The savage and modern self: North American Indians in eighteenth-century British literature and culture

6 Native North American Material Culture in the British Imaginary

Around his manly Neck shone the beauteous Beads of *Wampum*, composed of shining Shells of variously reflecting Hues; his arms were ornamented with the same Decorations; around his Middle yet a broader Belt held in its varying Girt his fatal War-ax, and his pointed Ponyard; across his Shoulders hung his Bow and Quiver for the Chace; his Arms for War were the Fire-arms of Europe.

– John Shebbeare, *Lydia, or, Filial Piety* (1755)

Representations of Indians in the eighteenth century, as in John Shebbeare's description of his idealized Iroquois man, are often largely dependent upon their invocation of materiality; the numerous appearances of wampum, tomahawks, feathers, calumets, scalping knives, and so forth, are fundamental to the vocabulary of Indianness, and the well-known phrases from treaty negotiations, such as "bury the hatchet," "boil the (war) kettle," and "brighten the chain," deploy objects of exchange as metaphorical diplomatic acts. Indeed, part of the humour in Smollett's depiction of the foolish Duke of Newcastle in *Humphry Clinker* is not only his complete lack of geographical understanding but his ignorance of this material vocabulary, proclaiming, "Let [the Five Nations] have plenty of blankets, and stinkubus,[1] and wampum; and your excellency won't fail to scour the kettle, and boil the chain, and bury the tree, and plant the hatchet – Ha, ha, ha!"[2] Richard Owen Cambridge, writing in *The World* in 1754, observed that the new fashionable words in English would doubtless emerge from North America, and he provides a sample of "a letter from one of our colonies" to prepare the reader for this influx of novel language:

> The *Chippoways* and *Orundaks* are still very troublesome. Last week they *scalped* one of our Indians: but the *Six nations* continue firm; and at a meeting of *Sachems* it was determined *to take up the hatchet*, and *make the war-kettle boil*. The French desired to *smoak the calumet of peace*; but the *half-king* would not consent. They offered the *speech-belt*, but it was refused. Our Governour has received an account of their proceedings, together with *a string of wampum*, and *a bundle of skins to brighten the chain*.[3]

He claims that "no man will be fit to appear in company" unless he can "ornament his discourse with those jewels," and while the piece is meant to mock the fashion for using exotic words to demonstrate worldliness, it also highlights the correlation between the phrases from the Indians and material things. This final chapter will argue that this vocabulary emerges from an actual body of objects, and that like the literary trope of the Indian, this material functioned as a uniquely double-sided site of disavowal and appropriation. The material culture from North America that appeared in Britain presents a parallel narrative to Indians in literature. For example, Indian weaponry contained within it the transcultural fears and desires of the British subject in much the same way as the cruel savage of the captivity narrative, while collecting itself became a form of appropriation for some soldiers and antiquarians alike during the same period that produced hybrids such as Hermsprong and William Augustus Bowles. Indeed, Indian objects would come to shape historical narratives in the paintings of Benjamin West.[4] Thus, in closing with this chapter, I hope to show that the kinds of relationships and contradictions fostered by Indians in literature can also be viewed from the perspective of the history of British interactions with Indigenous objects.

This chapter is in part informed by "thing theory," which has spawned a robust body of scholarship in eighteenth-century studies for its interest in the ways that relationships between people and objects mediated the changing world. As Bill Brown writes, "the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation."[5] Arjun Appadurai similarly argues that "[w]e have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories"; it is, after all, "the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context."[6] Thus in the case of Indigenous material culture, tracing its circulation from sites of both domination and exchange, looking at both its manufacture and subsequent representative value, we can understand the broader "social life" of the objects and their import to British representations of the Indian.

From both an Indigenous and a European perspective, material culture was a central mediator for understanding and interpreting the other from the time of first contact; in most Iroquoian languages, the word for the Dutch is *Kristoni* or "metal-workers," while the word for "Europeans" more broadly is *Asseroni*, which translates as "ax-or knife-makers."[7] There is little ambiguity in this terminology and, as Joseph Roach notes, ethnohistory in this case shows us how "Native American languages record the symbolic inventiveness of the material relationships between Iroquoia and northern Europe at this historic juncture."[8] There are numerous examples of the centrality of material exchange with Europeans and its importance to Native societies; in a well-known passage from the Jesuit relations, an Algonquin chief boasts to the French that "his body was hatchets; he meant that the preservation of his person and of his Nation was the preservation of the hatchets, the kettles, and all the trade of the French, for the Hurons."[9] European goods here become the vocabulary of embodied political power, and the eruption of Pontiac's Rebellion over a century later in 1763 came about in part due to Native dissatisfaction with the English reluctance to give gifts to the nations around Detroit following the Seven Years' War.[10] Many scholars now understand the Indigenous appropriation of European goods as a political decision and articulation of symbolic power, and not, as Europeans frequently assumed, proof of the inherent superiority of their goods.[11] Indeed, in a speech by Onondaga chief Canassatego during treaty negotiations with British officials in 1744, widely reprinted in Britain beginning with the 1747 edition of Cadwallader Colden's *The History of the Five Indian Nations*, the chief notes that the English claim

> we should have perished if they had not come into the country and furnished us with Strowds[12] and Hatchets, and Guns, and other Things necessary for the Support of Life; but we always gave them to understand that they were mistaken, that we lived before they came amongst us, and as well, or better, if we may believe what our Forefathers have told us. We had then Room enough, and Plenty of Deer, which was easily caught; and tho' we had not Knives, Hatchets, or Guns, such as we have now, yet we had Knives of Stone, and Hatchets of Stone, and Bows and Arrows, and those served our Uses as well then as the *English* ones do now. (105)

Canassatego reminds the British that while his people may have adopted European goods into their lives, they would gladly give them back if it meant reclaiming the inheritance of their ancestors. The much

despised Tory gadfly and physician Shebbeare would re-write Canassatego into the virtuous Iroquois character "Cannassatego" in *Lydia, or Filial Piety* (1755) described in the epigraph above, who laments the arrival of Europeans, the "faithless Invaders," and views his people "wrapt in *European* Manufactures, as Men bearing the Badge of Slavery" (7). Within a few years, these sentiments that Shebbeare projects onto the Indian would spread in the colonies through the teaching of Lenape prophet Neolin.[13] Just as Neolin rejected all European wares with particular focus on the destructive trade in alcohol,[14] Cannassatego swears off "that enebriating Liquor, which totally deprives Humanity of Reason" and "had never clothed himself but in the Skins of those Beasts which he had slain with his own Hands" (7). That the imagined cultural tenacity of Indians by writers like Shebbeare, hardly a radical, would be mirrored in actual anti-colonial resistance indicates the imaginary and real importance of material exchange. But this contested side of the exchange, the Native appropriation of British goods through treaty negotiations, the fur trade, and other sites, has been well explored by anthropologists and historians.[15] What is less clear in this historical relationship are the ways in which Native material culture was perceived in Britain and how it informed British conceptions of Native people and of their own cultural moment.[16]

