
Repo Culture

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In July 1995, artist Peter de Seve commented on Manhattan's unbearably hot summer weather by visually parodying, in *The New Yorker's* cover image entitled *The Treasure*, the contingent nature of desire. De Seve depicted a young couple, enchanted by a snowdome offering at least an imagined relief from the city's heat. They ignore in this cluttered second-hand shop objects immediately apprehended by the reader for their uniqueness: artworks by da Vinci, van Gogh, and Picasso; religious relics, such as the Shroud of Turin and the Holy Grail; precious stones, such as the Hope Diamond, and historical documents such as the United States Constitution. Comparable to these coveted artifacts and rarities are commercially produced — but no less unique — icons of popular culture: Charles Foster Kane's "Rosebud" sled immortalized in Orson Welles's film epic, or little Dorothy's red slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*. Even singular objects of myth and folklore and fantasy such as a unicorn horn, a jar of hen's teeth, photographs of the Loch Ness Monster and wide-eyed extraterrestrials, and a stone tablet of Commandments Eleven through Fifteen appeal because they are, for the credulous, coveted. In this image, desire itself is constructed within an evanescent consumer moment used to imagine a different, cooler season or to evoke a lost sense of one's childhood.¹

This *New Yorker* cover offers the presumed urbane reader the image of the archetypal shop of second-hand goods. Even if you've not seen this particular image, you may easily conjure this quintessential space. Whether the contents are termed *junk*, *second-hand*, *thrift*, *used*, *collectible*, *vintage* or even *antique*, these business concerns are popularly imagined like a Dickensian Olde Curiosity Shoppe: housed in old, perhaps delapidated buildings, often figured as dark, its goods disordered and dusty, its shop hours erratic and the shop proprietor likely eccentric. Second-hand shops so conceived constitute attic-like spaces in which the visitor may potentially satisfy a specific yen with an unexpected discovery, or simply marvel at the exotic or unfamiliar while passing the time.

This sense of individual discovery of the unique or the lost helps to maintain the curiosity shop image within American popular culture. The personal agency at the heart of such discovery also currently fuels a thriving economy of second-hand goods in the United States. Scouring flea markets, garage and yard sales, and antiques malls for "treasures" of all sorts, shapes, sizes, and statuses has become in the last decade the "chic" activity, worthy of Manhattanites, suburbanites and "exurb-ites" alike. "Smart shopping," according to one newspaper writer, requires not only a strategy but belief: "You have to 'believe' that amid all the junk lies a gem." Another reporter described the "antiques hunt" as "a heady, almost intoxicating experience." Martha Stewart, that doyenne of domesticity and disciple of thrift, describes flea markets as an experience "welcome and wonderful...filled with tables, each one laden with treasures waiting to be discovered."²

The quest for treasure, however, has never been easier in the United States. The treasure map where "X" marks the spot is quickly being redrawn and enlarged. And there are more "X"s on the map than ever before. Over 10 000 antiques malls now dot the national landscape, many constructed within the last twenty years, competing and/or collaborating with 350 000 antique dealers and 7 000 antique shows held annually. These enterprises possess their own recently formed professional organizations (Antiques and Collectibles Dealer Association; National Association of Antique Malls; National Association of Collectors; Antique and Collectibles Show Promoters Association, all headquartered in Huntersville, North Carolina) and trade journals (such as the newly founded *The World of Antique Malls*). Flea markets number anywhere between 2 500 and 5 000 nationally, with between one hundred million to one billion annual visitors (sources differ). The National Flea Market Association, founded in 1997 as a not-for-profit organization "committed to free enterprise," publishes *Today's Flea Market* and has enlisted Tammy Faye Bakker Messner as a spokeswoman.

