without ever getting out of debt. And this was by no means an exceptional case.

The *tulipomania* eventually subsided. It seems to have been an outgrowth of a period of undreamed-of material well-being, which led to irrational actions, of which the boiler-shop atmosphere of collecting and speculating is a striking manifestation. In such times, material success adds to the dynamic interplay of a strong desire to give proof of one’s prosperity and comfort, and to use “collectibles” for those purposes.

It is apparent that the admiration for the object not only gives reassurance to the owner. It enhances his self-image. It also provides protection against the insecurities of the past. It is easy to see how quickly the collecting “bug” could spread in a period when the whole country felt the quickened pulse of life and everyone tried to partake in the frenzied activity. In such times people are almost destined to seek some tangible evidence of reassurance against renewed vulnerability. And after the many difficult decades it was now collecting and the embellishment of their towns and their houses, not their churches, that became the rage in the course of Holland’s Golden Age.
THE PREVIOUS two chapters focused on historical periods that witnessed not only essential changes in Western man's perspective and his awareness of his manifest destiny but also the advance of rationalism and concomitantly the gradually diminishing impact of the preachings and dogmas of Latin Christendom. The schism in the Church was part of the breakdown of medieval culture due to changing social conditions and increasingly heterodox ideas.

However, probably nothing had a deeper and more lasting impact on medieval man than the collective trauma caused by the outbreak of plague or Black Death, first reported in 1347, when Petrarch was forty-three years old and at the height of his influence. Such a dramatic experience could not help but affect his ideology and worldview. We have already spoken of Petrarch's influence on rational thinking in an earlier chapter and noted that, regardless of the dramatic changes in the fabric of life in western Europe, it is finally the humanism of Petrarch and Dante which must stand as the preeminent source of rinasce— the Italian word for Renaissance referring to rebirth.

Ever since the trecento people tended more and more to search for the source of man's past and particularly for evidence of his Latin origins and ultimately his Greek heritage. Their inquiries reflected the intellectual and experiential leap from medieval ecclesiastical thinking to the enthusiastic exploration of the material world, including learning about the past and, as a result, developing a tendency to idealize antiquity. But this creative expansion was not restricted to a curiosity about history and mere intellectual inquiry. There was at the same time a practical side expressed in the vital pleasure taken in the possession of worldly goods and, to begin with in Italy, an astounding advance of urban development, of city culture and sophistication, even luxury.

There is no question that promising young artists like Donatello and Brunelleschi were deeply influenced by the mod-
ern spirit of the era. As I have already mentioned, they went to Rome as the “treasure hunters,” looking for archaeological specimens. An instance such as this illustrates how the new humanist worldview—the rediscovery not only of classical Rome but more tellingly of Nature as such—influenced the desire to expand learning and broaden the intellectual horizon of collectors and hobbyists alike.

But there were many other examples as well. Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), for one, provides us with a fine example of a true collector, motivated by forward-looking thought and intellect. Unlike Brunelleschi and Donatello, he was anything but a casual treasure hunter. So possessed was he in his habit that he thought nothing of stealing rare documents or of deceiving unsuspecting monks in order to get hold of valuable manuscripts that were often molding away in the vaults of the monasteries.

So much for the strategies and moral values of a dedicated collector at the time of the early Renaissance. This was by no means impulsive behavior. It was, rather, determined, carefully planned, and unambivalently goal-directed. However, we should at least contrast Poggio’s approach with the values of the Church, or his limits of honesty and integrity, prompted by his impelling passion.

Nor was he alone in his passion. Men like Thomas Phillipps or Cardinal Mazarin, who had their own rationales and habits of collecting, were probably equally predisposed. They all represent a personality type that is driven by the need to own and to be in control, and simply unable to wait or to tolerate frustration. While their modus operandi was influenced by the period and circumstances in which they flourished, there is sufficient evidence that they lived according to their own moral and psychological codes.