While the British did not appropriate Indian objects in the same way or on the same scale, they too came to define the other and their relationship with them through material culture. In 1777, during the American Revolutionary War and some thirty years following Canassatego's rousing words about the prevalence of British axes and knives in the colonies, William Pitt the elder gave a speech in the House of Lords to address the use of Indian allies to fight against colonists: "[*N*]*ow* we had *sullied* and *tarnished* the arms of Britain for ever," Pitt declared, "by employing Savages in our service, by drawing them up in a British line, and *mixing* the *scalping knife* and *tomahawk* with the *sword* and *firelock*."[17] This is odd for a European, an *Asseroni*, a knife and ax maker, to define the savagery of the other through the very things that he supplied them with; how could this use of Indians bearing British manufactures become "a contamination, a pollution of our national character"(490)? In Shebbeare's book, the fictional Cannassatego declares that

> the very Garments which we wear are Testimonies of the Truth, of how small Account an *Indian* Chief, and his Exploits, is deemed amongst [the British]; these Coverings, if these Men may be believed, are the Productions

> of the lowest People, the Price of Metal dug from the Bowels of the Earth, the Toil of six Days only, by Hands which never wield the Ax, or meet their Foes in Battle; these are the Purchase of an *Indian* Warrior's Arm, his Fame, his Family, his Being; and his Country. (10–11)

For him too the degenerate nature of the other is in their material culture, in similar objects for the "Indian trade" that Pitt uses to depict Indian savagery. But Canassatego draws attention to the production of these goods, a site continually effaced in the literature of the period but never difficult to find if we look to the material record and see the stamps of British cutlers on tomahawks and scalping knives.

Yet by the 1760s the scalping knife and tomahawk had become synonymous with the cruelty of Indians, easy shorthand to distinguish what one writer later described as "striking proofs of British valour, opposed to tomahawk cruelty."[18] This association is dramatized in Benjamin West's 1768 painting *General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from the Tomahawk of a North American Indian*, in which Sir William Johnson humanely intervenes to save a wounded French enemy from what is clearly a weapon of European manufacture. This picture is further complicated with the knowledge that Johnson himself had requested 10,000 such tomahawks in 1765 for treaty negotiations, to be manufactured in Birmingham and Sheffield and worth £875.[19] By 1777, there were near daily accounts in the British press of some new outrage committed by Indians, nearly always embodied by the tomahawk and the scalping knife. Even a cursory look reveals examples such as this from the *London Evening Post*: "How [is] … the use of the tomahawk and the scalping knife, which indiscriminately butcher the innocent with the guilty, (sparing neither age nor sex) to be justified before God or Man?" Another newspaper approvingly tells of some gentlemen at a dinner who toast their meal by declaring, "May those who employ *Savages*, in acts of cruelty, fall by the Tomahawk." And a New Years resolution poem in the *Post* for 13–15 January 1778 reads in part, "Cease Britain, cease the horrid strife, / The bloody contest now give o'er, / No longer use the Scalping Knife, / The Tomahawk employ no more."

How did it come to be that the same objects which in the colonies represented British trade and mechanical superiority were representative in Britain of the inhumanity and utter savagery of the Indian? Perhaps even more perplexing, how is it that British soldiers and travellers could trade with different Native groups and bring back these British-made hatchets and knives and display them as examples of

Figure 6.1 General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from the Tomahawk of a North American Indian. Artist: Benjamin West, c. 1768. Oil on canvas. Derby Museum and Art Gallery. Used with permission.

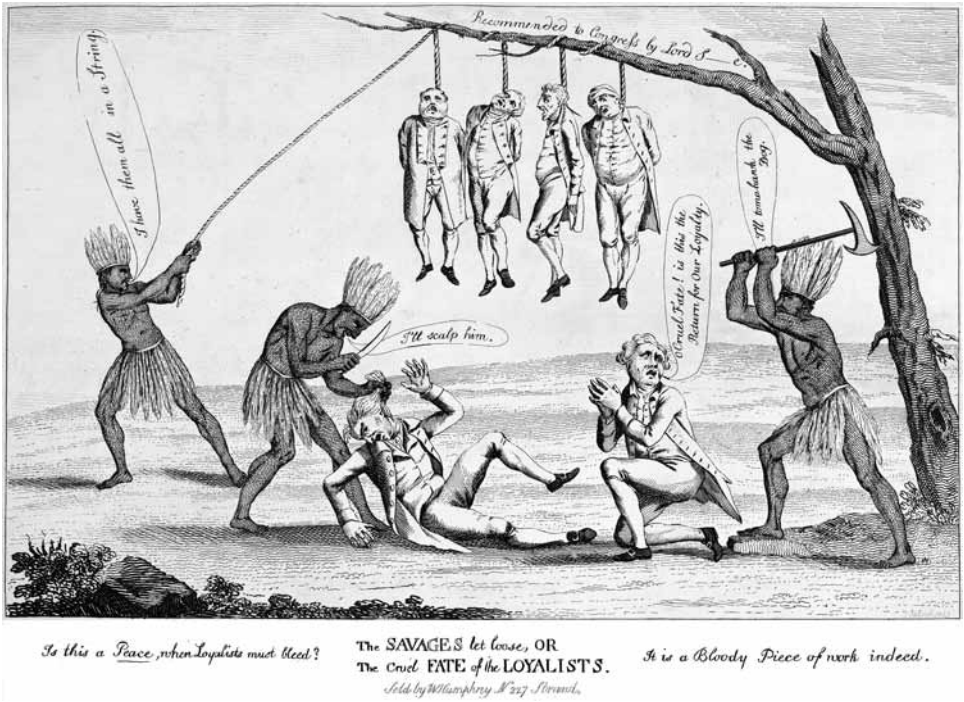

Figure 6.2 The savages let loose, or, The cruel fate of the loyalists, 1783. Etching. Lewis Walpole Library. Used with permission.

Indian curiosities? Early pipe tomahawks in the British Museum and other collections were made in England in the eighteenth century, and brought back in the same period.[20] Sarah Stone painted a knife in 1780 for the auction of the contents of the Leverian Museum, and while the ornamental quillwork is Northeastern Indigenous, likely Huron, the blade clearly shows the marks of a British cutler.