Surely the curiosity shop, the flea market, and the quaint, out-of-the-way country antiques shop have become an industry — estimates place 70 million antique collectors worldwide, spending \$25 billion annually on their “discoveries.” And this does not even begin to take on the enormity of Internet auction sites such as eBay.³

Certainly the enormity of this commerce in second-hand material culture demands study. If one defines *popular culture* as those social practices and artifacts that do not adhere to a canonized set of aesthetic criteria and operate within the realm of commerce, the daily jostle of goods, prices, and people evident at a flea market (or, to a lesser degree, an antique mall) surely warrants its study as popular culture. In this sense, popular culture is distinctive from “official culture” (to borrow from cultural studies). Traditionally, popular culture has often been celebrated as “the people’s culture.” As Ray Browne defines it, “popular culture is the everyday culture of a group, large or small, of people. In the United States democracy, popular culture is the voice of the people — their practices, likes and dislikes — the lifeblood of their daily existence.” Whether local, regional, or national, those cultural forms or customs that relate directly to lived experience constitute popular culture.⁴

Imbedded within the study of popular culture are the ideological positions of this scholar and that. Many on the left consider popular culture inherently conservative, a form of false consciousness, a means by which people are led to support their own repression within capitalism. Other left-leaning intellectuals find in popular culture the possibilities and practices of subversion, in that such practices question implicitly those persons and institutions of power. Conservatives, on the other hand, see within popular culture an Arnoldian anarchy; the very indeterminacy of genres and practices are detrimental to the stability of “Culture-with-a-capital-C.” And contemporary culture offers yet another dissolution of boundaries. As John Urry observes in *The Tourist Gaze*,

*Postmodernism involves a dissolving of the boundaries, not only between high and low cultures, but also between different cultural forms, such as tourism, art, education, photography, television, music, sport, shopping, and architecture.*⁵

Whatever one’s politics, the contemporary demotic practices of what I am calling “repo culture” constitute a form of popular culture. Upscale Yuppies hire interior designers to scour flea markets to find that “distressed” table or chair that can be

made over. Un- or underemployed and retired individuals set up stalls at flea markets to gain or supplement incomes. Working- and middle-class consumers spend weekends or summer vacations exploring the cast-off junk of one individual to find a desired treasure to add to a collection, replace a cherished possession now lost or broken, aspire to the “shabby chic” of elites, or become pickers and dealers themselves. Whatever the purpose, these Americans are in the profession of repossession — of things, of feelings, of ideas.

This research report (or, perhaps more accurately stated, rumination) is a preliminary attempt to grapple with the meaning(s) of this second-hand economy in general and of second-hand goods for participants within this culture. “Repo” here is short for *repossession*, and I borrow it from the 1984 cult classic film, *Repo Man*, in which car repossession is more a mystical calling than a dirty job, and its practitioners transcendentalists rather than loathsome grubbers. In the film, a repo man takes back cars to remind car owners of the transitory nature of possessing things. *Repo Man* is about the circulation of things and of souls; the film explores the ephemeral, and ultimately false nature of *property*.

Indeed, scholars have not paid consistent attention to the implications for the latent meaning of objects as possessions or property, legally and historically construed. That is to say, we assume claims to status through specific possessions in a time and place, or through the values assessed to items in a probate inventory to reckon class. Or we divine affective or economic purposes in the dispensation of the deceased’s possessions through a will. But *possession* itself is not always the same as *property*, nor is it necessarily a permanent condition, nor is it only a legal right. Women and children, for example, may not have been considered legally to “hold” certain goods in the eighteenth and a good part of the nineteenth century, but surely these groups made claims to things that were recognized in their communities. *Possession* may also be a temporary state or relationship with what English jurist William Blackstone called “the external things of the world.” And when he argued that the foundations of property were man-made, Blackstone himself recognized that the only property of possession was evanescence.

We think it enough that our title is derived by the grant of the former proprietor, by descent of our ancestors, or by the last will and testament of the dying owner; not caring to reflect that (accurately and strictly speaking) there is no foundation in

*nature, or in natural law, why a set of words upon parchment should convey the dominion of land; why the son should have a right to exclude his fellow creatures from a determinant spot of ground, because his father had done so, before him; or why the occupier of a particular field, or of a jewel, when lying on his death-bed and no longer able to maintain possession, should be entitled to tell the rest of the world which of them should enjoy it after him.*⁶

I have begun to explore “repo culture” in two areas undergoing economic renaissance, itself a clue to the phenomenon: the Rust Belt of Northeastern Ohio and the Route 127 Corridor

between Covington, Kentucky, and Gadsden, Alabama. In the Cleveland-Akron-Youngstown axis over the last ten years, antique malls have been erected near major interstate highway exits, and economically struggling towns have created downtown “quaintscapes” of antique and collectibles shops and tea rooms to attract visitors and business.⁷ (Such “quaintscapes” incorporate two histories: the region’s beginnings as the Connecticut Western Reserve, and its industrial heritage, from the canal era of the 1830s and 40s to the characteristic steel and manufacturing industries before the Second World War; see Figs. 1, 2, and 3.) The Midwest alone is home to nearly 2 350 multi-dealer antiques malls, and Ohio,