Balzac, another prototype, was well aware of such individual differences in collecting patterns, for while he himself was a nearly irrepressible accumulator, often with the idea of profit in mind, his brainchild, Sylvain Pons, represents an almost complete opposite type—one who made no concessions to impulsivity. This does not mean that different avenues of pursuit can easily be translated into different psychological configurations. It does imply, however, that both the manifest attitude and the unconscious forces responsible for the active drive to collect reflect much more than mere techniques of gathering and a yearn-

ing for accumulation. They involve a clearly individual stamp and inner experience, sometimes romantic and idealistic, as in the examples of Donatello and Brunelleschi, and at other times truly disciplined or systematic or scholarly.

Whatever their overt conduct, I am not in agreement with certain psychoanalytic propositions according to which “cupidity and collecting mania . . . have their correlating determinants in the infantile attitude toward feces.”36 This, I believe, is too confining a point of view. It is a homogenization on the basis of appearances and genetic phases instead of seeing the phenomenon in its immediate experiential context.

If one attempts to trace the individual development of collectors, it soon becomes evident that the actual cause of their habit and the role of this inclination cannot be limited to a particular phase-determined character trait. As I have shown earlier, this is not an elementary matter, since there are in most instances deeper and more involved sources for the often surprisingly powerful passion for a particular kind of object or, more to the point, for the habit as such.

From this point of view it would seem instructive to note that, in observing the manifest attitudes of different collectors it soon becomes evident that their individual behavior reveals quite similar needs but vastly different approaches in making their acquisitions. Thus, in keeping with their own specific ego constellations, different people are bound to take their own pathways with respect to their collecting techniques and preferences.

Basically these collectors’ impulses are not irrational because, regardless of the striking differences in character and lifestyles, the development of their passions can most of the time be plausibly reconstructed from their personal histories. I was surprised to learn from the many collectors I had an opportunity to interview that beneath their longing for possessions there was often a memory of early traumata or disillusionment, which then shifted the need for people to a narcissistic need for substitution functioning as their equivalent—in other words, a self-indulgence with objects. More specifically, this usually took the form of a chronic longing for objects rather than for people. People were, so it seemed, potentially unreliable.

A shell collector of my acquaintance once showed me a Golden Cowrie shell. To be more exact, he did not simply show it to me as other shell collectors might do when they point out
a careful arrangement of, say, different examples of one particular variety of shell, thereby revealing their inclination toward observation and method—indeed, a behavior trait that can be interpreted as a “successful repression of coprophilia.” Rather, this man, a confirmed bachelor, presented the shell like some delicate work of art or jewelry, and placed it on a tastefully selected blue velvet cushion. Such details reveal more of a collector’s personality. No impulse buyer would be inclined to display his or her objects in as solemn a fashion. Here, the man was expressing more than his mere pleasure in having finally obtained this specimen of considerable rarity and beauty, outstanding with respect to brightness of color and resplendent luster, as he eloquently explained.

“I fell in love with it,” he commented with visible pride. “I could not resist it. It took me years before it became available. It used to belong to a scientist of note, and only sometime after his death could I persuade the family to let me have it.”

As the man kept saying, he had known about the shell for a number of years and had longed after it ever since he first saw it. It had made him restless and it had caused what has been described as a sentiment d’incomplétude, an incapacity to feel complete without possessing it. He then went on to comment about its perfect shape and ideal color. “A masterpiece of nature,” he kept reassuring me. There were no blemishes, not even a small chip. And while he was speaking in these enthralled terms he could not suppress a transparent comparison.

“It’s like a body you find beautiful beyond description. You want it all for yourself.” At this point he took the shell, on its blue velvet cushion, back to its proper abode, a drawer where it was protected against the light. However, this did not occur until I had followed what had obviously become a traditional rite: I had to express my admiration of the shell for the collector.

Such an incident is instructive. It is not hard to recognize that situations of this kind are occasionally unconsciously calculated in order to elicit the acclaim of the observer. The man’s enchantment was clearly transposed from the plane of sensuality to a kind of triumphant overvaluation often observed among young lovers. Indeed, excesses of passion such as this show anthropomorphizing residues and are bound to cross the threshold of objectivity.”

