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Objects of an American Memory: Settler hauntology on display in the Hudson Valley antique store and college campus

April 29, 2022

American Studies 302: Senior Thesis

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acknowledgements

This thesis and I have been nurtured by the diligent and warm guidance of Molly McGlennen over my four years at Vassar College. Thank you Molly, for your poetry, classes, trust, recommended readings, laughter, event organizing, advice, and encouragement; your teaching has shaped me and this project.

I would like to thank Melissa McAlley, guardian of the American Studies program, who welcomed me into the Old Laundry Building every week and provided the support (and snacks) that allowed me to work and write. Thank you to the professors whose classrooms gave me space to investigate the questions that trouble this work: Hua Hsu, Jasmine Syedullah, Colleen Cohen, and James Merrell.

I am deeply grateful to the Native feminists who taught/teach me how to read Christian colonialism – Kim TallBear, Huanani Kay-Trask, Deborah Miranda, Paula Gunn Allen, Eve Tuck, Elissa Washutta, Kim Anderson, and many others – their revolutionary works shatter settler innocence and insist that Native women and families' resiliences offer a vision of the world based in justice for this planet and all its people. I am indebted to the nation of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians, from whose lands I write, for generously sharing their histories of the Hudson Valley through public recorded events, cultural affairs services, their library, and their museum. I encourage every person who lives on Wappinger, Stockbridge-Munsee land to learn more about the nation today through their in-depth historical guides, political factsheets, brochures on repatriation, and other resources which are available here. I also encourage white settlers to make a financial contribution to Stockbridge-Munsee historic preservation and language revitalization efforts: to do so please click here.

Thank you to my friends and family, especially my Mama, Lyla, Lila, Sydney, Rivers, Sam, and Tori, who listened to my sentences, my worries, drove me to various antique stores, and reminded me when to take a break. Finally, I would like to thank Fiona Apple and Oklou for their perfect rage, which provided the soundtrack to this project, and Dr Pepper (the world's most misunderstood soft drink).

Every experience, good or bad, is a priceless collector's item

– Hyde Park Antiques Center website

If an object calls for its mother,
boil water and immediately swaddle it.
If an object calls for other family members,
or calls collect after midnight, refer to tribally
specific guidelines. Reverse charges.
If objects appear to be human bone,
make certain to have all visitors stroke
or touch fingertips to all tibia, fibula
and pelvis fragments. In the case of skulls,
call low into the ear or eyeholes, with words
lulling and kind.

– Heid Erdrich, "Guidelines for the Treatment of Sacred Objects"

Alas, poor country!
Almost afraid to know itself.

– Ross, *Macbeth*

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some notes before beginning

texts of denial

I live in a place called Poughkeepsie. Before I lived here, I lived in a city called White Plains, an English translation of that land's name in Munsee (Quarropas). White Plains is about 35 miles north of New York City, and Poughkeepsie another 50 north from there. To travel from White Plains to Poughkeepsie, one can join the Taconic Parkway at its entrance near Quarropas Street and rush through towns like Ossining and Chappaqua, hamlets like Kitchawan and Shenandoah. Besides a few passing remarks about the strange names of these places, settlers rarely think about what happened to the Indigenous people who once lived here.

Both of these American places, Poughkeepsie and White Plains, occupy Wappinger lands. Their lands stretch from southern New York east towards Connecticut and encompass the entire Hudson Valley. Wappinger people probably mostly spoke Munsee, closely related to Mohican, both languages within the Algonquian family. The Wappinger are sometimes referred to as a confederation because of the kin-based clusters where people lived – white historians claim it wasn't until Dutch invasion that the mostly independent groups united in defense of their collective homelands. In actuality, Wappinger people were always part of vast kinship networks bonded by language, culture, familial ties, economics, and mutual interdependence; the Indigenous history of the Hudson Valley has never been marked by insulation or seclusion. Wappinger communities were closely bonded to their northern Mohican and southern Munsee neighbors, bonds that allowed members of Wappinger communities to survive when they faced

the depraved realities of European encroachment, disease, and massacre. Contrary to local lore, Wappinger people did not vanish or go extinct. Most Wappinger people who survived the many apocalypses of the mid 17th-18th centuries joined the nation that continues today as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians. Like all diasporic people, Wappinger people moved to cities, assimilated into settler society, stayed put exactly where they were, joined other nations that continue today in Ontario and Oklahoma, and went wherever else people might go when faced with the catastrophic violences of dispossession.

Perhaps the most apparent reminder of Indigenous history for settlers today in this region is the prevalence of Indigenous town and placenames, the texts of European land claims. To be clear, most of these names are the butchered mumblings of Dutch and English settlers, not the words Indigenous people used to describe their lands. The colonial project's obsession with its own expansion has always demanded the shrinking of Native life – in Poughkeepsie, colonial authority attempted to reduce Indigenous language and land claims to their own realm of control.

The christening of sites of extreme colonial violence with "Indian" names is a self-congratulatory settler assertion of completed conquest and a looming threat against Indigenous sovereignties. Sarah Scneider Kavanagh notes how the baptism of a settler graveyard with the name "Indian Hill Cemetery" in 1850 "no longer indicated that the Hill *belonged* to Indians, but that the hill itself *was* Indian: Indian space under the control of white proprietors."[1] Similarly, the adoption of "Indian" place names confines Indigenous land (and thus life and history) inside the nexus of colonial invasion. In choosing these names, settlers sought to cement

[1] Sarah Schneider Kavanagh, "Haunting Remains: Educating a New American Citizenry at Indian Hill Cemetery" eds. Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence* (University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 167.

Native histories within the physical and temporal geographies of American progress narratives, tethering them to this nation's history. Indigenous people lived here for approximately 12,000 years before they encountered Henry Hudson, but almost all available histories of Native life in the Hudson Valley begin at that date in 1609. The confinement of Wappinger history to the settler period, like the colonial claiming of "Indian" words and names to signify its own domination, exemplifies the repression of Native histories within the genocidal apparatus of settler-colonialism.

There is no independent Wappinger community today because Dutch, English, and American settlers massacred them, repeatedly and brutally, and those that survived were forcibly removed and/or fled to neighboring kin. It is because of this dizzying genocidal violence that there are so few people who speak for Wappinger life today, so few people to ask the questions that trouble this work. The archive of Wappinger history is a dusty corner mostly filled with books written around the turn of the 20th century by white men anxious to build up a distinct national history, the only people ever taken seriously as authorities on Wappinger life.

Contrary to their writings, Wappinger culture, history and life has in no way been extinguished, and Wappinger people integrated their own beliefs and lifeways into the communities they joined in the period of their "many trails" from 1683-1856. Descendants of Wappinger people live and some hold the stories of their ancestors, though the histories of removal complicate the ability to locate a distinctive Wappinger lineage. Because Wappinger people were closely related to the people whose nations they joined and did not join them all at once (but rather in periodic spurts), few Indigenous people today identify as Wappinger. The lack of acknowledged contemporary

Indigenous authority on Wappinger life is the painful legacy of physical and historical removal and repression. Despite the dedication of the Stockbridge-Munsee nation to provide the public with access to their histories through services like their comprehensive factsheet or guides for repatriating objects, their resources are not given a central position within many texts written about Indigenous life in the Hudson Valley. The result is that the current websites and places to which settlers turn to learn the Indigenous history of this land recycle the same standard extinctionist narratives that naturalize Indigenous genocide within fantasies of American progress.

For this reason there is an irreconcilable and glaring cavity within this work: where Wappinger people should speak they have sometimes been silenced, their authority replaced by the omniscient, anonymous writers of Wikipedia articles and governmental township websites. It has been a deeply painful process to attempt to learn a history that has intentionally been destroyed, where the only easily accessible information about Wappinger life are accounts of its death. However painful this process may have been for me as a settler reckoning with a violent inheritance, the reality remains that Native people are forced to parse through the written materials that justify Indigenous genocide when they look for information on their ancestors, their homelands, and their histories.

In the Northeastern United States (as elsewhere), literacy and English education formed an essential arm of the colonial project. Native children were stolen from their families for over three hundred years: the story of boarding schools and forced assimilation into settler systems of learning is older than this country itself. It was often through this particular kind of intellectual

colonialism that Native students were introduced to the world of Christian patriarchy. Missionaries, teachers, and other colonial authorities impressed upon children that only English modes of remembrance were valid: English language and law. Native children, cut off from their communities, did not forget their own cultural practices but instead faced severe consequences for following them.

The colonial disciplinary system of education, coupled with the physical terror launched against Indigenous people aimed to remove and then redefine Indigenous histories of this land. Schneider Kavanagh writes that "the fertilization of Native lands, exhumed of their histories and bodies, with European American bodies, histories, and ideologies" provided the scaffolding for the extinction myths that uphold and perpetuate genocide.[2] The settler insistence on the absolute authority of colonial histories has successfully uprooted and flattened the textures of Indigenous life before, during, and after the period of early encounters. This is indeed reflected heavily in this thesis. It is the insidious violence of colonialism to silence and suppress Indigenous systems of learning and remembering in order to make settler logic appear natural and self-evident. No matter what I read nor how I use it I cannot avoid the success of settler genocide in violently denying Native histories of this land; this collective repression exemplifies how exactly nationalisms can turn chance into destiny.