Fig. 1

The AAA I-76 Antique Mall, located at Exit 33 near Ravenna, Ohio, is one example of the number of antique malls established in the 1990s along interstate highways throughout the United States Midwest. The business sign pictured here is only viewable from the interstate. (October 2000)



Fig. 2

This small sign, located at the exit of the parking lot of the AAA I-76 Antique Mall and positioned at drivers' and passengers' eye level, directs shoppers to continue on to Ravenna's Main Street. (October 2000)





Fig. 3
 This late-nineteenth-century commercial block located on Ravenna's Main Street houses antique shops — and empty storefronts. To attract patronage, Ravenna, the Portage County seat, invested in “quaintscape” amenities, such as lampposts, banners, and flower baskets. (October 2000)



Fig. 4
 The Route 127 Yard Sale in Kentucky, Tennessee, and a small part of Alabama, appeals by its appearance as a neighbourly activity. In actuality, many vendors travel from all parts of the United States to set up temporary stands, often in fields or yards rented out for the annual event. (August 2000)

along with New York State and Pennsylvania, are the nation's top collectible markets, according to QAS Systems, an Iowa computer software firm that provides software specifically to antique malls.⁸

The Route 127 Yard Sale, begun in 1986, has increasingly attracted national attention via collectors' magazines and national news broadcasts. Fentress County, Tennessee, executive Mike Walker, now an attorney in private practice, offered free media exposure to artists, crafters, and antiques dealers if they would set up stands at the side of the road to lure vacationers from the interstate highways. Now extending some 450 miles through Kentucky, Tennessee, and a wee

bit of Alabama, this “World's Longest Yard Sale,” occurring annually the third weekend of August, attracts over 3 500 vendors and some 40 000 visitors from across the United States (Fig. 4).⁹ Traffic jams notwithstanding, vendors do a booming business. One antiques mall owner told me that during the Yard Sale of 1999, his small business “took in” \$38 000. He opened at 5 a.m. on each day and closed at 9 p.m. every night (instead of the normal closing hour of 5 p.m.) to accommodate the rush of customers. Exhausted, his partner and he quickly opted to sleep in a camper behind the building rather than return home every evening.¹⁰

Fig. 5

Route 127 Yard Sale dealers, whether amateur or professional, display their cleaned second-hand goods according to size, genre, colour, or style. Price tags often adorn the sale items, but here act as a starting point for negotiation. (18 August 2000)



For many, though, according to the family members who own Brothers Antique Mall in Montville, Ohio, it's not a business, "it's a calling."¹¹ Indeed, a cursory review of newspaper articles about this "craze" reveals a basic assumption that participants in the second-hand economy are collectors, and not just casual shoppers.¹² At the Memphis Drive-In market, interviewees reported they collected "kids' toy badges," political items, antique shoe-button hooks, old spoons, dippers, antique kitchen tools, gold watches, cookware (especially Fire-King and Fiesta), vintage clothing, and Roseville pottery.¹³

One Cleveland collector, asked about his penchant for acquiring pre-1964 skateboards, feared the publication of a price list.¹⁴ These lists drive up prices by implying and rationalizing an emerging market. As much as dealers would gain by such increased knowledge and desire, a price list potentially destroys the sense of discovery upon which some repo men and women thrive. That is to say, many participants like to find something that hasn't yet achieved a market value and is, comparatively, cheap to collect: the thrill of discovery is tied intimately to one's pocketbook and his or her sense of value of the object. Paradoxically, such an attitude fosters the sense of community that dealers and collectors assert, defined through the shared ability to find desired items and "deals" and to control more readily value through bargaining and bartering. Moreover,

some individuals withhold goods from, or increase asking prices of certain prospective buyers, feeling that these persons haven't the right "attitude" or "commitment." What is being dealt here are social relations, built on a balance of authority (via knowledge) and trust. Still, many individuals rely on price guides to assess the monetary value of their collections, and antiques malls often provide bookstands with such guides for sale.