There was no doubt that the shell was very beautiful, and that the man had made material sacrifices in order to obtain this rare specimen, a habit not at all uncommon among devoted collectors. But was his obviously romanticizing exaltation limited to this one specimen? The analogy with the body was revealing and close to the essential focus: He had to have it. He had to touch it. It had to be his.

In connection with this, I was reminded of another shell collector, an eighteenth-century Peruvian adventurer who was living for a while in Paris. He got permission to inspect the well-known collection of the Countess de Praslin-Rochechouart. She graciously presented him with some rare shells, probably duplicates of ones she already owned. Yet he still helped “himself to three others which he had not seen before despite the owner’s protest that she did not give away precious specimens for nothing, and, as if this were not in itself enough, he broke three more, supposedly unique.”

Whatever the aesthetic or historical or occult value of a collected specimen, emotional echoes are rooted in past experiences reawakening a delusional reaction either to a person (remember: the collector had referred to a body) or an object (or the proverbial security blanket or a doll), irrespective of its quality. What we observe here is an expression corresponding to the belief in amulets or magical relics or, for that matter, to toadstools when their presence remedied states of anxiety. We saw this in little Paul’s toy dogs. We hear about it from certain fanatics such as the Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, a contemporary of Martin Luther, who owned enough holy relics to buy himself 39,245,120 years of indulgences and salvation. There is, then, a sense of relief and hence a subjective exaggeration or overestimation of value, an almost quantitative-capitalist contrivance for redemption.

In the shell collector’s case, his reference to a body was like an involuntary confession, since the symbolic equation had little to do with the shell’s conchological rarity or exceptional quality. Remarks of this kind, even in the form of a puckish aside, should not go unnoticed. It is not at all uncommon for the attitude of a devoted collector toward his objects is similar in many ways to a lover’s passion and, further, that overvaluation is, after all, a well-known trait among lovers and collectors alike.
One must be aware of the fact that the emotion is detached from the outside world and narcissistically invested in the collected object.

There is no denying that the symbolic equivalence here tells us much of the inner nature of the man’s experience. His beautiful object really means that he is not alone. If we think of the traumatic events in so many collectors’ early lives, it is easy to see how affection has been displaced to “things,” rather than to people who have proven not to be reliable.

I remind my readers of the late Mario Praz who once described to me something that occurred while he was around London. He was looking into a bookshop and his attention was suddenly drawn to a chandelier. (He also spoke of this incident in a fine passage in his House of Life.) “When I saw it I felt so deeply in love with it that, if it had been for sale, I would have done anything in the world to acquire it.”

Here the source of satisfaction, even of deep love, appears to derive from something other than devotion to a loved person or, rather, from a stable emotional involvement. Instead early frustrations or traumata have led to what George Steiner has aptly called a “malign emptiness,” with respect to people, and we find a pronounced sensitivity to and idealization of objects. Chandeliers and other decorative objects or shells or even exquisite works of art are appreciated not just for their aesthetic excellence.

Professor Praz’s collection was famous for its high quality of Empire furniture and abundance of elegant decorative examples, but as his personal history implies, early sensitivity, largely prompted by the consequences of his congenital impairment, encouraged compensatory gratification: since his body was imperfect, he chose to acquire and surround himself with impeccable objects.

Other collectors would readily confirm to what degree time and affection can be attached to those tokens of one’s involvement. The noted book and manuscript dealer, the late Hans Kraus, once told me about a similar phenomenon in connection with his early captivity by postal stamps and, later, rare books and manuscripts—rather than attractive young ladies. For him rare books became a lifelong craving and fascination, and discovering or obtaining them remained his ambition. This he correctly understood to be “a mistress of another kind, safer and more exciting” than the real thing.

Keeping this observation in mind, I thought of the Goncourt brothers, two French writers, who warned that “those who believe themselves to be in love ruin themselves for their passion: whether for woman or thing, for art objects alive or inanimate [September 12, 1868].” But then Jules de Goncourt, the younger of the two, died of syphilis in consequence of his sexual encounters at the age of thirty-nine, two years after the diary entry. The brothers’ affection for each other had many homoerotic overtones. Nonetheless, women in their lives had only a casual and noncommittal meaning, as if their temporary presence would merely highlight the lasting fraternal closeness.