In places like the Hudson Valley where Indigenous histories are repressed, students of Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) are often forced to center colonial documents, legal codes, and secondary sources in the search for intentionally denied Native resistances and presences. In doing so, scholars risk vindicating the authority of the very tools of genocide that

[2] Ibid., 152.

silenced, erased, and attempted to destroy Indigenous epistemologies. Colonial land deeds, for example, are sites that historians frequently turn to in order to evaluate settler-Indigenous negotiations of land claims. Despite the fact that these deeds are testament to terrible deceit and violence, their proliferation legitimizes colonial authority and proceedings because other records of diplomacy, like wampum, have been delegitimized or discarded. Thus, even when they are understood as illegal, they are sometimes simply all we've got: students of Native American and Indigenous studies often have little choice but to reinforce the ranking of these records as sole historical record. Try as I might to glean the true resistance, joy, pain, and quotidien drama of Wappinger life from the documents, legal codes, and secondary sources that are available, these texts will forever be inadequate explanations of this land's histories.

Central to this thesis is an understanding that the histories we know are intentional constructions rather than inevitable inheritances. Histories do not float passively through the meandering of time, nor do they mysteriously vanish during a teleological march forward. They are instead actively grabbed, guarded, upheld, celebrated, denied, discarded, dug up, desecrated. I cannot learn Wappinger history before Hudson's arrival because settlers did not just attack Native people, but their histories and modes of remembrance.

Stockbridge-Munsee people have held fast to their oral histories, the words and legacies of their ancestors, and their ties to this land; Indigenous resilience exemplifies the failure of the colonial project to exact totalizing erasure. As this paper tracks, the Native people who lived here not only negotiated with settler authority but actively challenged and resisted it, and continue to do so. Despite the strength of Indigenous resilience, however, it would be a mistake not to

underscore the horrifying and often overwhelming success of the colonial project in executing its genocidal goal of historical and physical eradication. For this reason I find I must give ample space to the deafening silence of the archive, the hollow canyon of genocide, within which there is so much we do not and cannot know.

It is not lost on me that I write from the very system that safeguards such inadequate renderings of Indigenous life as truth. Indeed it is through this language (in which I write), these colleges (from which I write), these documents and these objects (about which I write) that colonialism became and becomes codified. In her writing on the transformation of a sacred Wangunk site in Middletown, Connecticut, into "Indian Hill Cemetery" in 1850, Sarah Scneider Kavanagh writes that the "implantation of white bodies and histories, paired with an exhumation of Native ones, transformed the land into a text that would forever convey Euro-American ideologies about land, ownership, and "Indian-ness" serving to legitimize and edify white American nationhood."[3] Here in the Hudson Valley, settler genocide has displaced Indigenous memories through the careful construction of American memories of Indigeneity. Between the histories that are available – the careful musings of mostly dead white men – and the histories that have been repressed with as much diligence and intention, the story of American memory comes alive, "a memory that is," in the words of Sarah Schneider Kavanagh, "perhaps most profoundly a forgetting."[4]

[3] Ibid., 153.
[4] Ibid., 171.

Tools of an anglo-american education

These are the building blocks of English linguistics: there is the taxonomy, the ordering. the reduction of people to the level of animal or didactic image. If I used these blocks to teach a child this language, what would they have to say?

If I gave these blocks to a child, perhaps they would want to keep books between this metal; perhaps they would be encyclopedias or comprehensive histories…

on the broadcast of excessive violence

The George Floyd Uprisings in the summer of 2020 both revealed the white desire to consume Black suffering and amplified calls against such quotidien devouring. On Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, in the New York Times and the BBC, on TV news and in radio shows, violence against marginalized people is regularly broadcast. Are such shocking images information or entertainment, moving or paralyzing, or everything all at once? Between tweets about last weekend's happenings I find videos of Israeli Offensive Forces shooting Palestinians with rubber bullets at Damascus Gate. Sometimes I click away and sometimes I watch, but either way I scroll away in a matter of moments…

To return to normal programming, exit the app, close the computer, or finish the reading is not the goal of this project, nor is it an option for our collective futures. Reckoning with settler violence is a lifelong process. For this reason NAIS, Africana Studies, and other disciplines of critical ethnic studies underscore the need for community in the spaces where the true histories of colonialism are investigated and exposed. We move through this work at the speed of trust, a trust in the fact that we will all be changed by what we read, hear, see, and feel. Through such changes we are able to imagine peace: a different future for this planet and its people, a future where reparations are paid and land returned, where Indigenous sovereignties are valued and respected, where children have clean water and air…

Such dreams may seem idealistic and naive because "in this particular era of neoliberal capitalism, it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism."[5] But, as Nick Estes goes on to explain over the course of his manifesto on Indigenous futurity, the apocalypse has come for many Black and Indigenous people and structures the lived reality of every American today. He says "Indigenous resistance is not a one-time event. It continually asks: What proliferates in the absence of empire? Thus, it defines freedom not as the absence of settler colonialism, but as the amplified presence of Indigenous life and just relations with human and nonhuman relatives, and with the earth."[6]

Understanding apocalypse as a pervasive reality demands a recognition of the unknowable chaos of genocide. The violences that transformed the Hudson Valley into a settler state are impossible to name. Sometimes they are called removal, boarding schools, massacre, malaria, but none of them really get at what happened here. They are mere conjurings of catastrophes I cannot imagine. The brutalities referenced in the chapters that follow are "above our comprehension," as Mohican leader John Quinney said in 1852[7]. This does not mean that settlers should not try to understand these events or relay their import, but that we instead must sit with the illogical and inconceivable horrors of genocide and our inability to truly know them.

I have omitted many of the gruesome details of senseless colonial terror because the purpose of this thesis is not to make a laundry list of settler violences. The purpose of this thesis is instead to

[5] Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. (London: Verso, 2019), 38.

[6] Ibid.

[7] "Mohican History Seminar, 'Words of Our Ancestors." May 5, 2018." accessed January 22, 2022. ,https://trms.ctsbtv.org/CablecastPublicSite/show/18565?channel=3.

focus attention on the saturation of American subjectivity with images of Indigenous death. In a thesis very much concerned with the circulation of images of erasure it would not be appropriate to put such acts of violence on display. The images that accompany my writing on the racist objects I encountered are violent enough.

While I absolutely encourage white settlers to research the brutal details of genocidal events like the Pavonia Massacre or the Esopus "Wars," this thesis does not divulge details of torture or sexual violence in order to shock readers into paying attention to what I have to say. I do not wish to partake in (or worse, supply) the pornography of violence that marks so much of white culture's current fetishization of Black and Indigenous suffering.

on we and i

While most of the people who fill the antique stores and college campuses and I are part of the same demographic, I generally avoid using the term "we" to describe normative white, middle-class, educated, liberal people. I find this to be a lazy and imprecise identification. Much more often I opt for "I," not because I do not recognize myself as part of the settler class but because settler positionalities are not a standard against which other people's experiences can be measured. My settler subjectivity shapes everything about this thesis, from the objects that catch my eye to what I feel in the basement of Blodgett. This is not an objective, representational, or neutral text. It is much more accurately a collection of one settler (me) looking at myself and my surroundings. The use of "I" is not an attempt at a personal distancing but instead a recognition that what is called simple "us" and "ours" implies an opposing "them" and "theirs."

on “indianness” and “indian” objects

For settlers there is always violence in referring to a person Indigenous to the United States as an “Indian.” It is a loaded term that, like place names like Poughkeepsie, celebrates conquest through the colonial defining and naming of Indigenous life and history. This is not a label I use nor find acceptable. As an observer of settler memory, violent slurs often accompany the violent representations/renderings of Indigenous people, and “Indian” is the most ubiquitous.

In his complicated work *The White Man’s Indian,* Robert Berkhofer begins with the assertion that “since the original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere neither called themselves by a single term nor understood themselves as a collectivity, the idea and the image of the Indian must be a White conception. Native Americans were and are real, but the Indian was a White invention and still remains largely a White image.”[8] In understanding the settler construction of “the Indian” as a figure who is not real but instead drawn up, projected, and plastered over settler landscapes, Berkforker opened up “Indian” as a category for settler imaginings of Indigeneity. Phil Deloria, in his 1998 monumental work *Playing Indian* expands this idea, writing that the desire to locate and then appropriate an imagined mythical “Indianness” is intrinsically linked to the formation of American national identity. As I have explained earlier, settlers baptized the lands they stole with the shoddy utterances or translations of Indigenous words, giving them “Indian” names. They are “Indian” because they are representations only of settler conceptions of Indigenous people, not Indigenous people themselves. The succinct ability of this term to

[8] Berkhofer, Robert F. *The White Man's Indian: The History of an Idea from Columbus to the Present*. (New York: Knopf, 1978), 1.

encapsulate settler projections of Indigeneity is especially useful as I attempt to untangle the affectual hauntings of colonial violence from the pervasive settler nightmares of "Indian" ghosts. For this same reason, I will sometimes refer to the dolls, jars, tobacco ads and other objects found in my trips to the Hyde Park Antiques Center as "Indian" to underscore that they are constructions that reflect whiteness, not Indigeneity.