Were the people who collected and viewed items such as these unaware of the provenance of this material, or were there other cultural forces at work that led to British manufactures being mistaken for ethnographic items and symbols of savagery? As late as 1841, painter George Catlin was frustrated by what he perceived as the cultural impurity of Native nations as he painted them and gathered ethnographic objects, and proclaimed that

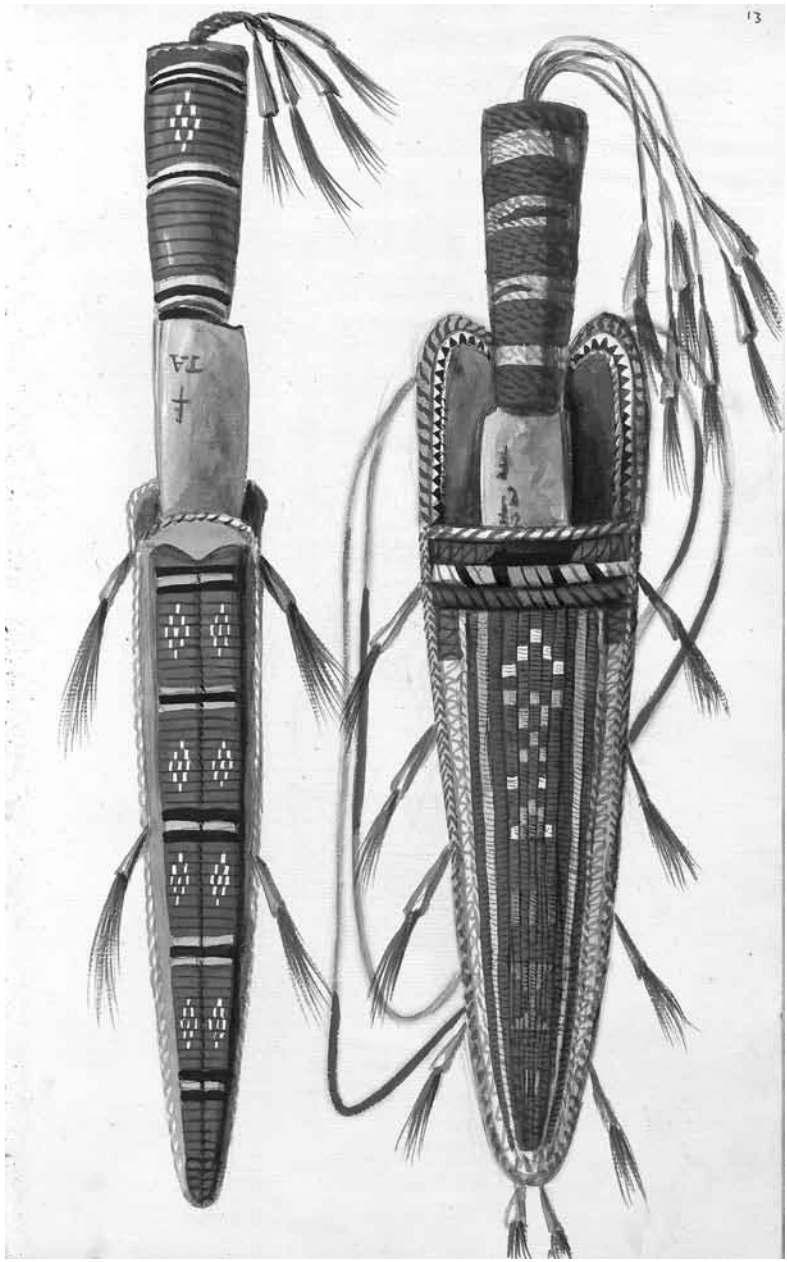

Figure 6.3 Illustration of Woodlands knife from the Leverian Museum. Artist: Sarah Stone, 1780. Watercolour. British Museum. Used with permission.

> If I … should ever cross the Atlantic with my collection, a curious enigma would be solved for the English people, who may enquire for a scalping-knife, when they find that every one in my Collection (and hear also, that nearly every one that is to be seen in the Indian country, to the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean) bears on its blade the impress of G.R., which they will doubtless understand.[21]

Yet objects such as these in Catlin's collection already were in Britain and did not seem to influence British awareness of their own involvement in making them. Any reference to the European part in manufacturing the weapons fundamental to depictions of Indian cruelty is nearly impossible to find outside of letters between colonial officials; Henry Timberlake observes in his memoirs of 1765 that the "tommahawkes" used by the Cherokee by mid-century were "all made by Europeans,"[22] though his work had little impact at the time. The fact that neither Burke nor Pitt mentions this trade in their speeches before Parliament suggests that the material connection to such a troubling reality could be difficult to articulate or even conceive, but I will return to these weapons and their surprising provenance below.

I will here take a step back to the beginning of this side of the material relationship, to track, however provisionally, the emergence of fragments of the so-called New World in Europe. The history of North American material culture in Europe cannot be separated from the physical processes of empire and the expropriation of colonial wealth that, beginning in the late fifteenth century, gave rise in part to European modernity. The transatlantic movement of resources, profits, artifacts, and people was in turn shaped by, and gave shape to, what has been variously described as the "Indian Atlantic" and, more recently, the "Red Atlantic."[23] This re-naming and re-imagining of an historical process has been in part meant to emphasize the importance of Indigenous peoples of the Americas in the transatlantic world, and nowhere is this paradigm more fruitful and more fraught than in looking at the collections of cultural objects, sacred and otherwise, that were brought to Europe in a variety of circumstances starting in the early modern period.

Early European Collecting of American Objects

If the influx of European goods into the Americas over the next few centuries beginning with Columbus undoubtedly had its effects on Native societies, so too did the appearance of "Americana" in Europe.