Kraus had been made aware of similar dangers: “for better or for worse, father had put the fear of syphilis into me,” he noted. This was quite a realistic warning at the time before the miracle drugs of antibiotics would separate every young man’s romantic affairs from the haunting image of hazardous contagion. Such a threat itself would almost certainly tend to make people satisfy their sexual longings through other than amorous encounters. In this regard, Kraus told me how he would pursue the owner of certain rare books and how he would approach him year after year, and wine and dine him, and offer him other desirable books in exchange or replace it with other objects for the books he coveted. And he painted these adventures in what were almost rhapsodic tones.

To be sure, in our particular context, diverting one’s affections or, in psychoanalytic terms, splitting the ego between sexual and desexualized interests, does not imply an irreconcilable conflict. Books, shells, chandeliers, or cookie jars, for that matter, may be objects an avowed collector cannot do without, yet they do not necessarily constitute an opposite stimulant to the physiological impulse of sexual relations. However, there is no denying that the love for objects so emotionally expressed by Praz is inevitably interlinked with a preexisting narcissistic clinging to tangible possessions.

In reality the range of nuances and variations in the pleasure taken in whatever one assembles or even hoards is indeed infinite, especially among those collectors who are so entranced by their possessions that all other emotions are shunted into the
background. When the second Lady Phillipps complained that she had been “booked” out of one room and “rated” out of another, she expressed quite graphically the idea that marital bliss had been sacrificed at the expense of her husband’s self-centered character. Obviously, she had forgotten that Sir Thomas had been “in the market,” as he wrote, for a substantial dowry, rather than a wife; and that his sole purpose in marrying a second time was to satisfy even more his progressively obsessive need for new acquisitions.

There is no doubt that there is an infantile component in the behavior of a man of Thomas Phillipps’s character, where collectibles (in psychoanalytic definition we would think of them as narcissistic supplies) are meant to ward off a deep sense of anguish and avert a recurrence of childhood feelings of mystification, loneliness, and rage. Even wealthy collectors such as J. Paul Getty or the Empress Catherine the Great have let us know how powerfully their reactions were ruled by emotions when it came to making new acquisitions. “Reality considerations are abandoned and the impelling aim...is the pursuit for the acquisition of an object,” observed M. M. Segal tellingly enough, not in connection with some collectors’ manic pursuit of new objects but for immediate sexual gratification,20 as in the case of another collector previously mentioned, the Don Juan.

Keeping in mind that those intense needs are rooted in an early sense of abandonment or of literally being out of touch and then longing for something tangible, the inner drivenness to guarantee possession (in experiential terms we should speak of re-possession) is sometimes uncontrollable.

Among collectors, it is not at all uncommon to hear people refer to certain objects in anthropomorphizing or animistic terms. Jacques Kerchache, a French collector and a dealer in African and Oceanic art, once remarked to me in reference to a representative sculpture from Zaire that he did not care for it because it had “no soul.” Although I myself saw some artistic merit in the figure, I immediately understood what he had in mind.

My main concern here is not with the emotional experience one or the other object may arouse in a person. Rather, I am using this vivid example in order to exemplify how a discriminating collector’s response leans on the recall of pleasurable memories, possibly from early childhood. In such an instance, the visual experience of the sculpture should be captivating enough to magically evoke the illusion of a live creature.

Magic is closely akin to such emotional reactions. In observing magic acts and rituals in preliterate societies, we soon become aware that their psychological plot aims essentially at the self-assertion of the magician by turning insecurity and doubt into its opposite (i.e., fantasies of control, superiority, and excellence).

Similarly, “collectibles” are, strictly speaking, implements that are meant to enhance or restore a narcissistically injured person’s sense of self. This seems to be the principle that appeals to the unconscious pleasurable memory traces of many collectors. It touches pretty closely on what is, to the outsider, often quite curious behavior.