There is an important distinction to be made between the stolen Indigenous objects often found in auction houses, private collections, museums and historical societies and the mockeries of Native craft and aesthetics that tend to populate local American antique stores, settler households, government buildings and popular culture – namely that the former are often intentionally made and specific manifestations of Indigenous practices, pride, and sovereignties (and continue as such even as they are held captive), and that the latter are pure settler projections whose very constructions intrinsically deny Indigneous independences from colonial domination. The former are sometimes art objects in the sense that they display extreme skill and care in their creation (not because they are non utilitarian); the latter are mostly ugly fetish. The former may be sacred (another imprecise term) and life-sustaining, the latter are often profane and murderous. Another important distinction must be made between the holding of Indigenous materials and the holdings of Indigenous people *as* materials. This distinction becomes important in the sections where Vassar College's captivity of Unangan (Aleut) burial objects and human remains are analyzed in the context of affectual structures of feeling and pervasive notions of colonial hauntings.

There is also an important distinction between objects that appropriate Indigenous aesthetics and those that are simple settler representations of Indigenous peoples, like an "Indian" head logo on a "welcome" sign. The "axis of distance" that Deloria coins in *Playing Indian* is central here. Such an axis relates to the range in which settler Americans simultaneously claim an idealized or mythical Indigeneity as an essential component of their national identity and exact its physical obliteration.[9] While the appropriation of Indigenous aesthetics like basket weaving and beadwork (pervertedly) claims Indigenous cultural practice as settler hobby, settler representations of actual Native people almost always insist on the disappearance of Indigeneity.

None of these distinctions, however, are hard and fast categories, and upholding them as such only serves the colonial obsession with discovering and containing some pure essence of Nativeness. Often the lines between expression and imitation, art and stuff, Indigenous and "Indian" objects, Native materials and Natives as materials, are blurred, sometimes on purpose by those trying to turn a profit and sometimes because of the dynamisms of American Indigenous and settler identity. All of these objects are linked by the ways their images have come under the purview of the colonial marketplace, whether it is a reductive placard in a museum or some settler artist's dismal reproduction of Mohican beadwork that minimizes such items to settler possession.

In the chapters that follow I carefully choose the words I use to describe different objects and avoid making value judgments between them. I do not think I can be the judge between "authentic" antiques, kitsch, memorabilia, curios, or whatever else abounds in antique stores, nor do I think that such divisions are important to this work. Indeed "authenticity" is a myth that

[9] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

stalks the colonial preoccupation with exotic Othering, as the history of Western tourism and collecting practices makes clear. Here, however, let me be clear in saying that Indigenous self representations will always and in every situation be better reflections of Native histories than white conceptualizations. Indigenous art and art objects (an undoubtedly colonial category itself) are not the study of this project. Instead, settler physical representations of Indigeneity, "Indian objects" are the focus.

In this working definition of the category of "Indianness," no living Indigenous person can be an Indian and there is no stable standard of what an Indian is beyond its creation within white hands. There is thus no singular Indian but countless iterations connected only to each other and reality through their phantasmic origin within settler subjectivities. I stand deeply against the reductive and inaccurate portrayals of Indigenous people that abound in American national culture, but what does it mean to stand against them? To think they are wrong, and harmful? As the Stockbridge-Munsee website writes, "*Race-based Indian logos, mascots, names and images deliberately, and in a derisive manner, portray Native American tribes, tribal governments and tribal cultures and should be rejected on all occasions and in all uses.*"[10] What it means to reject these images in the hallowed spheres of national identity where they abound is the challenge of settler historical reckoning…

on hyde park antiques center

While I originally planned to explore a variety of antique stores, and multiple stores across the Hudson Valley and Stockbridge-Munsee lands do feature in the analyses that follow, this

[10] "Cultural Affairs Frequently Asked Questions." Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians. Accessed April 20, 2022. https://www.mohican.com/services/cultural-services/cultural-affairs/faq/.

research is grounded in one store, the Hyde Park Antiques Center. Through focusing on a particular antique store that I have visited personally for years, I was able to notice minute shifts in display arrangements, prices, and visitors attitudes toward such objects. Thus this work is not a survey nor is it representative of antique stores across the Hudson Valley, which differ greatly based on location, socioeconomic status, and aesthetic preferences, but rather a closer look at one of the most common destinations for antiquing for people in Poughkeepsie. Due to the massive size of this antiques center, this space offered a wide array of objects and display practices that reflected individual vendors' perspectives. The Center's proximity to Poughkeepsie, as well, means that this is a common destination for Vassar students and people in the Hudson Valley.

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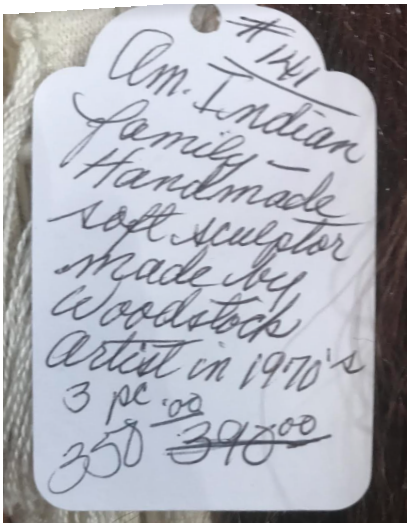
Introductions

welcome to hyde park antiques center

On this visit to the Hyde Park Antiques Center, it is a day of bitter cold. The car slows over the frost-covered gravel and the doors slice decisively through the wind. We hurry up a few stairs too frozen to creak beneath our footsteps. I am here to do research, my friend wants a ring. The others just want to get out somewhere, away from campus.

The Hyde Park Antiques Center is a Dutchess County landmark. Seated between the Vanderbilt Mansion and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Home/Presidential Library off Route 9, the antiques vendor mall is a two-story house with winged extensions on either side. Countless objects line open air rooms and individual booths to create an atmosphere of diligently organized clutter. According to the Hyde Park Antiques Center website, "our customers will delight in the museum-like experience of wandering through, viewing and claiming their own personal piece of history." [11] This space *is* like a museum, and its historic status makes a visit an almost educational experience. But unlike a museum, these objects are appealing because they are available for more than just observation – they can be touched, bought, broken. Visitors straddle the line between viewer and consumer as they take part in both a historical and commercial witnessing. The declaration that one can lay claim to the history 'preserved' here through the observation and possible purchase of these objects is important to the central function of antique stores: as they facilitate a sense of personal connection to physical objects – be they 'remnants,' 'valuables,' 'collectibles,' 'antiques,' or 'junk'-- of a presumed shared history, they bolster a sense of unified, delocalized national memory.

[11] " Hyde Park Antiques Center - Discover Hyde Park ," accessed April 29, 2022, http://www.hydeparkantiques.net/discover.html.


#1141
Am. Indian
family -
Handmade
soft sculptor
made by
Woodstock
artist in 1970's
3 pc
350
390

An indian family

We turn the knob on the tiny door to the antiques center, it jingles. We greet the staff leaning on a wide glass case, and I leave my friends to peruse the endless aisles. I head towards a back room, it smells like dust, like old things.

"An Indian Family," as the tag that dangles from one of the scarecrow-esque figures identifies them, stands in the corner. They have been here for years: periodically, over my time as a student, I have come and seen them. There is never any movement in their wrinkled smiles. Their plush hands remain still at their sides. Besides the baby in a fringe bag, there are no hints at motion. The figure with a cowboy hat looks up and out at something above itself, the figure with feathers stares down at the child. Whatever is happening in front of them, they pay no mind.

The parents have no legs: if they were to come alive, and have the idea to go somewhere, they would be stuck in this spot. But they don't seem to have any dreams beyond their current state, which they gesture towards with lips pursed in aimless concentration…. The store keepers have also seemed to notice their immobility, so they lowered the price at some point. $350 for a man, woman (only identifiable by the skirt taped to the hem of the figure's shirt) and child.

Unlike some of the other "Indian" objects that dot the glass cases and bookshelves of the Hyde Park Antiques Center, "An Indian Family" is not tucked between vintage pyrex or the campaign buttons of various presidential candidates. It is actually quite hard to miss. The Family is surrounded by other racialized objects in this corner of the store. There is a sombrero nearby, a "Peruvian hanging," a replica mini Western wagon, a Japanese folding door. Still, they tower

over the other objects. On a table next to them, an American flag obscures a "carved coconut head:" I pick him up and hold him in one hand like a bowling ball. He has one tooth, the bridge of his brow lined with red and yellow paint. He is some kind of warrior, it seems, though only one side of his face seems angry. The other side merely returns my gaze.

The family wear feathers and "wampum" and cowboy hats, their recognizable "Indian" style of dress imported from a couple thousand miles West. Though they were made in Woodstock, they could be found anywhere in America and recognized instantly as Indigenous – their braids, headbands, and faux turquoise are not so subtle indications of their identity. They are "an Indian Family."