Silvia Spitta claims that "indigenous objects would literally overcome Europe's ability to order things," suggesting that Foucault's narrative of the epistemological shifts in the early modern period are incomplete without considering the effects of the "misplaced objects" arriving from the Americas. "For what work could misplaced objects do," asks Spitta, "other than signal the destruction of indigenous cultures and at the same time throw the thinking of early modern Europe into question?"[24] For Renaissance Europe, the objects of the "New World" produced a sense of wonder that can be troubling for its erasure of the colonial violence that allowed these wondrous things to cross the Atlantic. Wonder is also, however, ambiguous as a discourse. Thus in 1520, while visiting Brussels, Albrecht Dürer observed the first of the objects sent back by Cortés to Charles V from "the new golden land" of Mexico and he "marvelled at the subtle *ingenia* of men in foreign lands" while declaring these "wonderful things" to be "much more beautiful to behold than prodigies."[25] Stephen Greenblatt reminds us that it would be disingenuous to ignore the "relations of power and wealth that are encoded in the artist's response," but it would at the same time perhaps be even worse to reduce Dürer's reaction to those objects he viewed in Brussels as a celebration or pure expression of these relations.[26] Dürer declares that "[a]ll the days of my life I have seen nothing that has gladdened my heart so much as these things," and this sense of wonder at material culture from the Americas would continue in Europe for at least two more centuries.[27]

Yet while wonder may offer a new kind of epistemology through encounters with profound otherness, it also would become an ordering principle in an emerging form of collection and display in the early modern period, the curiosity cabinet. The *kunst-* or *wunderkammer*, as these cabinets were known in German-speaking countries, displayed singular objects from the natural world alongside works of art, classical sculpture, and machines.[28] While their organization, often baffling to later eyes, was based more on singularity and curiosity rather than the taxonomies of later Enlightenment collections, they nonetheless offered a meditation on the relation between nature and culture and were not simply a random, purely aesthetic experience.[29] The precise role of "exotica" in these collections was shifting and not always clear, but foreign objects were almost always crucial to the completion of any display. In the surviving inventories of early *kunstkammern*, the most common descriptive term for non-European items is "Indian," and though it is often impossible to tell what culture is meant to be the originator,[30] there were indeed

many items from the Americas.[31] The position of these exotic artificial curiosities in collections was ambiguous, like the discourse of curiosity and wonder itself;[32] Horst Bredekamp notes that *exotica* in early modern cabinets existed outside of the classificatory schemes of collectors and antiquarians, somewhere between the natural and artificial worlds.[33] In 1565, the first theorist on museums, Samuel Quiccheberg, proposed five principal sections around which to organize collections[34] and placed "Indian" objects in two of them, suggesting that they could not be accommodated to one vision within the microcosm.[35] Similarly, as Dürer rhapsodises over Cortés's spoils in his journal, reflecting on the value and rarity of these Indigenous things, he ends by proclaiming, "Indeed I cannot express all that I thought there." For the early modern European, New World objects were a challenge to fit into the classical world view, and ways of seeing the world had to be modified.

While cabinets were sites of speculative learning to a certain extent, they also produced knowledge, and the slippage that saw many non-European objects labelled as "Indian" carried forward into the Renaissance iconography of all foreign or "non-civilized" cultures, which was influenced by these collected curiosities.[36] Featherwork in particular frequently evoked this early modern vision of exoticism in visual culture, and geographical distance collapsed under the rubric of otherness. Thus if we recall the "naked Indian" riding an elephant in William D'Avenant's court masque *The Temple of Love* (1635), the cabinet is brought to life in his adornment in the "tire and bases of several-coloured feathers, representing the Indian monarchy."[37] The masque, like the cabinet itself, integrates otherness into its metaphorical vision of the world just as it effaces non-European specificity. But before this time, pageants on the continent would deploy objects themselves to produce spectacles of encounter. Rulers would attempt to appropriate the wonder held by the material culture of the New World.[38] Archduke Ferdinand II took feathers from a pre-Columbian headdress and placed them in his helmet worn during his second marriage,[39] while Duke Friedrich of Württemberg himself played the Queen of America in a carnival in 1599, complete with American weapons from his cabinet.[40] In Rouen, France, in 1550, two Brazilian villages were recreated on the banks of the Seine for the entrance of Henri II, complete with foliage, monkeys, parrots, hundreds of naked French people acting as Indians, and over 50 actual Indigenous people. The villages were then burned to the ground as the various actors staged a mock battle with each other. This display of the Americas in Europe, both joyful and apocalyptic,

was certainly the largest of its kind in the period.[41] What is striking is that while the vast body of material culture obviously shaped existing epistemological views, at the same time there was little desire to understand it in any terms outside of its curiosity or rarity. Objects of the Americas were chosen solely on aesthetic terms to this point, not necessarily because their place of origin held a special interest.[42]

Early British Collections

Britain lagged behind many continental countries in collecting, and while it was influenced by the iconography of foreignness shaped by "feathered Indians," as seen in D'Avenant's masque for the court of Charles I, its rulers did not maintain cabinets which were meant to establish microcosms of the known world.[43] The vast royal cabinets of dynasties such as the Habsburgs had no counterpart in Britain, and British collecting in its infancy was done by private men, often with the help of elite masters or benefactors. It was done with seemingly less methodology than on the continent, and took place, as Arthur MacGregor suggests, "lower down the social scale."[44] Interest in objects from the Americas did not become widespread until the period following the English Civil War, with the rise in anti-Spanish sentiments and the English translation of texts on the colonization of the "New World," particularly the writing of Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas.[45] Prior to this time, Sir Walter Cope, who began as a gentleman usher but rose to be a powerful administrator, was among the first to establish a widely admired cabinet in Britain.[46] In 1599, the Swiss traveller Thomas Platter visited his collection. Cope personally showed Platter through his cabinet, and the visitor's account lists objects such as "[a]n Indian stone axe, like a thunder-bolt," pieces of featherwork, and a "long narrow Indian canoe, with the oars and sliding planks, hung from the ceiling of this room."[47] Platter notes that "[t]here are also other people in London interested in curios, but this gentleman is superior to them all for the strange objects, because of the Indian voyage he carried out with such zeal."[48] While Platter sees items such as "an embalmed child," "a unicorn's tail" a "flying rhinoceros," and many other "queer foreign objects," it is the objects from the Americas that most strike him. Like Dürer marveling at the collections in Brussels some eighty years earlier, it is not the prodigies but the productions of Indians that most captivates the Swiss. Unlike the large variety of objects in early modern continental Europe, items once possessed by Indians were at this time still

rare in Britain, and, for an aspirational gentleman like Cope, they were an effective means of distinction. When some "Virginians" arrived in England in 1603 in the midst of the plague, Cope entertained them, and there is a good chance that his canoe, suspended in the rarified space of his cabinet's ceiling, was put to use by these men as they rowed on the Thames.[49] The audience, given the grim circumstance in London, was no doubt diminished as compared to other such similar spectacles of Indian visitation, and these unnamed men vanished from the record after their appearance. They are absent from the listings of subsequent English voyages back to the Americas, so they perhaps succumbed to the deadly disease ravaging their captors.[50]

Collecting after Cope remained a primarily private pursuit, notwithstanding Francis Bacon's call in 1605 for a "substantial and severe collection of the Heteroclites or Irregulars of nature" which rejects "fables and popular errors."[51] Platter's description of a pelican in Cope's cabinet, likely from the collector himself, asserts that it "kills its young, and afterwards tears open its breast and bathes them in its own blood, until they have come to life," which presumably indicates a cavalier attitude to such high-minded concerns for empirical study. However, Bacon's vision of collecting, more importantly, insisted on the importance of ethnography for new knowledge; he argues in *Novum organum* (1620) that "[i]t would disgrace us, now that the wide spaces of the material globe, the lands and seas, have been broached and explored, if the limits of the intellectual globe should be set by the narrow discoveries of the ancients."[52] Ethnographic objects represented a world not known to the classical mind, and presented for Bacon an opportunity to provide, as Alain Schnapp suggests, "continuity between the discovery of the material world and the laws of human intelligence."[53] A reliance on antiquity represented a continual repetition, a struggle over memory and tradition that threatened the advancement of science and learning.