It is the recurrence of this experience which has led many observers to describe the collector’s quest as a compulsion to repeat. It is a trait known to every collector. After all, whatever the objects in his possession, they all represent a special moment of search and the excitement every find elicits. One man told me that he had never returned from a journey without having discovered a worthwhile object, be it in a rummage sale or under a heap of bric-à-brac, as when a rare Oriental vase appeared among broken or damaged late Victorian porcelain, or as a Dutch acquaintance, Loed van Bussel, described to me a fine seventeenth-century Benin ivory carving that had been miscatalogued in a country sale as a comparatively ordinary piece of Japanese carving.

There is no question about the fact that nearly every collector has a hungry eye or, as my late friend Paul Wallraf, collector par excellence, put it: he would “manger avec ses yeux”—eat with his eyes—an expressive description of the visual experience I have spoken about throughout this book, which is the essentially oral-incorporative longing for a continuous flow of new additions to one’s collection.

If we look at the behavior of many collectors with respect to discoveries or purchases, one soon becomes aware that they often tend to follow a certain pattern. For example, one of my informants owned a specialized library of travel books and guide books, among them a number of unique and much
sought-after volumes. Many of them were discovered in out-of-the-way antiquarian bookshops, which he visits and explores quite systematically at more or less regular intervals. Unlike those who rely on contacts and scouts, he insists on making the finds himself.

His love for travel books, he told me, is a direct outgrowth of his experiences during the first seven or eight years of his life, when he accompanied his parents on their tours of the American continent to appear in variety acts. His constant concern was where they would go next and who would take care of him while his parents were working. He remembered alternating between the anticipation of seeing another town and the apprehension of being left with a strange new sitter.

Eventually his parents gave him a number of picture books and postcards and photographs of the places they had visited, and these gave him some sense of continuity. But, he stressed, and not without pride, the turning point came when he began to help his father in reading maps to find the right road or a better road before his father could do so. This gave him more than the feeling of superiority. It was a real triumph, he said. Besides, knowing the destination—and actually seeing the place on the map—helped alleviate some of his fears and uncertainties.

By assuming total responsibility for his quite unique collection, he maintained this kind of control. His insistence on finding the books himself was but a repetition of what had given him this initial sense of skill and mastery. In other words, not only was he collecting travel guides and maps, which had first provided him with a sense of greater security, but he also felt compelled to repeat those moments of elation when he found the best road by himself. Now, as an adult man discovering yet another book or map or even another bookshop, but, revealingly, without anyone’s help, the same sense of triumph (over his father) returned over and over again.²⁸⁴

This example should be contrasted with that of a woman with fine taste and a more-than-average knowledge of medieval history. In this connection, she had developed a predilection for select examples of early tapestries and put together a beautiful group of rare specimens, often in direct competition with major museums. Only under exceptional circumstances would she acquire a piece without consulting a professional acquaintance or connoisseur even though she had a better eye than most of them. When other people’s opinions reinforced her own, and the preliminary judges had approved an item, she would turn to a scholarly expert for final advice.

In view of her own expertise, she hardly needed any other opinion, so that it became clear to me that she required something more than agreement with her initial choice and judgment. Every acquisition obviously triggered emotional upheaval that was excessive in terms of the new piece or its cost, especially in view of her financial independence. She acknowledged that she needed someone else’s encouragement to mitigate her intrinsic apprehension and, ultimately, guilt in making new purchases.

But why guilty? One of her often repeated rhetorical questions caught my attention: “How can I permit myself?” she was always asking when she was considering another purchase.

In this case, the conflict and turmoil represented a repeated return to old modes of behavior, which centered around her persistent envy of four older brothers who, she had always felt, had been wanted by her parents, while she was not. As the youngest child and only girl she had never felt “good enough.” She sought relief from this chronic feeling of unworthiness and envy, which was followed by self-reproach. Placing the onus of release from inhibition and decision-making on experts seemed to arrest her guilt feelings. Her perpetual struggle between self-indulgence and an awareness of at times grandiose fantasies generated hours of histrionics before she could make up her mind. Her behavior revealed the various facets of her ambivalence. She really did find those tapestries beautiful examples of craftsmanship, even though her longing for possession and having them reproduced or exhibited involved early fantasies the dynamic meaning of which were linked to her hope that she was now “as good as” her brothers.