Participants in the second-hand culture of temporary flea markets and of bustling antiques malls often characterize themselves as collectors and dealers and not consumers, even as the goods they now collect were, overwhelmingly, mass produced and are, increasingly, displayed as department store goods are, by use, colour, size, or shape¹⁵ (Fig. 5). Collecting connotes active engagement; consumption, quite the reverse is feminized as passive. Within the Rust Belt, where industrial culture has been "museumized" through the establishment of new institutions by state and regional historical societies, the mass-produced artifacts of one's childhood or first home still available to collectors may serve as a means to hold onto one's past as other authorities (call it "official culture") seek to create a historical narrative with artifacts of work that elides issues of individual self-sufficiency for identity based in industrial labour. For example, the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor (created by the Ohio Historical Society) tells the story of larger movements of



Fig. 6
The empty spaces of the Hartville and Byler flea markets in Hartville, Ohio, evoke the liminality of repo culture. (October 2000)

union labor and management and corporate power, only nodding to workers' domestic and leisure lives. Taking advantage of the economic renaissance of Cleveland, the Western Reserve Historical Society is creating the Crawford Museum of Transportation and Industry, which celebrates primarily machines, and incidentally the men and women who created them.¹⁶

On the other hand, Americans are resilient if not always resistant, and in these museums visitors may find their own meanings in the artifacts and activities proffered. Historians have recently turned their attention to the ways in which Americans seek and use their past(s). Under the leadership of David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig, historians and students surveyed Americans about their own "history making." *In the Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (1998), these historians sought to locate a "people's history" amongst various practices, from reading books and taking classes, to viewing television shows and documentaries, to visiting museums and historical sites. What these historians were amazed to discover is that Americans invested more trust in museums and historic sites (no surprise to material culture scholars, though).

Survey participants saw museums as collaborative in nature. They offered an immediacy with artifacts that translated to intimacy and authenticity. Most important, museums and historic sites offered visitors a space in which, through their own agency, their identities and narratives could be enacted. These characteristics apply equally to the repo culture of flea markets and antique malls, and beg for a

consideration not only of Americans' uses of the past beyond the marketplace, but within it.¹⁷

Indeed, the proprietors of flea markets and antiques malls see themselves as independent entrepreneurs preserving, in the words of the Executive Director of the National Flea Market Association, the "Free Enterprise System" and protecting "an American Way of Life," by fostering opportunities for "a person to start a business without a large layout of capital and long term commitments."¹⁸ Flea markets, traceable in part to market-day activities in the nineteenth century, and not necessarily restricted to used merchandise, have been enlarged or instituted on the vacated premises of drive-in theatres, empty factory buildings and warehouses, and bankrupt department stores.¹⁹ The Hartville, Ohio, flea market had its origins in 1939 as a livestock auction. Now the weekly event, still owned and operated by the same family, attracts over one million visitors annually, averaging 25 000 visitors every Labour Day weekend. Byler's Flea Market is located next door, and the Hartville Kitchen serves some 3 500 meals on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor day weekends (Figs. 6 and 7).²⁰ In the Cleveland suburb of Brooklyn, the Memphis Drive-In began hosting a flea market in the early 1970s. Open on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, the drive-in offers new and used goods and farm produce. The market's manager, Don Evans, asserts that the Memphis is "a true 'flea market' in the sense that there is little management control over the types of items sold. We prohibit the sale of explosives, ammunition, flammables, alcoholic beverages and obscene materials. Other than that, anything goes."²¹

Fig. 7

The Hartville Kitchen, serving up to 3 500 meals during holiday weekends, still does a brisk business on non-flea market days. (October 2000)



With such a complicated project and at this early stage of the research, my findings thus far are tentative. And larger questions lurk about this project. For example, what do we mean when we term something *second-hand*? And how does that second-hand economy work within a larger national economy, the robustness of which is based on production of new goods? When goods are termed second-hand, we traditionally assume they are inferior. As Arthur H. Fox in his 1957 essay, "A Theory of Second-Hand Markets," observed, however, "In the eyes of the law the term second-hand may apply as well to a Gainsborough as a garden roller, or even a herd of goats." Dismissing consideration of the "related fields of the art, antiques, valuables and property markets," Fox preferred to analyse the "everyday usage" of the term to theorize a relationship between "first-hand" and "second-hand" goods: "Second-hand goods are inferior goods. Having once been bought new, durable goods are normally subject to physical use which results in a perceptible process of deterioration and in the end wears them out. It follows therefore that the continued availability of used goods in the second-hand market requires a continuing stream of new production feeding the market at the top."²²