While Cope was part of the early wave of collecting in Britain, one of his admirers was John Tradescant the elder, a gardener to various noblemen at the beginning of the seventeenth century who would have a more important role to play in the institutionalization of collections into the forms that are recognizable today. Tradescant began collecting specimens through travel in Europe and North Africa and connections with the powerful men for whom he worked, including Cope, and following the assassination of his employer the Duke of Buckingham in 1628, he bought a house and established his museum known as "The Ark" at Lambeth.[54] While it was his collection of botany

that brought him fame, Tradescant also boasted numerous "Indian" objects. These were presumably increased following a voyage by his son John Tradescant the younger to Virginia in 1637. The younger Tradescant took over from his father following his death in 1638, and the collection would eventually fall into the hands of solicitor, astrologer, and antiquary Elias Ashmole after the younger died in 1662. Ashmole had helped compile the catalogue for the Tradescants' collection, the *Musaeum Tradescantianum*, which was printed in 1656 and became the first museum catalogue in Britain.[55] He would later inherit the collection, rather dubiously according to some,[56] and donate it to Oxford under his own name. This would become the Ashmolean Museum, which opened as Europe's first public museum in 1683. The catalogue contains numerous objects from the Americas, and, significantly, they often appear using the North American Indigenous terms, which marks the start of a shift in British understandings of North American material culture. These include "A Canow & Picture of an Indian with his Bow and Dart," under "Variety of Rarities" (42), the "Tamahacks, 6 sorts," under "Warlike Instruments" (46), "*Pohatan*, King of *Virginia*'s habit all embroidered with shells, or Roanoke," in "Garments, Vestures, Habits, Ornaments" (47), "Virginian purses imbroidered [*sic*] with Roanoake," and "Black Indian girdles made of Wampam peek, the best sort" (51). There are also numerous "match-coat" (47), a recently Anglicized word from the Algonquin *matchkore*. While the word "Indian" is still ambiguously used in some instances, this level of specificity for North American objects is a new development. It suggests a more sophisticated relationship with Indians, mediated by both material and cultural exchange, and a greater shift from the aesthetic appreciation of *exotica* to its ethnographic value. While the feathered items predominately from Mexico and South America had informed exotic iconography from their position in earlier European cabinets, the visibility and vocabulary of North American collections began to redefine the iconography of the "Indian" to what is still today a familiar form. As Eugenio Donato notes, this form of collecting "is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world."[57]

Nehemiah Grew's catalogue of the Royal Society, *Musaeum Regalis Societatis* (1681), similarly contains ethnographically specific details about North American Indians. The entry on "Several sorts of *Indian* MONEY, called WAMPAMPEAGE," describes the objects in detail, both in material and design, and goes on to explain the different

values of individual pieces (370). He notes that strings of wampum "pass among the *Indians*, in their usual Commerse, as *Silver* and *Gold* amongst us," though observes that this string money, "being loose, is not so currant." He nonetheless breaks down their equivalent value, from the white single strings at five shillings per fathom, all the way up to the woven girdles "sometimes worn as their richest Ornaments; but chiefly used in great Payments, esteemed their Noblest Presents, and laid up as their Treasure." Grew attempts to rationally categorize all aspects of the collection. He explains that in his description of the objects from other cultures, "instead of medling with Mystick, Mythologick, or Hieroglyphick matters; or relating Stories of Men who were great Riders, or Women that were bold and feared not Horses; as some others have done: I thought it much more proper, To Remarque some of the Uses and Reasons of Things" (v). The curiosity that typifies an encounter with a cabinet of wonders, unrestrained by rational history or context, is reigned in by Grew's text. Fellow Royal Society member Robert Hooke would use stronger language, proclaiming that "the use of such a Collection is not for the Divertisement, and Wonder, and Gazing, as 'tis for the most part thought and esteemed, and like Pictures for Children to admire and be pleased with, but for the serious and diligent study of the most able Proficient in Natural Philosophy."[58] Such goals, however, were easier said than put into practice. Indeed, the source of much of the collection came from the purchase of Robert Hubert's cabinet of natural curiosities, which was assembled on principles of rarity and wonder and displayed as a public spectacle at his "Musick House."[59]

Like Ashmole's account of the Tradescant collection, the Royal Society's catalogue sought to make the mutable contents of its repository transcendent or, as Michael C.W. Hunter writes, it "reified the collection in book-form so that its fame spread even more widely than it did from travellers' reports."[60] German traveller Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, who visited the Repository in 1710, wrote, "Both in Germany and elsewhere an exalted idea of this Society has been formed, both of it and of the collections they have in their Museum" thanks in large part to "the fine description of the Museum by Grew."[61] Von Uffenbach's reaction to the collection in material form, now widely cited, reveals the extent to which the Society achieved its aim of a collection worthy of "serious and diligent study"; he writes that while there are present "the finest instruments and other arts (which Grew describes)," they are "not only in no sort of order or tidiness but covered with dust, filth, and coal-smoke, and many of them broken and utterly ruined."[62] Because

they have only known the collection in textual form, von Uffenbach remarks that "foreigners have just grounds for amazement when they hear how wretchedly all is now ordered."[63] He does not mention any of the ethnographic collection, but we can assume that it too sat in mouldering neglect. By the time the Society's collection was donated to the British Museum in 1781, much of it ruined by "time and dirt" as the repository's keeper observed in the 1760s, it seems the little that remained was natural history specimens and not the more fragile "artificial curiosities."[64]