I stand for a long time listening to the buzz of the heater, the murmur of my friends in the next room, the sliding of hangers across a rack. Like every time I encounter "An Indian Family," I am shocked by their size and their prominence. They are not hidden. They are on display.

introduction to the project

The central concern of this thesis is the relationship between hiding and display, absence and presence. While "An Indian Family" is kept in a prominent position, Vassar College keeps the vestigial descriptive placards that accompanied a display of stolen Aleut burial objects in a random drawer in a random room in the basement of Blodgett Hall. Neither of these objects or their containment, however, can be simply categorized as entirely in plain sight or out of view. Both of these institutions, Vassar College and the Hyde Park Antiques Center, instead contend with the visibilities of the ideologies that inform their most fundamental structures. A close

analysis of a certain set of objects and the ideological "structures of feeling" that they embody can provide a window into collective orientations toward racialized geographies and memorialization. Such orientations form a national "hauntology," according to Jacques Derrida's theory, "an indeterminate relationship between 'then' and 'now,'" and our understandings of what is "'present' and 'absent,' 'being' and 'non-being." [12]

Derrida's 1993 neologism "hauntology" put into words, or at least hinted at, a phenomenon I encountered every time I entered an antique store since I first began my education in critical American studies While often a space of personal interest and leisure, I couldn't ignore that racialized objects took up as much shelf space as the vintage clothes and records I sifted through. Often I thought, *what are they doing here?* And then, as my research process progressed, I began to wonder *where else they could go.* Most striking to me was the fact that these dolls and trinkets never seemed out of place around so much other American ephemera and those who populated these stores often paid them no mind. And while these racialized objects often represent Indigenous people as disappeared or decayed, as *old* in the most derogatory sense of the word, their collection, sorting and display simultaneously renews and reconfirms the confinement of Indigenous history within the popular American imagination. In every antique store there seemed the endless contradiction of this materially present *absence*, and Derrida's theory of hauntology offers a philosophical framework that embraces the multiplicities and contradictions of racist collection and resists the constraints of binary opposition or classification.

[12]Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* trans. Peggy Kamuf (Routledge 1994)*;* Eds. Vivienne Bozalek, Michalinos Zembylas, Siddique Motala, Dorothee Holscher, H*igher Education Hauntologies: Living with Ghosts for a Justice-to-come* (Routledge 2021), 2.

Wappinger removal and resistance, 1643-1854

In 1683, 23 Wappinger leaders "made their mark" on two settlers' purchase of some 85,000 acres in Dutchess county (known as the Rombout Patent once granted by the Crown in 1685), "signing" with Xs because they did not read English. While dispossession is often discussed in relation to one catastrophic event – such as the Dutchess County "brief history webpage" suggesting that the patent period (1683) ended Indigenous history – Wappinger history demands an attention to the repeated process of removal and the colonial project's commitment to the structures of genocide.[13]

For almost seventy five years Wappinger communities had confronted waves of smallpox epidemics, massacre upon massacre, and multiple full fledged 'wars' which literally decimated their populations and prompted these mostly independent (though related) tribes to unite in defense of their lands. In the seventy five years after signing Rombout's patent, Wappinger communities contended with more war, more removal (a full eighty years before Jackson's era), and more death. Some Wappinger left after terrors like Dutch massacre in 1643; others sought refuge in Mohican communities to the northeast (as well as Lenape and even Haudenosaunee communities to the south and west, respectively) as the English took control of New Netherland in 1664. We know that a majority of the Wappinger communities that remained until the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754 were "removed for their own safety" to the new (mostly) Mohican Indian town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where some Wappinger had gone when it

[13] Government, Dutchess County. A brief history of Dutchess County. Accessed April 29, 2022. https://www.dutchessny.gov/Departments/History/A-Brief-History-of-Dutchess-County.htm#:~:text=Dutchess%20was%20among%20them%2C%20named,twelve%20counties%20of%20New%20York.

was founded in 1738. By 1811, there was one remaining Wappinger tribe in Putnam county; all others had integrated into neighboring communities.

Despite their integration into neighboring communities, Wappinger people never forgot their connections to their homelands and navigated the hypocrisy of English law in order to contest English domination. Eighty five years after the patent period, Stockbridge-Munsee leaders petitioned the validity of Philipse's Patent in 1767. After the American revolution, in which a number of Wappinger and Stockbridge-Munsee people served and died (including "last" Wappinger sachem Daniel Ninham, his son, and some 40 other Wappinger), Stockbridge-Munsee leaders wrote and spoke their grievances against the new American government. In 1809, the Stockbridge Mohicans signed their last deed for land in Massachusetts - they relinquished their burial ground to John Partridge, a prominent settler who they trusted would "prevent the soil from being removed," so "that the bones of our Ancestors may there lie undisturbed."[14] Though at this time the Stockbridge-Munsee were currently living with the Oneida in New York, never did this nation relinquish its claims to this land nor take the process of land theft as a completed fact of history.

In 1854, John Quinney, grandson of the sachem who led the Mohican move to Stockbridge to safeguard future generations, gave an address to some 2,000 people in Reidsville (Albany County), traveling over a thousand miles from Wisconsin where the nation had been removed. He directed his address at the colonial legislatures, but also seemingly at the white public at large who had settled on stolen land:

[14] "Mohican History Seminar, 'Words of Our Ancestors.' May 5, 2018."

> Where are the twenty-five thousand in number, and the four thousand warriors, who constituted the power and population of the great Muhheconneew Nation in 1604?... It is curious, the history of my tribe, in its decline during the last two centuries and a half. Nothing that deserved the name of 'purchase' was ever made… Will you look steadily at the intrigues, bargains, corruption and log-rolling of the present Legislatures, and see any trace of the divinity of justice? And by what test shall be tried the acts of the old Colonial Courts and Councils? … Let it not surprise you my friends, when I say, that the spot on which we stand has never been purchased or rightly obtained; and that by justice, human and divine, it is the property now of the remnant of that great people from whom I am descended. They left it in the tortures of starvation and to improve their miserable existence... These events are above our comprehension--and for wise purposes. For myself and my tribe I ask for justice. I believe it will sooner or later occur. And may the Great and Good Spirit enable me to die in hope.[15]

I have tried over the course of writing this thesis to put Quinney's words into my own, but I have found over and over that only he can explicate the power of his own pain, rage and sense of justice. In pointing out the hypocrisy of colonial "legal" systems, John Quinney challenged settlers as individuals to consider their own actual implication in colonial conquest. Nick Estes writes of the continued inadequacy of colonial courts through the modern criminalization of water defenders in Minnesota: "By following its own legal traditions, the arc of the Western moral universe never bends towards Indigenous justice."[16]

I am grateful for Quinney's words and reminded of how many did not get the chance to speak to a crowd and instead grieved the loss of their lands in their own homes, in the care of their own communities, words that weren't written but live on in the memory of descendants. In the 2018 history seminar organized by the Mohican Community Band of Stockbridge-Munsee Indians "Revisiting Indiantown," community members read the words of their ancestors. Coral Cook read part of her ancestor John Quinney's address. Over the course of seven "removals" (they are actually innumerable) and almost two hundred years in Shawano County, Wisconsin,

> The Stockbridge-Munsee Community has always maintained a connection to its Eastern

[15] "Mohican History Seminar, 'Words of Our Ancestors," 2018.
[16] Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future,* 2019, 10.

> homelands and tribal members have continuously returned since the 1850's to protect burial sites or other cultural area or to pursue land claims. in 1999, this work was formalized by establishing a Tribal Historic Preservation office which routinely consults throughout our New York and New England areas. The office carries out duties under NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) to repatriate cultural items and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to consult on federal construction projects that may impact cultural sites.
>
> In 2011, the Tribe purchased 63 acres of land along the Hudson river to protect a culturally sensitive Site. ln 2015 we were proud to formally establish a satellite Historic Preservation office on the campus of Russell Sage College in downtown Troy, N.Y. on Mohican homelands. The office reviews approximately 500 proposed construction projects a year, ensuring the Tribe's cultural perspective is heard in the planning process.[17]

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place

This thesis is realized through physical places: antique stores and the college campus. In *Place: A Short Introduction,* Tim Cresswell writes that "place is a word that seems to speak for itself" due to its common usage.[18] Yet when we investigate what turns "land" or "space," terms that may seem simplistic and broad, into a particular "place," we can see how popular notions of place-making insist on settler conceptions of land-relations: fracturing of land as essential to place-making and place as ultimate dominion.

American geographer D.W. Meinig defined place as a "mental imposition of order, a parcelization of the Earth's surface, a transformation of space – an abstraction into something more specific and limited."[19] One scholar's definition cannot represent the myriad manifestations of place-making, but Meinig's definition invokes settler conceptualizations of physical space that

[17] "Cultural Affairs Frequently Asked Questions." Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians.
[18] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011).
[19] Quoted in Sarah Schneider Kavanagh, "Haunting Remains," 154.

reflect the way this land has been and continues to be colonized. The manifestation of place as order, as will be investigated later, relates deeply to the Euro-American preoccupation with categorization and organized knowledge. Moreover, *when land is "ordered," whose places are made, and whose places destroyed?*

While Meinig insists on the "imposition of order" and thus expresses the central role of coercive power in constructing place, reading power as relational rather than totalizing is necessary to understand alternative place-makings and ongoing resistance to hegemonic norms.[20] The belief that in places, people exert complete control over physical geographies denies the possibility of reciprocal relationships with land. Such a claim also denies place for people who have been dispossessed and forcibly removed from their homelands. Diasporic communities know that land deeds and "legal" control does not prescribe rightful possession, from occupied Palestine to so-called New York.