Fox's economic definition, by dismissing alternative categories of valuation (including signs of usage or patina that, for some, add interest, style, and value), dismisses to a degree the "repo culture" I wish to examine. Like many economists, Fox was more concerned with first-hand markets, in which productive activities could be measured and analysed in terms of

output, income, and employment (among other factors). As Tibor Scitovsky observes, "the sale of a second-hand good by its previous owner made no direct impact on productive activities," the primary focus of economists' studies.²³

Owners and dealers of antique malls and flea markets, however, consider their activities as an important contribution to free enterprise, a point Scitovsky also makes when he writes that second-hand markets "stimulate the economy, partly by enabling the well-to-do the sooner to replace their worn out or obsolescing durable goods with new ones and thereby increasing the total demand for them, partly by generating employment and income for the middlemen who run the second-hand market."²⁴ Such economic stimulation may cause economic dislocation. Valley View Antique Mall, once Valley View Department Store located in rural Brookfield, Ohio, opened with the same owners who could no longer compete with national retail giants such as Kmart and Wal-Mart. They re-opened in March 1996 with 75 dealers. By the end of the year the 173,000-square-foot [16 100-square-metre] space housed 300 dealers, who themselves would rather spend their time acquiring goods rather than disposing of them, all the while spending less in overhead costs by sharing rental space and relying on the mall's small sales staff.²⁵ (One must quickly note, however, that new antique malls are more often built along interstates, and are actually chains.²⁶)

Second, what do we mean by second-hand *material culture* rather than a second-hand *market*? The anthropologists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, in their oft-cited *The World of Goods*,

asserted that “goods are good for thinking.” But as Jay Mechling astutely pointed out in 1989, goods are also “good for feeling.”²⁷ Visitors and dealers agree that the lure of the second-hand is based within nostalgia, or a curiosity, or some sentimental affection for a genre of collectibles. Dan Barnett, of Barnett Antiques in Jamestown, Kentucky, traces his start in business on the back porch of his childhood house, where he found his late mother’s Flow Blue china. He collected to “fill in” the missing pieces, and found others who were participating in the same endeavor.²⁸ Mr June Hubbard, a retired owner of Hubbard’s Restaurant in Kentucky, took down from a shelf an old Dripolator coffeepot when he explained to me why he had some four hundred coffeepots housed in a small outbuilding on his property along Route 127. The coffeepot he held was but a slightly larger version of the coffeepot with which he poured his first cup of coffee when he opened his own restaurant after years of cooking in a nearby state park restaurant.²⁹ Others tell similar stories of repossessing lost or arresting potentially transitory meanings through the collection of objects specific to a turning point in their lives — points at which these individuals realized new responsibilities.³⁰

Third, scholars of material culture have overwhelmingly concerned themselves with issues of identity and status reified in new goods, in the acquisition or the circumstances of their acquisition. As sociologist Rob Shields points out in his *Lifestyle Shopping*,

...a serious engagement with consumption must be open to discovering that lifestyles and consumption cultures are not “confusions over class, regional, generational and gender identities” but the emergence of new “identifications.” There is a need, therefore, to treat consumption as an active, committed production of self and of society which, rather than assimilating individuals to styles, appropriates codes and fashions, which are made into one’s own.³¹

Such appropriations may be apprehended perhaps in the changing definitions of *antique* and *collectible*. If *antique* is legally defined as an object of 100 years and counting, the current collecting craze has added conditions: “contemporary antiques” are 60 to 100 years old, and the “exceptional modern collectibles” are in constant flux, according to the owner of a Parkman, Ohio, mall.³² So, too, are decorating trends, accounting for a large portion of second-hand shopping.