Thus while the actual collection itself disintegrated to dust, the North American objects survived in print, in Grew's widely read text. Indeed, this is a pattern throughout the period in Britain, with many catalogues listing objects that are lost to history. In Yorkshire, Ralph Thoresby's Musaeum Thoresbyanum also contained a wealth of North American Indian material and attracted a steady stream of visitors in its own right. One visitor from London saw it as superior even to the Ashmolean, proclaiming in the guest book, "Oxford be silent, I this Truth must write, / Leeds hath for Rarities outdone thee quite."[65] Thoresby had been a voracious collector and maintained regular correspondence with Royal Society members, particularly Hans Sloane, even penning some reports for the Society's *Philosophical Transactions* himself. His catalogue appeared in his *Ducatus Leodiensis: or, the topography of the ancient and populous town and parish of Leedes* (1715), his principal work. In the catalogue for his museum, he cites Grew's text often as an authoritative source and gives detailed descriptions of his objects, including their materials, origins, uses, and the person from whom he acquired them. The vocabulary for Indian objects was still provisional, so the tomahawk is variously known as a "*Tomahaw*" and a "*Tamahauke*," while wampum is often referred to, and understood as, "shell money" in various denominations. Thoresby attempts to provide context to his objects, gesturing to the importance of the written catalogue in noting that he has some Indian things that "are not mentioned by any Author I have met with" (428). Some of his items remain difficult to interpret due to their seeming singularity to Thoresby's collection; he lists one object as an "Indian periwig" made of feathers, complete with comb, while his "*Assonagh* or *Escocheon*" used "at the Funeral of the Princess *Eliz. Sonam*, Sole-Daughter and Heir Apparent of *Ann Sonam*, a converted *Indian* Queen in *Maryland*" (484), describes both an unknown object and a seemingly untraceable historical character. Upon his death, some of the valuable contents of the museum were brought to Thoresby's son's

house in Stoke Newington, but most of it lay "in a garret like a Heap of Rubbish" until the elements rendered it "like a Dunghill."[66] As such we are not likely to ever know the contents of Thoresby's collection, only its textual legacy.[67]

For those following in the legacy of Hooke and the "new philosophy," the subjective experience of wonder had to be displaced when encountering Indian objects, and increasingly there were efforts to understand this growing body of material in culturally comparative terms. In this attempt, Western epistemologies could be frustrated, as when one writer, in discussing the 1710 visit to London by the "Four Indian Kings," members of the Haudenossaune or Iroquois confederacy, writes that the calumet, which is their "method of making peace … is the most mysterious thing in the World, for it is us'd in all their important Transactions; however, it is nothing else but a large Tobacco-Pipe."[68] A periodical essay in *The Connoisseur* later in the century has a country gentleman obsessed with current affairs proclaim, "I am a great admirer of the Indian oratory; and I dare say old Hendrick the Sachem would have made a good figure in the House of Commons. There is something very elegant in the *Covenant-Belt*; but pray what a pox are those damned *Strings of Wampum?* I cannot find any account of them in Chambers's Dictionary."[69] While this is obviously written with tongue in cheek, the elusive meaning behind such objects could lead to reductive interpretations of Indigenous cultures. In *The Spectator* no. 56 from 4 May 1711, one week following the essay on the Four Indian Kings, Joseph Addison writes that North American Indigenous people believe that everything has a soul, including "inanimate things, [such] as stocks and stones," and "all the works of art, as of knives, boats, looking-glasses" (408–9). As a result of this belief, "they always place by the corpse of their dead friend a bow and arrows, that he may make use of the souls of them in the other world, as he did of their wooden bodies in this" (409). Addison goes on to tell the story of Marraton and Yaratilda, in which, like Orpheus, the Indian Marraton visits the land of the dead to see his beloved wife. On his journey, he encounters various spirits engaged in both work and play, and observes multitudes of them "employing themselves upon ingenious handicrafts with the souls of *departed utensils*, for that is the name which in the Indian language they give their tools when they are burnt or broken" (411). According to Addison, Indians imbue the world of objects with a fetishistic and sacred quality that may appear absurd, but he notes that "our European philosophers have maintained

several notions altogether as improbable" (409). While Addison ends, typically, on a note of shared, if not condescending, humanity, fetishism increasingly became the interpretation of the relationship between Indians and their goods alongside a similar anxiety in Britain over the rise in consumerism.[70]

Perhaps most representative of this was wampum, which British writers described variously as money, as a special kind of gift, as writing, and simply as ornament. Even Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as Hugh Blair and James Beattie admitted to not knowing exactly how it functioned in their treatises on writing and language.[71] Like the Incan *quipos*, which mystified Europeans as some form of secret knowledge or "language to the eyes" in Horace Walpole's phrase,[72] wampum existed somewhere between competing regimes of value. And the blurring of the distinction between commerce and written memory was troubling to a society witnessing the commodification of culture itself. This anxiety is manifested in *Memoirs of the life and adventures of Tsonnonthouan*, which, as discussed in a previous chapter, tells the story of an Indian continually searching for a new object to worship as his god or manitou while reflecting on the interchangeability of commercial writing in the wake of the popularity of *Tristram Shandy*. This critique articulates the ideology that underlies claims by moralists such as the Archdeacon of Lincoln, John Gordon, who wrote in 1762, "There was a time, when the weakness of men was such, that every thing was to be transacted by tokens, symbols, and pledges. What is the Calamet and Wampum among the Indians at this day, but a proof, that they are now in a state, in which all mankind once were?"[73] Gordon's real critique is of the contemporary desire for ornament and "external form," or the "deviations from simplicity" evident in followers of fashion, and he sees in these metaphorical objects a dangerous attachment to transitory things.

And what about the actual display of Indian objects in places such as the British Museum, Don Saltero's Coffeehouse in Chelsea, or Thoresby's Museum in Leeds? According to catalogues and guidebooks they occupied significant space on display, but it is difficult to know how the public received such objects. Angela Todd argues that Saltero's collection, established in the late seventeenth century by a former servant of Sloane's, "recapitulated British nationalist, religious, and Orientalist ideologies,"[74] while Troy Bickham claims that "Indian primitiveness was an inescapable message to visitors of almost any major exhibition" of Native material culture in the eighteenth century.[75] He cites an

account of the Leverian Museum in 1782, which describes how the visitor is transported by the exhibits and "sees the Indian rejoiced at, and dancing to, the monotonous sound of his tom tom; he sighs to recollect the prevalent power of fear and superstition over the human mind, when he views the rude deformity of an idol carved with a flint, by a hand incapable of imitating the outline of nature, and that works only that it may worship."[76] It is without question that a display such as this one in Ashton Lever's Holophusicon at Leicester Square achieved some of its effect by diminishing non-European cultures and their material advancements, yet this same collection of Indian objects included a "[r]eal tomahawk, and tobacco-pipe in one," an object no doubt of European manufacture. And while the European origins of this tomahawk may have been hidden from the author of the guide, he nonetheless admires the "curiously carved" weapons he observes, and notes that these foreign objects "make his active fancy travel from pole to pole through torrid and through frigid zones." He himself becomes subject to the curious power of the objects, and admits that "he looks at the vast volumes of actual information, that every where surround him, and is indeterminate where to begin, or on which to fix his attention most." This hardly sounds like the assertion of a hegemonic gaze on the primitive other, and resonates more with Dürer's early modern wonder over men in far-away lands than a confident articulation of British superiority. Indeed, he is implicated in the Indian ceremony, rejoicing over the fetish objects that surround him.