As the history of Wappinger dispossession, removal, and resilience suggests, Poughkeepsie was place before European encroachment and has continued to be place for those whose ancestors were removed from Mohican and Wappinger land and Lenapehoking in ways that challenge settler conceptions of property and ownership. Despite the "end" of Stockbridge-Munsee "legal" ownership of their lands in 1809, the Community nation continues to recognize the land as its inheritance and actively stewards it through the protection of cultural sites and implementation of NAGPRA oversight. Dutchess County continues to be an Indigenous place despite intentional efforts to destroy such possession. Popular definitions of place taken for granted in everyday and

[20] John M. Findlay and Richard White dissect this definition in *Power and Place in the North American West,* first analyzing the imposition of order as an exercise of power. Quoted in Schneider Kavangh, "Haunting Remains,"154.

academic vernaculars naturalize American propriety and erase the genocidal violence that enabled it.

Despite Meinig's assembly-line conceptualization of place, I latch onto his view of parcelization, not only because of his reference to the enclosure movement and the ascendance of modern conceptions of ownership, but also because his formulation of fractioning posits *belonging as essentially implicated in place-making.* Who belongs in which spaces is not the central concern of this thesis – it is instead *upon whose exclusion and erasure does other people's belonging depend?*

Cresswell writes that "places almost always have a concrete form" and that places are "material things."[21] The ability to make land "place" challenges dominant theories of geography, because in the American popular imagination, land provides the raw materials from which place is constructed. Vassar is easily understood as a place, and so is the Hyde Park Antiques Center, but what of the Fonteyn Kill, the stream once sacred to Wappinger people that runs through Vassar's campus? The waterway heavily influenced Matthew Vassar's choice of location for the College, as he wrote in his journals, and Vassar still builds developments, like the new Science Bridge, along its banks. For white Americans, natural spaces can be landscapes, but their ability to be "place" is more complicated. Land is something owned and ordered, *something upon which places are built.*

"Place" implies transformation and manipulation, a purposeful endowment of spaces with meaning. There are many parallels between objects and spaces in the popular American

[21] Cresswell, *Place,* 7.

imaginary – both are possessions and inanimate. But just as people endow possessions with significance through personal connection, making them transcendent (like when a doll becomes 'she' rather than 'it'), so too is space made place through romanticization. Tim Cresswell uses the example of a college freshman transforming a standard dorm room into "their place" to explain the importance of forged historical connection in creating place. He writes that beyond the provided dresser, desk, and bed, there are "the hauntings of past inhabitation. The anonymous space has a history – it meant something to other people. Now what do you do? A common strategy is to make the space say something about you."[22] Is personalizing space what makes it place? Or is it an imagined connection to those who belonged there before (if they could make this a place, so can I)?

Reorienting space from the direction of one's own worldviews explains how place-making is a narrative of the self and also a narrative of desire, of *becoming*. Cresswell uses the phrase "hauntings of past inhabitation" to explain how people make place from other people's places. He does not literally mean that ghosts haunt old dorm rooms, but instead that affective orientations linger in the physicality of the present, and that this imagined "always already absent present" becomes an essential component of the stories we construct about ourselves and our places. Within "places," whether they be the classroom or the dorm room, subjectivity is made, reinforced, and able to create new meaning(s) for the space it inhabits. But exposure to the true history of this land challenges 21st century settlers' ability to make place here – how can I feel at home on a land I know is not my own, that is not only stolen but desecrated? Whose places are protected by the denial of such a bloody history? And how does this history make itself known?

[22] Cresswell, *Place*, 2.

In her writing on Indian Hill Cemetery in Middletown, Connecticut, Sarah Schneider Kavanagh adopts Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopias in order to read places as social texts. I follow in Kavanagh's footsteps wherein she reads land as text and synthesizes Meinig's implication of power in his theory of place to question whether all places are haunted. Because white American place-making is a narrative of the self that implicates both struggles for power and imagined historical connection, I read place-making as an inherently hauntological endeavor.

hauntings and ghostliness

In beginning the research process for this thesis, I quickly learned the potency of ghosts both as rhetorical metaphors and affective "social artifacts."[23] Notions of haunting and ghostliness show up in quotidien life and language: "her lyrics are haunting," "I'm haunted by the smell of his old cologne," "its a ghost town in here," even "she ghosted me." When hauntings or ghosts are invoked in the everyday, they convey a universally recognizable contradiction of a lingering disappearance, a palpable absence, a proximity that is impossible to close, a shadow. As I began to confront the ubiquity of ghostliness, I started to wonder why hauntings seem to figure so prominently in people's conceptualizations of their experiences and their surroundings despite the apparent contradictions that mark ghostliness. In a place like Vassar, where probably a relatively small student population would claim that they actually believe in ghosts, how and why does ghostliness remain so familiar?

[23] Judith Richardson, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 4.

Despite ghostliness's proliferation as a metaphor in personal narrative, this thesis is about *"*hauntings as they work *in place"*[24] and practices of place-making. On Vassar College's campus, ghosts and ghostliness inform a significant amount of historical and communal lore. There are tales of doomed early students drifting through Main Building in their nightgowns and abandoned classrooms filled with unsettling noises. According to one reporter for the Miscellany News, Vassar's school newspaper in 2009, "it's no secret that Vassar has traditionally been considered a home for numerous ghosts and spirits."[25] This is true: in 1914, The New York Times reported that the "hopelessly old-fashioned" ghost of Matthew Vassar was haunting his old farmhouse somewhere between Red Oak Mills and New Hackensack. "The spectre," the author wrote, "is the effect of a violent past emotion, penetrating like an aroma into the consciousness of sensitive sleepers."[26] As this description suggests, ghosts call popular understandings of time into question. Vassar's ghost is "old-fashioned," a "past emotion," yet it exists in the current moment, tugging along something suppressed but vivacious, *something unburied.* More than a century after Vassar's sighting at the farmhouse, a different report in the Miscellany News about partying for Halloween explained, "if you've ever visited the Blodgett basement, you're probably not surprised to hear that Vassar is infested with ghosts."[27]

Ghost stories allow students to forge bonds in the places where they come together to live; as we know from countless campfires, ghosts aren't worth much if they're kept to oneself. At Vassar, a

[24] Judith Richardson, *Possessions*, 4.
[25] "A Spirited Search Through Vassar's Haunted Hallways," Miscellany News 29 October 2009 - Vassar Newspaper & Magazine Archive, accessed April 29, 2022, https://newspaperarchives.vassar.edu/?a=d&d=miscellany20091029-01.2.19&e=-------en-20--1--txt-txIN--------.
[26] "VASSAR'S GHOST," New York Times 29 January 1914 - TimesMachine, accessed February 1, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/1914/01/29/archives/vassars-ghost.html
[27] Tayla Phelps "Vassar legends, ghosts sure to surprise every student" – The Miscellany News October 25, 2017. Accessed March 3, 2022. Acehttps://miscellanynews.org/2017/10/25/features/vassar-legends-ghosts-sure-to-surprise-every-student/.

beacon of "progress" and enlightened rationality, ghosts are mainly tagged as jokes by official histories and students alike, but I don't know many students who willingly walk the halls of Main Building alone past midnight. Beyond the relatively harmless legends of Matthew Vassar appearing amidst the morning fog of library lawn, students also whisper about tiny closets where College maids were quartered and almost all lost their possessions in a fire in 1918 or the pervasive sense of dread that hangs around Blodgett Hall. Such discussions often help students physically orient themselves within the nuances of Vassar's true histories. Students most likely know that Indigenous people were removed from this land, but they might not know the active role that Vassar played in such dispossession. As a site of violence within student purview but whose histories are denied by official College narratives, Blodgett Hall and its hauntings offer modes "for thinking about higher education, in its implicatedness in, and being affected by, organized forces of power and unjust social structures."[28] Moreover, they reflect the settler subjective obsession "with an original sin against Native people that both engenders that subject and irrevocably stains it. Native American ghosts haunt American literature because the American nation is compelled to return again and again to an encounter that makes it both sorry and happy, a defiled grave upon which it must continually rebuild the American subject."[29]

In *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley*, Judith Richardson writes simply: "over at least the last two centuries, the Hudson River Valley between Manhattan and Albany has developed a reputation as an uncommonly haunted place."[30] She tracks such a development through the sensationalized captivity narratives of settlers in the 17th century (the

[28] *Higher Education Hauntologies,* 3.
[29] Renée L. Bergland, *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), vi.
[30] Richardson, *Possessions,* 2.

first American bestsellers) and the writings of Washington Irving. The rise of Hudson Valley hauntings, then, are intrinsically linked to the constructions of settler subjectivities through visions of Indigenous death. According to Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush in their introduction to *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture & History,* "While often viewed as romantic remnants of 'traditional' Indigenous cultures or the nostalgic detritus of 'local' history, Native ghosts have in fact shaped and informed colonizing encounters in significant ways, becoming stock characters in a quotidian North American drama of displacement, transformation, and belonging."[31]

While Vassar's temporal situation as an early women's college built in the shadow of the American Civil War and its physical situation in a "historic" (read: bloodied) landscape, perhaps partially explain why ghosts figure so prominently in the stories that this campus tells about itself, Vassar's active role in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples helps explain where these ghosts come from and what they might mean. "Native ghosts haunt settler places built in Indigenous landscapes.[32]"

Ghosts accrue value or relevance when they clearly resonate with or explicate a communal orientation that struggles to be articulated within dominant narratives; they are, for this reason, extremely social spirits that can build (and break) community. Through their trade in highly charged emotional states and taboo subjects like fear, anxiety, hostility, death and guilt, hauntings can articulate and/or validate resonances that lurk "at the very edge of conscious availability," that pervade lived realities but are repressed through hegemonic historiographies.[33] According to

[31] Eds. Boyd and Thrush, *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence,* viii.
[32] *Ibid*., xiv.
[33] Sadeq Rahimi, *The Hauntology of Everyday Life* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021, 20.