The current trend of “shabby chic” for baby boomers, for example, a style created with “comfortable furniture with washable slipcovers, crystal chandeliers, and flea-market finds” perhaps has more to do with the memories of 1960s counterculture and 1970s recycling campaigns as well as a veiled higher status claim. In the words of one reporter, one “achieves” shabby chic.³³

Thus an investigation of “repo culture” may shed light on assumptions currently held in American material culture studies. Costume historians have considered the “making-over” of garments, historians of the Colonial Revival and of collecting have explored the cultural meanings and political purposes of the old and the antique, and scholars such as Katherine Grier and Susan Strasser have explored the political and moral economies of “making do” and recycling.³⁴ In so doing, these individuals have shed light on the relationship of first-hand and second-hand goods and their meanings, but in the main material culture practitioners have focused their attention on firsthand meanings, on new things coming through the upper- or middle-class house’s front door.

Last, the reconfiguration of the American built environment — urban and rural — may also be fruitfully re-examined. Temporary flea markets, new corrugated steel buildings, old factories and re-adapted department stores housing antiques emporia demand that we consider how such liminal spaces — in open fields, along interstates, in downscale urban areas and vacated suburban retail strips — are expressing social needs and demarcating new economic loci. These commercial spaces are also leisure spaces, competing with malls and galleries and bourses, and with museums and historical societies. Yet these spaces require and legitimate different behaviors — touching and inspecting objects, bargaining and bartering over value and worth, creating new social relations at the edges of towns, along highways, in vacant lots.³⁵

Repo culture requires that the individual often be simultaneously buyer and dealer, consumer and collector, but always a producer — a *dealer* — of meaning. The multiplicity and complexity of roles, the agency of role players, and the urgency of their collecting zeal are perhaps succinctly captured in the title of a 1997 book by “trash-to-treasure” guru Mary Randolph Carter: *American Junk: How to Hunt For, Haggle Over, Rescue, and Transform America’s Forgotten Treasures*.³⁶

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NOTES

1. Peter de Seve, *The Treasure*, cover image for *The New Yorker*, 17 July 1995.
2. Annette John-Hall, "Smart Shopping: Find Gems in the Junk: Yard Sales, Flea Markets and Auctions Require a Strategy and a 'Thrill of the Hunt'," *Knight-Ridder News Services*, appearing in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 9 September 1997, *Tempo*, D-1. Chris Casson Madden, "Questions to Ask Yourself Before the Antiques Hunt," *The Plain Dealer* [Cleveland], 20 April 1996, *Your Home*, 9. Martha Stewart, "Make the Most of Flea-Market Shopping," *Dayton Daily News*, 17 July 1997, *Homelife*, 6.
See also Judy Buchenot, "Today's Lifestyle: Past Perfect, Hidden Treasures," Copley News Service, 22 March 1999. For flea-market shopping as a disease or an addiction, see Barbara Hertenstein (*St Louis Post-Dispatch*), "Hunting for Bargains: Flea Markets Have Become an Addiction for Some," *The Plain Dealer*, 5 July 1998, *Homes*, 6F. These characterizations follow those examined in Werner L. Muensterberger's often-cited *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
3. The number of antique malls, dealers, and shows are offered in D. L. Stewart, "Junking Up Definition of 'Antique,'" *Dayton Daily News*, 31 March 2000, *Life*, 1-C, and Charles E. Ramirez, "Antique Shoppers Making Deals Online," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 21 March 2000, *Financial*, 30. On the national associations, see www.antiqueandcollectible.com. The disparity in the estimated numbers of flea markets is evident in Jerry Stokes, "A Flea Market By Any Other Name is a Flea Market," at www.fleamarkets.org/history.htm, and Michael D. Clark, "Everything but Fleas: Shoppers Find a World Unlike Regular Stores," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 14 October 1999, *Metro*, B-1. On the National Flea Market Association, see www.fleamarkets.org; Tammy Faye Messner as spokeswoman discussed in Susan Vela, "Eyes Have It: Tammy Faye a Draw; Flea Market Visit Lures Fans, Curious," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 30 April 2000, *Metro*, B-1.
4. Ray Browne, "Internationalizing Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 30 (1996): 23. The literature of popular culture studies, both on United States culture and beyond, is enormous, and I've likely done an injustice in my brief characterization. Studies I have found useful include John Fiske, *Reading Popular Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Herbert Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Russel Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970); Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steve Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990). Two early readers in cultural studies were also helpful: Simon During, *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), and Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1991). I have increasingly turned to work in consumer culture and consumption: Juliet Schor and Douglas B. Holt, eds., *The Consumer Society Reader* (New York: New Press, 2000), and Martyn J. Lee, *The Consumer Society Reader* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).
5. See note 4. John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 82.
6. Paul Finkelman and David Cobin, introduction to *Blackstone's Commentaries: with notes of reference to the constitution and laws, of the federal government of the United States and of the Commonwealth of Virginia: in five volumes, with an appendix to each volume, containing short tracts upon such subjects as appeared necessary to form a connected view of the laws of Virginia as a member of the federal union*. By St George Tucker. Book II [of four books]: *Of the Rights of Things*, chap. 1, "On the Nature of Property," p. 1 (Union, N.J.: The Lawbook Exchange Ltd, 1996; originally published Philadelphia: William Young Birch, Abraham Small, 1803). Available at www.constitution.org/tb/tb3.htm.
7. Of particular interest are the Medina and AAA I-76 antique malls, located in the Akron area. One of the first antiques malls in the region, the Medina mall, located near Interstate 71, draws about 40 000 people a week to its 450-dealer displays housed in a 52 000-square-foot former Finast supermarket. It has become a model for successful managed malls: Thomas W. Gerdel, "Collecting Shoppers: With a Growing Market for Antiques and Collectibles,