Elsewhere, Indian objects helped shape historical narratives. The painter Benjamin West possessed a collection of Native North American items in his London studio, a number of which survive in the British Museum.[77] He used these objects to lend authenticity to his paintings of colonial scenes and idealized Indians, most famously in *The Death of Wolfe* (1770). West's contemplative Indian, an embodiment of a philosophical noble savage, was based on a Native soapstone pipe in the artist's possession. The iconography of the Indian in West's paintings is in very clear ways shaped by the North American items that he owned, and Native objects, while not integrated into the material lives of British people like steel and iron among Indigenous nations in North America, helped bridge the divide that *The Death of Wolfe* addressed between the non-specific classical setting of baroque history and modernity.[78] In this sense we can see this work, a new approach to historical painting, as a transcultural document, and West's pipe and other Native items connect rather than separate so-called primitivism and the European.

Figure 6.4 The Death of General Wolfe. Artist: William Woollett after Benjamin West, 1776. Line-engraving with etching. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. Used with permission.

Indeed, the Indian in the painting is wearing a knife from West's studio that is likely made of Sheffield steel,[79] and his rifle and tomahawk, European goods with Indian ornamentation, physically connect him to the body of the dying Wolfe.[80]

Even before the widespread availability of such transcultural items in Britain, Indian objects in collections could become something altogether different from an assertion of ethnographic difference. As we have seen in the cases of Thoresby and of the Royal Society, British collecting in the period focused more on the cataloguing of objects for posterity than on the actual display and preservation of these things. While foreign visitors were dismayed by the conditions of objects in

Figure 6.5 Smoking Pipe from Benjamin West's studio. Made by Northeast Peoples, c. 1600–1750. Carved soapstone. British Museum. Used with permission.

British collections, subject to damp in repositories and ruinous tobacco smoke in coffeehouses, they were at the same time impressed by the catalogues. Marjorie Swann describes this "impulse to textualize collections" as revealing "the interrelationships of material and literary culture,"[81] and it is significant that the item that perfectly exemplifies the textual impulse and the collapse of text and object is from a North American Indian. Swann draws attention to a peculiar North American spoon in Sloane's possession, one which would later become part of the founding collection of the British Museum in 1753. This item is inscribed with the story of its own provenance, and on it is written in ink:

> Anno 1702 An Indian Spoon [made of] the Brest bone of a Pinguin made by Papenau an Indian whose Squaw had both her Legs gangrend & rotted off to her knees and was cured by bathing in balsam water. [M]ade by Winthrop esq. New England[.] The method was thus[:] he Ordered

> two Oxe Bladers to be filled wi his Rare Balsamick Liquor made warme and the stumps put into the Bladers wth the Water was kept comfortably Blood warme, and the Leggs were perfectly cured in a few days time.

This is the earliest North American object whose maker is named, but more significant is its transformation from artifact to narrative. It is forever tied to the story of John Winthrop and his clever cure, more so than the craft of Papenau or cultural context of his people, and the object cannot be perceived outside of its singular history.[82] This spoon is the catalogue entry made flesh, and the collector's story supersedes the thing itself. The Indian object is once again appropriated for European self-imagining, but the story of technological superiority inscribed upon it equally suggests the importance of its transcultural value.

Conclusion

In this context we can return to the tomahawk and scalping knife; if the other Indian objects become fetishes because of the limits of knowledge or the fear of commodities becoming a new system of value, while others are appropriated into historical narrative, why do these British goods come to represent what looks on the surface to be such a profound otherness? In describing the actions of Indian allies in his celebrated speech in Parliament discussed earlier, Edmund Burke claimed that to use Indians "was merely to be cruel ourselves in their persons, and to become chargeable with all the odious and impotent barbarities, which they would certainly commit, whenever they were called into action" (521). He precisely articulates what these objects embody, though perhaps without knowing their material specificities. They become saddled with the violence of colonialism and the profoundly disturbing prospect of the violent separation of the transatlantic British subject. One newspaper in 1777 described this paranoia as "the Tomahawk and Scalping knife fever," while Richard Tickell, lampooning parliamentary discord over the use of Indians, calls the weapons "[S]atanic instruments of death."[83] Their fearful power grew from their reflection of self, and as such they had to be disavowed. Yet even this disavowal would be reversed.

Just as in the case of the literary Indian, things began to change following the Revolutionary War, and narratives began to shift. Scotsman Peter Williamson, whose transculturation following a supposed six month captivity among the Lenape has already been discussed at

86 For a different Jacobin vision of Indians and the corrupt gentry, see Smith, *The Old Manor House*. The character Orlando returns from his Iroquois captivity as a spectral, damaged figure, but is still able to secure a wealthy inheritance. Wolf-hunter, the Indian who saved Orlando from his cruel brothers, is forgotten upon the Englishman's return to Britain.
87 Qtd. in Wilson, *The Island Race*, 31.

6 Native North American Material Culture in the British Imaginary

1 "Bad liquor, esp. adulterated spirits." *OED*.
2 Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, 240–1.
3 *The World*, no. 102 (1754): 285–6.
4 In addition to the paintings addressed in this chapter, see also Rigal, "Framing the Fabric," for a discussion of *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* and the role of material culture.
5 Brown, "Thing Theory," 4.
6 Appadurai, "Introduction," 5.
7 Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 120.
8 Ibid. See also Laurier Turgeon: "[T]he object was the means by which the Amerindian conceived and assessed the other, at least in initial contacts with the European." Turgeon, "The Tale of the Kettle," 1–29.
9 Schiavo, Jr, and Salvucci, eds. *Iroquois Wars I*, 117.
10 See Middleton, *Pontiac's War*, 20–1.
11 See Turgeon, "The Tale of the Kettle." See also Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 60–1; both authors note the word should be "appropriation," not "acculturation."
12 "A blanket manufactured for barter or sale in trading with North American Indians." *OED*.
13 Neolin would in turn inspire Pontiac, who adopted his moral code; see White, *The Middle Ground*, 284.
14 Ibid., 283.
15 Turgeon, "The Tale of the Kettle," and Richter, *Trade, Land, Power*, 13–41.
16 Bickham has done some work in looking at North American material culture; see especially "'A Conviction of the Reality of Things'," 29–47. He does not, however, see more than an assertion of European superiority in its display.
17 *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol. XIX, 489–90.
18 *Observer*, issue 439, Sunday, 18 May 1800.
19 Woodward, "The Metal Tomahawk," 9.
20 Acquisition dates are uncertain for many, but see Am1987,Q.13, Am,Dc.72.a-b; British Museum catalogue.
21 Catlin, *Manners*, 236.