Richardson, "Ghosts operate as a particular, and peculiar, kind of social memory, an alternate form of history-making in which things usually forgotten, or discarded, or repressed become foregrounded, whether as items of fear, regret, explanation, or desire."[34]

Thus, in every place where ruling logic is understood as the only form of "common sense," the spectral arises to demand a recognition of lived experience "beyond the opposition between presence and non-presence, actuality and inactuality, life and non-life."[35] In his theory of structures of feeling, Raymond Williams writes that though affectual experiences are often denied agency or authority within hegemonic histories, they are nonetheless felt and make themselves known. In "The Hauntology of Everyday Life," Sadeq Rahimi analyzes the ghost as "the manifestation of an affectively charged figuration borne of the collective, external, and intra-psychic processes and representing the structural configurations of another time and hence another place—a fact that further highlights their relevance to the notion of structures of feeling."[36] Derrida calls such persistent "ontological interderminancy of time-being/being-time in its materiality" hauntology (a portmanteau of haunting and ontology).[37] Sadeq Rahimi explains:

> In a most basic sense, two features of hauntology have direct implications for the concepts of being and time. First, hauntology indicates a disjointing of time where past and future are present, and present is absent, and consequently it necessitates a pantemporal formulation of human thought and experience. Secondly, hauntology is a call to disavowal of ontologies of presence in the interest of what one may think of as an ontology of absence.[38]

Put another way: hauntology "does not ask 'to be or not to be,'" but "claims instead the simultaneous playfulness of "to be and not to be."[39] At Vassar, where dominant discourse

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[34] Richardson, *Possessions,* 3.
[35] Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 9.
[36] Rahimi, *The Hauntology of Everyday Life,* 20.
[37] *Higher Education Hauntologies, 3*.
[38] Rahimi, *The Hauntology of Everyday Life,* 6.
[39] Ibid., 4.

perpetuates settler innocence in the curious vanishing of Indigenous peoples, hauntings claim this land as a site of violence. Avery Gordon reiterates that

> haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power (for instance dispossession, apropriation of resources, or slavery) make themselves known and impact everyday life. This is especially the case when they are supposedly over and done with, or when their oppressive nature or concrete impacts on both humans and non-humans, or the material world, is denied. In other words, these forms of violence appear not to be present while actually being integrally present and continuing to impact the world around them in a dynamic way.[40]

As a result, "hauntology upsets the political order and the normative notion of justice as an end attainable through law, and it is through such destabilization of the law, the language, and the regime of truth as such, that justice emerges as an articulation of lost meanings."[41]

This is haunted land, and with or without recognition ghostliness continues to structure the ways people navigate our cognitive and physical worlds, our memories and histories, our spaces and places, our homes and our lives. For those interested in narratives of the self and of the nation, a notion of a lingering ghost, whether it is an embodied fog or just a permeating feeling, makes the currency of history legible.

[40] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997).
[41] Rahimi, *The Hauntology of Everyday Life,* 67.

ballston spa canoe

his is a strange day because I have never been here before, not to this antique barn nor this town. It has an atmosphere like Kingston, a warm quiet. Unlike the racist objects I have come to know and expect in the antique stores I usually visit, the ones here shock me with their expressions of anguish. I am further North than the Hudson Valley, in Saratoga County. I am within Mohican territory that is also Haudenosaunnee land. In this town, James Fenimore Cooper penned parts of The Last of The Mohicans, Wikipedia tells me on the drive over. I enter the barn through a tiny foyer with a desk like a hotel receptionist; at eye height two tiny Native people sit in a statue canoe.

They look like maybe they have just heard something in the bushes. They look afraid, they are on alert. Are they arriving or leaving in their bundled canoe?

They are clearly well-made, evidenced by their expressions of anguish and glossy finish. They look… expensive. When I try to lift them up to check the price, they are too heavy, and, just for a few seconds, they wobble…

the anatomy of a haunting

Ghosts bear particularly heavy weight within settler imaginations of Nativeness. Popular culture is overrun with "Indian" ghosts and burial grounds: *Pet Sematary,* ghost-tours and ghost-hunting TV shows, Kubrick's film adaptation of *The Shining.* Settler stories have featured such specters for three hundred years. The trope of the Indian burial ground has been around so long it's a dead horse in popular culture, and its most common form these days is parody. In a Halloween special of *The Simpsons,* Homer looks into the basement, its floor piled with dirt and jaggedheadstones. He yells "an ancient Indian what?!" He need not finish the sentence for viewers to know the reference. What do American fears of Indian burial ground mean for the current conversation on repatriation and land back, especially when Indigenous remains are discovered in the belly of settler institutions?

Native ghosts persist in the settler imagination through the myth of the vanishing Indian and the power of white guilt, even as their popular manifestations are written off as insensitive 1980's cliche in liberal circles. We see their "affective residue" in the fierce debate over Indian mascots, in the space of the antique store, and on college campuses constructed by Indigenous dispossession and genocide. The existence of the ghost matters less than its temporal and affectual *insistence* in the places people continuously make and remake.

Seen through the lens of Native history in the United States, hauntology is deeply concerned with both spatial and temporal distancing, the confrontation settlers face when reminded of the persistence of Indigenous peoples and histories through education about their removal and erasure. Is it possible to evade ghosts, to eliminate ghostliness, on land that is not only stolen, but desecrated? And should we try to? Can we just throw Native ghosts away without an investigation into what they have meant and continue to mean to our culture? Can we reckon with how and why they persist, instead of disappearing them completely, making ghosts of ghosts? In *Notes of a Native Son,* James Baldwin comments on a similar phenomenon with the cultural banishment of the racist anti-Black tropes of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Tom: "Before… our joy at the demise of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Tom approaches the indecent, we had better ask whence they sprang, how they lived? Into what limbo have they vanished?"[42]

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history of settler collecting practices

Since the beginning of European colonization efforts (which cannot be understood as singular events of first contact), material encounters created webs of meaning for all involved**.** According to Myers and Appadurai, objects travel through "regimes of value production," and exchange should be understood as having the "capacity to express identity and to produce hierarchy."[43] Moreover, "cultural objects externalize values and meanings embedded in social processes, making them available, visible, or negotiable for further action by subjects."[44]

[42] M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), 1.
[43] Arjun Appadurai,. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Myers, Fred R. *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2008).
[44] Daniel Miller. *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*. London: Routledge, 2003.

The history of collecting is inextricably linked to the history of colonialism. According to Belk, "the European discovery of the New World stimulated both early anthropology and Renaissance collecting habits, epitomized by highlighting exotic materials in *Wunderkammern* serving both ends."[45] During the sixteenth century, the *Wunderkarmmern*, the wonder cabinet or cabinet of curiosities, arose as a cultural motif for the elite as settlers scavenged for "marvels," something foreign, exotic, bizarre; a physical testament to their exploits around the world. The rise of collecting culture in the Americas was thus predicated from its inception on alterity. The stone axe or a string of wampum represented the perfect 'find,' especially if it was accompanied by a story of encounter or struggle with a Native person.

While the Wunderkarmmern eventually fell out of favor, its exhibitionary and exploitative qualities lingered in consumer culture. In 1754, Swedish botanist Carl Von Linne developed his famous taxonomy, which literally mapped and thus encoded "hierarchies of nature." Such classification and categorization practices accompanied the rise of the first American natural sciences museum in Philadelphia and New Haven.

The war of 1812 was perhaps the first time that America recognized itself as a member of the cult of ruling colonial powers: indeed, such empires all idealized a unified national culture in order to appear impenetrable by foriegn influence. It is in this period that American history became a careful and conscious construction. The development of extreme wealth during the industrial revolution supported "the gradual legitimization of hobbies: fewer work hours, greater alienation from work activities, and increased affluence" gained through exploits in the Americas

[45] Russell Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 10.

allowed consumer culture to flourish.[46] Though "it was not until after the American Civil war that a substantial number of Americans collected," Europe continued to experiment in commodity exchange and collection, epitomized by the first world's fair in 1851.[47] Within these "monuments to consumption," Europeans put living Native people on display as well as their purported "authentic" handicrafts/art: "starting with the 1878 Paris exposition, 'native villages' were included involving living exhibitions of the 'exotic' foreign people moved to live in them during the course of the fair."[48] Thus the literal exhibition of Native people reveals how Euro-American collecting always hyper fixated on the Other in order to build its own identity through conquest.

After the American civil war, the need to heal a broken nation through the bonds of a shared (fictitious) history became apparent and the country's centennial revived the practices of "relic rooms" that had been so popular in the earlier years of settlement. It was amidst such celebration that the first "curio shops" began to dot the cities of the Eastern seaboard.