By calling on professionals in loco parentis she tried to transform envy and possessiveness into specialness and, with the help of her collection, attention and desirability. One could also say that it was a borrowed sense of acceptability. But does such behavior truly alter the basic intent? While I was not in a position to ask this lady personal questions, her conduct was at times so extreme that she could barely conceal the inner rage
which motivated her possessiveness, seeking relief from her
cflict by employing judges as guarantors against her uncon-
scious fear of retribution because she had given way to her
desires.

She is not alone. While the elements in her approach contrast
with those of collectors who insist on making purchases or,
rather, the discoveries themselves, others lean on dealers who,
like the experts in the lady’s case, function as arbiters and act as
if they had the power to release their customers from their un-
conscious guilt feelings. This is not because purchasing a col-
lectable item is a culpable act, but that the object represents the
fulfilment of a forbidden wish.

When collectors idealize one or the other supplier they may
indeed feel that they have been singled out like best-loved chil-
dren. It is not at all unusual to hear a collector say: “I always get
first crack from John,” as if he was finally receiving the love and
favored position he had wished for ever since his early years of
turmoil and disappointments. Collector-dealer relationships
often feature a finely tuned interplay between the needful
collector-acquisitor and the astute and, indeed, empathetic
dealer-provider. The notion of being the preferred customer, or
in emotional terms the best-loved child, appears then as a
source of relief and assurance while revealing an infantilized as-
pect in the collector’s personality.

It is in the light of such variations in behavioral styles that we
should consider some other personalities. Sylvain Pons and
Lady Charlotte Schreiber shared, at least superficially, several
characteristics. With outstanding intuition Balzac sketched Pons
as a man of remarkable energy, determination, and knowledge.
In addition, Pons shared with Lady Schreiber an ultimate satis-
faction in discovering bargains.

Born Lady Charlotte Elizabeth Bertie, she began keeping a
diary in 1822 at the age of ten. However, her celebrated collec-
tion of ceramics, now one of the prized possessions of the Victo-
ria and Albert Museum in London, was not begun until 1869,
when she was already a grandmother. She grew up as a poor
little rich girl. “When my mother was born her father was 68,
and he died in 1818 when she was six years old,” wrote her son,
of her first marriage, Montague Guest. Three years after her fa-
ther’s death, Lady Charlotte’s mother married a cousin, a diffi-
cult alcoholic, whom the child detested. One gets the impression
of a forlorn and sometimes depressed girl who “led rather a
lonely life and was thrown very much on her own resources.”

Such a view is in keeping with our wider and more com-
prehensive picture of the woman. Both her sons were noted col-
collectors. “She was fired with the spirit of collecting from seeing my
brother and me returning from our trips abroad laden with
china and curiosities of all sorts.” Her son of her first marriage,
Montague J. Guest, writes. “She had always had within her the
spirit of the collector and connoisseur...” She hunted high and
low, through England and abroad; France, Holland, Germany,
Spain, Italy, Turkey, all were ransacked; she left no stone un-
turned, no difficulty, discomfort, fatigue, or hardship of travel
dunted her.

Often her search was crowned with success, although her dia-
aries recount the stories of the many inevitable dead ends famil-
ilar to any collector. However, skill in carrying out her venture
had become imperative, as set forth in many detailed entries. On
August 17, 1869, she wrote:

In train before 6. At Amsterdam about 11. Put up at Brack’s
Doolen. Set off immediately ‘en chasse.’ First to van Houtum’s in
the same street. Very little in our way; one or two Chelsea cows,
sheep, etc., at high prices. Our purchases of him in the course of
our stay consisted only of a small purple enamel pot and cover,
10/-; A Chelsea Pug (tail replaced), 10/-; Derby biscuit group
(arm replaced), £1.10. Good Chelsea Derby figure of a youth sac-
ificing a goat (head replaced), 10/-; After van Houtum’s we
had a grand ‘Chasse’ at Ganz’s, and a rather successful one,
though not to be compared to that of two years ago when we
pulled down from his rafters one or two fine Bristol jugs. At
Ganz’s we have found two excellent Chelsea jardinières painted
with flowers, which he sold us as old Dresden, for £1.15. Our next
best haul was with Speyers, St. Anthony, Broestraat; from him we
made several purchases, some of them likely to be good. Two
groups of Derby-China figures, man and girl in bocage of
leaves, good condition, only two figures wanting, ‘Proposal’ and
‘Acceptance’ (2). £15.25