Places Like the Medina Antique Mall Spring Up, Offering a New Way to find that Perfect Something," *The Plain Dealer*, 21 December 1997, *Business*, 1-6; Karen Sandstrom, "Antiquing Yields to Modern Ways: Shops that Once Would Have Snubbed Collectibles Now Offer Them for Sale," *The Plain Dealer*, 9 August 1998, *Homes*, 1-F.

The AAA I-76 concern was built in 1997, several years after the nearby Portage County seat of Ravenna began advertising its small downtown as an "antiques row" with which to attract — unsuccessfully, as it turns out — travellers.

8. Lisa Biank Fasig, "Something New In Some Things Old: Antiques Mall Opens," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 27 May 1999, *Financial*, B-20.
9. Robert Kyle, "On the Trail of the 'World's Longest Yard Sale'," *Maine Antique Digest*, October 1997, reproduced at www.maineantiquedigest.com/articles/yard1097.htm. The "official" Web site is located at www.jamestowntn.org/worlds.htm.
10. Interview with author, Dan Barnett, Jamestown, Ky., 18 August 2000.
11. Karen Sandstrom, "Antiques Get Second Chance at Brothers; Medina Mall Sells, Restores Pieces of Past," *The Plain Dealer*, 4 November 1994, *Friday*, 3.
12. I've collected and reviewed over eighty pertinent articles in newspapers in the major cities of Ohio (Cleveland, Akron, Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati) available through the Lexis-Nexis database, and I am in the process of collecting relevant articles in *The [Youngstown] Vindicator* and *Warren Tribune-Chronicle*. A clear increase in the number of articles dedicated to the topic is in evidence by 1994, but especially after 1997. A representative article equating second-hand shopping with collectors include John-Hall, "Smart Shopping" (appearing in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*), in which the collecting gurus Terry and Ralph Kovel, of Cleveland, Ohio, discuss the "social phenomenon" of collecting since the 1970s.
13. Lisa Palazzo, "Bargain Hunters Find Good Deals Now Laying at a Drive-In Near You," *The Plain Dealer*, 30 May 1999, *Living*, 1-K.
14. J. Peter Wentz, e-mail to author, 7 February 2000. This individual actively maintains approximately twenty active collections.
15. For an overview of collecting and its relation to consumption, consult Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), esp. chap. 5, "Collecting in a Consumer Society: A Critical Analysis."
16. I refer the reader to these institutions' respective Web sites: The Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor (www.ohiohistory.org/youngst) and The Crawford Museum of Transportation and Industry, still in its planning stages but called "a new way of experiencing motion, machines and museums" (www.wrhs.org/cmth/htm).
17. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
18. Stokes, "A Flea Market By Any Other Name." See also Tom Hopkins, "Flea Markets: Low Overhead, High Volume Make these Venues Ideal for Mom-and-Pop Entrepreneurs and Shoppers," *Dayton Daily News*, 15 February 1997, *Lifestyle*, 1-C.
19. See, for example, Jenny Callison, "If Shoe Fits, Fill It With Antiques: 1912 Building Gets a Makeover," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 22 April 1998, *Metro*, B-3. Not all proposed flea markets and antiques malls have been successfully constructed. City planners in Fairfield, Ohio, fought to control flea markets from "popping up" in parking lots of shut-down stores along busy retail strips: Maria Berninger, "Fairfield May Limit Flea Market Sites and Sights in City," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 29 January 1998, *Metro*, B-6. See also Natalie McNeal, "Clay Twp. Rejects Flea Market Proposal," *Dayton Daily News*, 16 August 1995, *Neighbors*, Z3-1.
20. Shane Hoover, "Wheeling and Dealing in Hartville," *Daily Kent Stater*, 4 September 2000; Debbi Snook, "Going to Market in Hartville: Folksy Town a Hub of Commerce Just As It Was in Farm Wagon Days," *The Plain Dealer*, 3 July 1998, *Living*, 1-E.