The rise of the department store reified this "culture of display" and American consumer culture took off "as more and more Americans were being encouraged to identify themselves… not through independent accomplishments, but through the ownership of things."[49] Hutchinson goes on to cite Bennett at length:

> Bennett has argued that the cultural changes of the nineteenth century precipitated a broad 'exhibitionary' complex that influenced the design of 'history and natural science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national and later, international exhibitions, arcades and department

[46] Ibid., 55.
[47] Ibid.,, 48.
[48] Ibid.,, 13, and 14.
[49] Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*. (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 23.

> stores. Exhibitionary culture relies on the nineteenth century idea of putting the world on display as an expression of the desire to collect and organize knowledge.[50]

The collection, personal and institutional, remain "dependent upon principles of organization and categorization."[51] Elizabeth Hutchinson details how at the turn of the twentieth century, an "Indian craze" spread throughout dominant, elite American culture as Native American art and handicrafts proliferated the market. She writes, "the term [Indian craze] comes from articles on the widespread passion for collecting Native American art, often in dense, dazzling displays called 'Indian corners.'"[52] Moreover, "discussions of Native American art were used to help accommodate cultural changes in mainstream America, including increased immigration, rapid industrialization, and evolving concepts of subjectivity. Promoters of Native American art were supporters of what Jackson Lears has described as 'antimodernism' -- a cultural retreat from 'over civilized' urban industrial American and a turn to seemingly preindustrial cultures perceived as more physical, authentic, and direct."[53] Like this artistic and cultural retreat from rapid modernization in the twentieth century, antique stores today represent a distinct cultural "contact zone" in which Americans encounter and wrestle with their own 'modern' identities and situations, often through the appropriation and exploitation of someone deemed Other placed firmly in the past. Pratt describes cultural contact zones as spaces where "cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[54]

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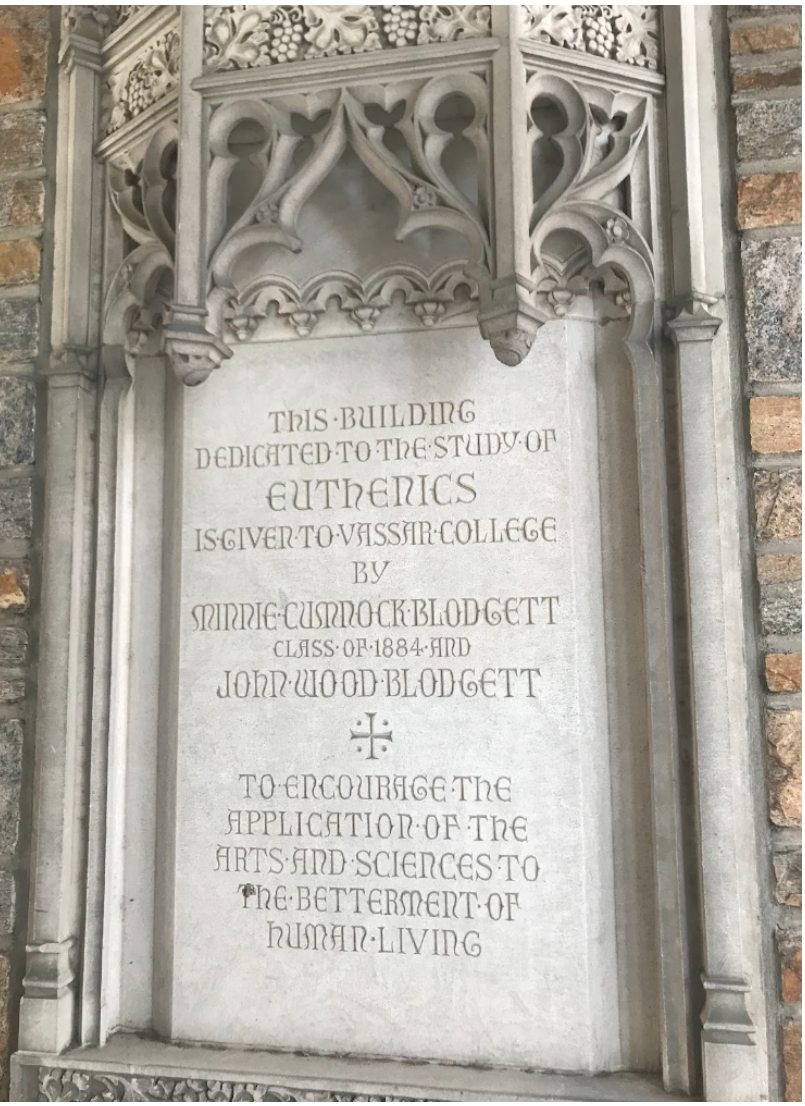
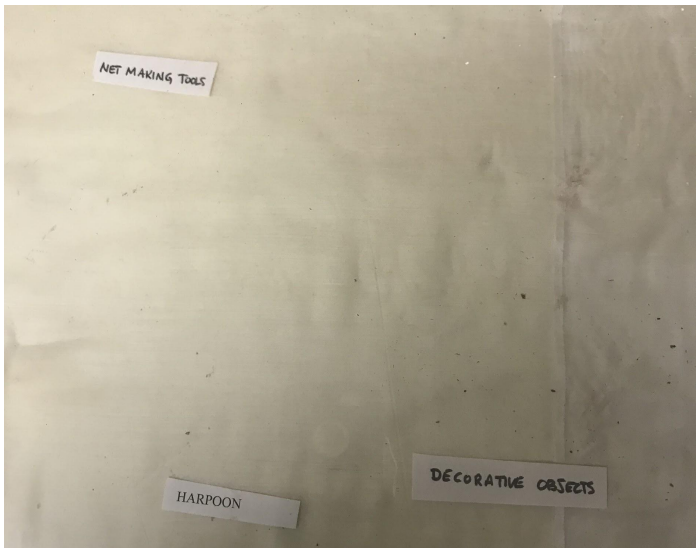
[50] Ibid., 36.
[51] Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 153.

[52]Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze,* 3.

[53] Ibid., 4.
[54] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," a keynote address delivered at the Modern Language Association in 1991.

During the Great Depression, the hobby arose as a category of "serious leisure" as unemployment reached record highs. Collecting allowed people to stay productive, offering "the promise not of eternal leisure but of eternal work."[55] Today, collecting and antiquing more generally allow Americans to connect to capitalism and commodification in ways that emphasize individuality and national mythology.





[55] Belk, Collecting in a Consumer Society, 55.

blodgett and colonial legacies at vassar

BEFORE WE GO, I expect to tiptoe around the basement of Blodgett. Leave no trace, touch no cabinets. Close the doors quietly behind us.

But once we are there something moves us from silence. In one abandoned office we find boxes of bedding; blankets and pillows. Hands slide over smooth cardboard, tape is flimsy. From countless rooms without windows we move towards the reason we are here. Is it heaviness I feel in my footsteps and between my ribs, or something else? Trashbags filled with unread mail, desk chairs stacked impossibly into one another.

From one side of the two way mirrors we clunk around around looking at old keyboards. A vintage pocketbook I would wear. A dog bowl. In a cement hallway, an extension cord plugged into an extension cord, charging nothing, looking cold.

The underbelly of the College is a maze of collected junk, clearly treated for years as an academic dumping ground. Here is where things are hidden, here is where Vassar hides. In a room in the corner we find a wooden cabinet emptied of all its drawers, except for one.

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In 2020, the "discovery" of Aleutian remains and burial objects stored in Blodgett Hall shocked much of the Vassar community and ignited multiple conversations on repatriation, Indigenous experiences, and the colonial history of this institution. "I am writing to inform you of a disturbing matter," wrote President Elizabeth Bradley in her campus-wide email. Not only does

Bradley's use of the word "disturbing" suggest a departure from "the values that underpin the College," it also connotes an unsettling emotional response.[56] While Bradley's writing and the administration's responses following stressed a sense of shock, deviation from institutional norms, and urgency, read through Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor," we can see how such discourse constitutes a settler move to innocence and a denial of Vassar's fundamental history as an institution.

In their abstract, Tuck and Yang write that "the metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or "settler moves to innocence," that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity." Moreover, "another component of a desire to play Indian is a settler desire to be made innocent, to find some mercy or relief in face of the relentlessness of settler guilt and haunting."[57] The current memorialization of Vassar's history, as President Bradley's email exemplifies, erases Native claims to this land and the violence that displaced them in an attempt to obscure Vassar's intentional histories of violence.

Not only was Matthew Vassar secretary of the Dutchess County Colonial Society, the Vassar family also inherited the first settler house in Poughkeepsie when Dutch settler Batlus Van Kleek's great-granddaughter married Vassar's brother. Vassar wrote in his diaries that "Indian relics [were] dug up on Main & Vassar streets." In his writing on Indigenous ghosts in Seattle, Coll Thrush explains that "the presence of the Indigenous dead, both in settler and Native minds and on the land, suggests that urban and Indigenous histories are not separate but

[56] "An Update from the President to Alumnae/i regarding NAGPRA Compliance" | Vassar College, accessed April 29, 2022, https://www.vassar.edu/president/community/2020/200118-nagpra-compliance.
[57] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" (2012), 9.

simultaneous."[58] Extending this analysis to Vassar, in the context of both Vassar and Bradley's immediate confrontations with Native "artifacts,"we can understand how denial of Vassar's colonial history is a denial of its entire history, a repression.