22 Timberlake, *Memoirs*, 51–2.
23 See Fulford and Hutchings, *Native Americans*, and Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic*.
24 Spitta, *Misplaced Objects*, 5.
25 Qtd. in Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," 31.
26 Ibid., 31–2.
27 See Evans and Marr, eds. *Curiosity and Wonder*.
28 There are numerous studies on such collections, but see especially Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 27. For a look at a similar tradition specifically in England, see Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious*.
29 For a look at the shift from Renaissance to Enlightenment epistemologies, and the corresponding role of wonder and wonders, see Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, and Evans and Marr, eds. *Curiosity and Wonder*.
30 Bujok, "Ethnographica," 19. See also Feest, "European Collecting," 3, and Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 35.
31 Yaya, "Wonders of America," 173–88.
32 Benedict, *Curiosity*, 1–23.
33 Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity,* 28.
34 For a brief description of these categories, see Bubenik, *Reframing Albrecht Dürer*, 52.
35 Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 34.
36 Yaya, "Wonders," 177.
37 D'Avenant, *The Temple of Love*, 287. It is also worth remembering Aphra Behn's well-known gift of feathers from Surinam, used in *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperor*, both discussed in chapter 1.
38 Yaya, "Wonders," 177. See also Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 158.
39 Mason, *Infelicities*, 83.
40 Yaya, "Wonders," 178.
41 For an account, see Wintroub, "Civilizing the Savage," 465–94.
42 Yaya, "Wonders," 181, and Feest, "European Collecting," 4–5.
43 For a detailed look at the origins of British collecting, see Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious*.
44 MacGregor, "The Cabinet of Curiosities," 147.
45 See Maltby, *The Black Legend in England*. For a look at different authors' deployment of Las Casas, particularly Defoe, see Runnell, "Defoe and the Black Legend," 13–28.
46 In the decades following his death, Cope's cabinet was remembered in at least two very similar bawdy songs by Sir John Mennes and Alexander Brome. Mennes would write in "The Fart censured in the Parliament House" (1655), "Sir *Walter Cope* said, this Fart 'twas let, / Might well have broke ope his privy Cabinet," while Brome's "Upon the Parliament Fart" (1662) similarly jests,

"Quoth Sir *Walter Cope* 'twas so readily let, / I would it were sweet enough for my Cabinet." Variations of the verse were published into the eighteenth century.

47 Pearce, *The Collector's Voice*, 23–4.
48 Ibid., 24.
49 Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters*, 43.
50 Ibid., 44.
51 Qtd. in Burns, *An Age of Wonders*, 63.
52 Qtd. in Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*, 59.
53 Schnapp, "Ancient Europe and Native Americans," 60.
54 MacGregor, ed., *Tradescant's Rarities*.
55 On its composition see Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*, 38–42.
56 See Altick, *The Shows of London*, 12.
57 Qtd. in Stewart, *On Longing*, 162.
58 Qtd. in Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*, 4.
59 See Altick, *The Shows of London*, 13. For greater background on Hubert and the Royal Society, see Hunter, *Establishing the New Science*, 129–36.
60 Hunter, *Establishing*, 123.
61 Von Uffenbach, *London in 1710*, 98.
62 Ibid., 98. Also qtd. in Altick, *The Shows of London*, 14.
63 Von Uffenbach, *London in 1710*, 98.
64 Thomas, "Compiling 'God's great book [of] universal nature'," 2.
65 Brears, "Ralph Thoresby," 215.
66 Ibid.
67 For a look at what definitively survives from Thoresby's original collection, see Connell and Boyd, "Material from the 'Musaeum' of Ralph Thoresby (1658–1725)," 31–40.
68 Anonymous, *The Four Kings of Canada*, 36; this description is taken, however, from Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705), 20–1, which in turn borrowed it from Hennepin.
69 *The Connoisseur* no. 76 (Thursday, 10 July 1755): 41.
70 For his part, Timberlake interpreted the Cherokee practice of burial alongside possessions as "probably introduced to prevent avarice, and, by preventing hereditary acquisitions, make merit the sole means of acquiring power, honour, and riches." See Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lieut. Henry Timberlake*, 68.
71 Blair claims wampum to be related to the "speaking by action" as used by Old Testament prophets, but only suggests that it is used to "declare their meaning" as much as speech without specifying how (Blair, *Lectures* vol. 1, 108); Beattie compares wampum to quipos, and notes it is "said to express, I know not how, the particulars of the transaction" (Beattie, *The Theory of Language*, 113).

72 Walpole, *Letters* vol. 7, 489.
73 Gordon, *Occasional Thoughts*, 44–5.
74 Todd, "Your Humble Servant Shows Himself," 132.
75 Bickham, *Savages*, 43.
76 *The European Magazine, and London Review* vol. 1 (January 1782): 21.
77 See King, "Woodlands Artifacts from the Studio of Benjamin West," 34–47.
78 See Green Fryd, "Rereading the Indian," 78–83.
79 King, *First Peoples*, 69.
80 Green Fryd, "Rereading the Indian," 74.
81 Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*, 9.
82 See Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious*, 88–9.
83 *London Evening Post* (18–20 December 1777) and Tickell, *Anticipation* (1778), 64.
84 Tobin, "Wampum Belts," 692–3.
85 For a further discussion of this portrait, see also Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 84–91.

Conclusion

1 In replicating the Indian warrior, Tobin suggests, Caldwell projects "an illusion of Indianness, but it is an Indianness rendered powerless by its incoherence." *Picturing Imperial Power*, 85.
2 Ibid., 86.
3 Colden, *History of the Five Indian Nations* (1747), 105.
4 Perhaps the most notorious instance of this in the eighteenth century is the 1737 Walking Purchase; on this treaty and the role of writing, see Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 61–4.
5 Though orientalism itself, as some critics note, was also lacking in consistent authoritative power in the eighteenth century. See Zuroski Jenkins, *A Taste for China*.
6 For a valuable overview of colonization across the Americas beginning in 1492, see Wright, *Stolen Contents*. For a look at the Canadian residential school system, whose legacy is very much present today, see Milloy, *A National Crime*.
7 Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, 221–2.
8 Kate Flint notes the British origins of the trope of the "dying Indian," for example, in *The Transatlantic Indian*, 34–40.