Then followed visits to five other dealers, after which she and
her husband proceeded to The Hague to make additional pur-
chases. Their next stops were Gouda, Utrecht, and Rotterdam and then “up again by cockrow the next morning.”

This lonely, defensively rigid girl had turned into an impressively astute woman, energetic, single-minded, and often better informed than her suppliers. Her resolute stance sounds like an echo of early fights for survival, and the residue of a childhood with two younger, mentally deficient brothers. There had been constant friction, mainly with her alcoholic stepfather.

Her approach, though uncommon for a woman of the Victorian era, was consistent and revealing. She goes “en chasse”; she goes ramshaking; she hauls or pulls down from a dealer’s rafter some jugs that strike her fancy. The relevance lies in the entire fabric of her thrust. Her son recalled an incident he had heard from Sir Joseph Duveen, the well-known art dealer. Duveen was on his way to an isolated village in an inaccessible part of the Netherlands. It could be reached only through a difficult journey by carriage. Nevertheless, in view of some rare objects owned by one of the local inhabitants, he undertook the expedition. Shortly before reaching his destination he saw another carriage coming in the opposite direction. While passing he caught a glimpse of Lady Schreiber, “only to find that she had snatched the prize, which she was carrying off with her.”

There is no question that this is a modified version of the successful hunt or the chase and capturing the trophy; in Lady Charlotte’s case, I see her mode of action as an attempt to prove her dominance vis-à-vis her stepfather, and also to enhance her self-esteem. At its simplest, it can be a fleeting impulse, like bringing home a souvenir. At its most committed, it assumes the proportions of a kind of aggression with masculine potential, if not dominance or an all-consuming, sensuous activity surpassing rational ends.

Habituated collectors of Lady Charlotte’s behavior, impassioned and not easily deterred, feel peculiarly driven to follow a certain pattern, making their rounds weekly or daily but usually with a certain regularity. “I must find something or I’ll get mad,” commented a young man infatuated with military insignia.

It would probably be more correct to call such a man a hoarder for he delighted in the masses he brought together. The only limit he had set himself was the price. He would not go beyond a fixed amount. He represents the opposite of the care-

ful, even though eccentric type of which Charles Ricketts, the English designer, epitomizes possibly one of the most outstanding examples.

Long before I embarked on this study I had read excerpts of his letters and journals. “You would not think that Old Master drawings would be at home with a birdcage ... each object, being in itself perfect, added its lustre to the whole,” wrote his friend Cecil Lewis. Ricketts and his companion C. H. Shannon were genuinely dedicated to finding objects of art, all selected with an almost unique sense of quality and vision distinguishing between the often quite subtle difference between true artistry from good craftsmanship. But then their actual living quarters reflected “almost poverty-stricken puritan simplicity,” showing the same intentional discipline with which they pursued their acquisitions. This involves a narcissistic attempt to keep decision-making in strict control and, unlike many collectors, to be on top of one’s affects. The collection assembled in other rooms seemed like an “indulgence in luxury ... arranged in perfect taste.” Ricketts, who was the more influential of the two, “had skimmed and saved on daily expense in order to amass his magnificent collection [now in the British Museum]. If you had an Old Master drawing worth £50,000.00, then surely you could afford a car? But you could not. You walked or went by bus; and it was by doing this for a lifetime that you had what you had.”