Is Blodgett Hall, and by extension Vassar, "haunted by ideologies of nationalism," as Sarah Schneider Kavanagh writes of Indian Hill Cemetery and Wesleyan in Middletown, Connecticut?[59] Is it too simplistic to say Vassar is haunted by its own history, its own violence, precisely because it has failed to reckon with its past? How do material encounters in the 21st century, like those in the 17/8/19th, both disrupt and facilitate reckoning with the lived realities and histories of settler colonialism?

Only discussing Matthew Vassar reduces Vassar's continued violence to its inception. It is necessary to recognize that over the course of the institution's history, white Vassar students and faculty have routinely and enthusiastically supported and maintained Native erasure. While there has also always been opposition and power is never totalizing, exhuming Native presence on this land represents an ongoing, interest and commitment on the part of the College. Such cultural and material excavation has provided the scaffolding that has allowed Vassar's structures to expand and it's students to live in ignorance of Indigenous genocide.

[58] Coll Thrush, "Hauntings as Histories: Indigenous Ghosts and the Urban Past in Seattle," eds. Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush, *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence,* 60.
[59] Schneider Kavanagh, "Haunting Remains," 153.

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A week after the email I walk past the professor's old office. She retired years ago, they said, and yet. Here are her national geographic clippings stuck to the door.

Here are the meetings, the explanations, here is the pain the pandemic consumed.

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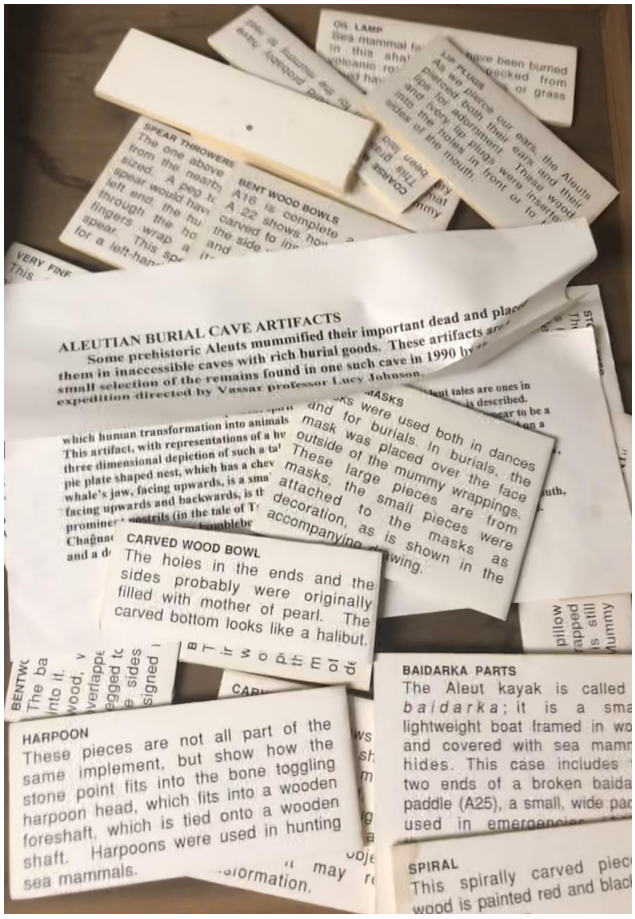
On top of a glass display case we empty the contents of the single drawer. Descriptions etched into fading pine, the clear accompaniments to the now absent objects. Lip plug. Harpoon. "As we pierce our ears, the Aleuts pierced both their ears and their lips…"

Amongst the clacking past tense, a single piece of paper. The wooden labels dense in my hands, the paper so thin it's barely there. I am stuck in something, stiff, stirred.

ALEUTIAN CAVE ARTIFACTS

Some prehistoric Aleuts mummified their important dead and placed them in inaccessible caves with rich burial goods. These artifacts are a small selection of the remains found in one such cave in 1990 by an expedition directed by Vassar professor Lucy Johnson.



collection as settler narrative of desire and becoming

Much of the appeal of antique stores comes from the fact that their contents seem to transcend rational use and historical time; through such mobilities, the act of collecting becomes a "narrative activity, a practice in which objects are signs for referents and require a narrator (collector or curator) to make meaning. Thus collections become sites of cultural memory and reproduction" at the same time that they confirm an individualist authority.[60] Collection

[60] Leah Dilworth, *Acts of Possession: Collecting in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 7.

engenders and reinforces subjectivities by abstracting objects from their former contexts or logics and firmly relocating them within a personal schema of classification.

Susan Stewart elaborates on the inherent hauntology within all narrative, personal or historical. She writes that narrative is "a structure of desire, a structure that both invents and distances its object and hereby inscribes again and again the gap between signifier and signified that is the place of generation for the symbolic."[61] Because white-American collecting practices are narratives that mediate the instability of meaning and materiality, collecting, like place-making, becomes a hauntological endeavor.

Through the acquisition of mobile objects in the antique store, "desire is ordered, arranged, and manipulated."[62] Herrmann writes, "personal possessions can index our identities over time." She elaborates, "possessions create a tangible residue of past, present, and possibly anticipate future development. A special possession, therefore, could facilitate self-continuity by connecting a person with a desirable past self (e.g. memories, a present self (me now), or a future self (who I am becoming))."[63] Though the affective 'residue' of a possession can be transformative personally over time, Sara Ahmed underscores that "affect is also 'contagious'" and material exchange is one arena in which affective orientations are shared.[64] Antique stores and "garage sales foreground human emotions and affective orientations, and they highlight personal histories as marked through the possessions for sale."[65] While personal histories are less obvious or accessible in antique stores than garage sales, **t**he objects in both are able to

[61] Stewart, *On Longing,* ix.
[62] Ibid., 163.
[63] Gretchen Herrmann, "Valuing Affect: the Centrality of Emotion, Memory, and Identity in Garage Sale Exchange" (Anthropology of Consciousness 2015), 172.
[64] Ibid., 173
[65] Ibid., 170

communicate affect through the "capacity of narrative to generate significant objects" and thus some kind of collection, the "nexus for all narratives, the place where history is transformed into space, into property."[66]

Ahmed writes in "Happy Objects" that "we move toward and away from objects through how we are affected by them."[67] Collecting thus opens the door to an affective exchange in which 'worth' is determined by "some value that cannot be reduced to economics" but instead always negotiated through the subjectivities of collectors.[68] In other words, antique stores are affective atmospheres where "the past is at the service of the [intersubjective] collection."[69] Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg write of the contact zones of affect: "Affect arises in the midst of in-betweenness… Affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body… in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves.[70]"

The emotional, immutable resonances that travel from body to body can be found in the polite smiles and quiet chit-chat that mark the experience of antiquing. Fellow antiquers might be attracted to the same object, or repulsed, and in that moment share a bond beyond words. Busiest on lazy weekend afternoons, these spaces provide consumers with an alternative to impersonal trips to sterile shopping malls. Gretchen Herrmann's work on garage sales is useful for thinking through antique stores because both venues market object abstraction and identification. She

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[66] Stewart, *On Longing,* xi.
[67] Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects" in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, 172.
[68] Fred Myers, *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2008), 12.
[69] Stewart, *On Longing,* 143.
[70] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

writes, "in contrast to the fungible, antiseptic commodities entombed in layers of plastic from contemporary stores, affectively charged garage sale goods can be alive with feeling and history."[71] Like garage sales, antique stores are filled with 'sticky' objects, objects "overlaid by affect and a transmitted orientation" toward them.[72]

Today, the turn from fluorescent lighting and linoleum lined floors toward dusty shelves and dark corners represents a shifting interest from mass reproduced consumptive practices toward individualized identification with objects. In the age of globalization, the American antique store purportedly offers a return to an "authentic" American culture, passed down from generation to generation in the form of heirlooms and quixotic knickknacks. In *Acts of Possession,* Leah Dilworth writes that

> The current popular interest in collecting… probably reflects millennial anxieties about both capitalist consumer culture and the authorities of institutions like museums and universities… the idea that eventually all goods, no matter how mundane, will become valuable and collectible seems to make consumerism more meaningful; we are all not simply consumers but potential collectors.[73]

Such interest in collecting at this juncture in history relates deeply to historical collecting practices and their formulations of temporal and physical space. A chair for a small child with the name "Olivia" painted in cursive across the back, or a corded phone, or a figurine of a Native American warrior, all allude to different futures once thought possible. Put simply, objects in antique stores are haunted by nostalgia, both for imagined times past and for a once-possible futures. In his introduction to *The Hauntology of Everyday Life,* Sadeq Rahimi explains how hauntings fold past and future into the present:

> It merits great emphasis that haunting is not simply brought about by the loss of an object of desire, real or imagined. Haunting is about a nullified possible future that a bygone existence (be

[71] Herrmann, "Valuing Affect," 170
[72] Ibid., 172
[73] D*ilworth, Acts of Possession, 3.*

> it the self or an other) was experienced to promise. What haunts is not that which is gone, it is that which was expected to come but whose condition of arrival has been foreclosed, and the ghost is an advocate of the promised future that was unrightfully canceled when the past was destroyed.[74]

Hauntings, like antiques, always invoke our perceptions of temporality. Do objects get passed down as cherished belongings through the teleological progression of time, or are antiques nothing more than random detritus from times past? Or does something else entirely happen?

[74] Rahimi, *The Hauntology of Everyday Life,* 6.

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