21. Palazzo, "Bargain Hunters Find Good Deals."
22. Arthur H. Fox, "A Theory of Second-hand Markets," *Economica* n.s. 24 (May 1957): 99-115; quotations at 99.
23. Tibor Scitovsky, "Towards a Theory of Second-hand Markets," *Kyklos* 47 (1994): 33-52; quotations at 35.
24. *Ibid.*, 37.
25. Karen Sandstrom, "Mall Has Everything From Soup to Nuts; They've Even Got your Goat...Mounted, With Horns and Forelegs," *The Plain Dealer*, 27 December 1996, 20.
26. Lisa Biank Fasig, "Industry Notes: Retail — Antiques 'Megamall' Opens Soon," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 22 May 1999, *Financial*, B-5; Randy McNutt, "National Chain Plans To Open Antiques Mall in Tricounty Area," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 11 March 1999, *Metro*, B-1.
27. Mary Douglas with Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 62; Jay Mechling, "The Collecting Self and American Youth Movements," in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 255-85.
28. Interview with author, Dan Barnett, 18 August 2000, Jamestown, Ky.
29. Interview with author, June Hubbard, 19 August 2000, Jamestown, Ky.
30. See, for example, John Seewer (Associated Press), "Malls Selling Antiques New Trend: Treasure Hunters Fill the Concourses," *Dayton Daily News*, Local, 1B.
31. Rob Shields, *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1992), 2 (quoting A. Tomlinson, "Introduction: Consumer Culture and the Aura of the Commodity," in *Consumption, Identity, and Style* [London: Routledge, 1990]). Emphasis mine.
32. Martha and Richard Ellers, "Finding Antiques at Auntie's: Parkman Mall Offers Variety of Collectibles," *The Plain Dealer*, 12 December 1998, *Your Home*, 2. See also Judy Buchenot, "Today's Lifestyle: Past Perfect; Hidden Treasures."
33. Charlyne Varkonyi Schaub (*Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*), "Achieving Shabby Chic: Decorating Blends Style, Comfort," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 20 March 1999, *Tempo*, D-3. Such "do it yourself-ers" must have the leisure and disposable income to invest in such a style. On "Shabby Chic" see, of course, Rachel

- Ashwell et al., *Shabby Chic* (New York: Harpercollins, 1996), and idem et al., *Rachel Ashwell's Shabby Chic: Treasure Hunting and Decorating Guide* (New York: Regan Books, 1998). Ashwell's epigones number in the hundreds. Among them are Emelie Tolley with Chris Mead, *Flea Market Style: Decorating with a Creative Edge* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1998), and Melanie Molesworth, *Junk Style* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998). On the growing acceptance of garage and yard sales beginning in the "Earth-conscious" 1970s, see Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Henry Holt and Company/Metropolitan Books, 1999), 280–83.
34. See, for example, Joan L. Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840–1940* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995). Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850–1930* (Rochester, N.Y. and Amherst: Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum and University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Strasser, *Waste and Want*.
35. My understanding of culture and space depends on Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981). Tuan argues that place offers security, while space offers freedom, and in thinking of where successful flea markets and antique malls are situated at margins and "in-between" this binary proves useful.
36. Mary Randolph Carter, *American Junk: How to Hunt For, Haggle Over, Rescue and Transform America's Forgotten Treasures* (New York: Penguin, 1997). Carter seems the least likely candidate for hunting and haggling: she is vice-president for advertising at Polo/Ralph Lauren.