Ricketts’s temperament contrasts sharply with the appetites of George Gustave Heye. Heye’s self-centered behavior is very illuminating for the understanding of another collector’s practices. His aims and objectives were doubtless ruled by his primitive-compulsive boldness, largely expressed in his insistence to pursue everything that was Native American Indian. His tenacity had many elements in common with Lady Schreiber. He was unconventional, a nonconformist, and of unequalled dynamism, and often manic. He too started his collection at a mature age—but then with a vengeance. Was he trying to catch up with the excitement that was lacking in his youth? Or had his inclination merely remained dormant until some external event triggered this yearning?

Heye was omnivorous and monomaniacal. Why he focused his attention on Native American Indian objects is unclear, although any collector’s preference is influenced by a variety of
circumstances. In Lady Charlotte’s case, her sons’ collection stimulated her interest. Often it can simply be a trendy fashion, as at the time the Ladies Six in Amsterdam mentioned to me that “Our family always collected modern,” and indeed, when the Six’s bought their Rembrandts and Saenredams they were among the most avant-garde collectors of their time buying “modern masters.” Or Martin G.’s area of choice was determined by his father’s death in the Far East.

Often people’s preference is linked to their professional occupation. I have met physicians who collected old apothecary jars, and surgeons with collections of very impressive historical surgical instruments. Miss Freud was kind enough to show me her father’s Greek and Roman collection, an offshoot of both his idealization of classical antiquity as well as his psychoanalytic work by delving into his patients’ distant past, which he used to compare with making discoveries by digging for remote, deeply hidden archaeological specimens. According to Peter Gay, “Freud’s . . . collecting of antiquities reveals residues in adult life of [no less] anal enjoyment.”

In Heye’s case I am inclined to attach much significance to his collecting habit as such rather than to the specific area that became, apparently almost accidentally, the focus of his activities.

Heye was a huge man, standing six foot four and weighing around 220 pounds. He was renowned for his voracious appetite, and smoked innumerable king-size cigars. I recall that the late Sam Lothrop, the outstanding Central-American archaeologist, once described him as having been born with a cigar in his mouth. These particulars seem to hint at something of a very basic bodily narcissism. Everything he did or was reflected largeness, and here and there even grossness.

His vast collection was eventually established as the Museum of the American Indian in Upper Manhattan, in New York City (the museum was later relocated to Ellis Island). It contains approximately four million items, ranging from common flints and potsherds to a great number of superb masterpieces of Native American Indian art.

What we can put together of Heye’s personality sounds more like a novelist’s invention than a portrait of an actual person. Some saw him as a collector of note; others as a ruthless, compulsive scavenger, and even a looter of precious works of art.

His approach had the earmarks of some kind of drunken revelry. The methods he employed with such impressive results attest to his uncompromising perseverance. One can view his collection as the outcome of creative dedication or devout ecstasy, or as the result of the hunger of a megalomaniacal narcissist, considering his oral habits. Still, owing to his compulsive temperament, he created a monument to himself which is also a major cultural contribution.

It is doubtful that Heye thought of himself as a man whose destiny was to rescue Native American Indian art. “I doubt whether his goal was anything more than to own the biggest damned hobby collection in the world,” a scholar commented. “George had absolutely no sense of sin. He didn’t give a hang about Indians individually,” said another.

If these characterizations are correct—and there is no doubt that they accurately depict some aspects of the man’s habits and personality—Heye did not hesitate to foist his neurotic presence on others regardless of circumstances and environment.

René Gimpel, the noted Parisian art dealer, remembered the famous bibliophile Gallimard and his collection of nineteenth-century woodcuts. After the death of any engraver of repute, he would appear like a vulture or see at the premises of the deceased: “I’d rush round to his widow or see at the premises of the deceased. I’ve made good use of my opportunities,” he proudly commented. Gimpel was impressed by the sheer lack of any sense of guilt, not unlike the young Don Juan’s simulated amorous protestations or Heye’s remarkable lack of conscience. Gallimard’s eyes would sparkle when he related such tales. “What a book could be written on the cruelty of the collector,” was Gimpel’s perceptive comment.

Heye was probably cut from similar cloth, his successful collecting apparently resulting from a conglomeration of horse sense, good luck, and tenacity. I do not know what early experiences laid the ground for his monomania. He told of one incident that acted as a sort of catalyst. While working in Arizona as a young man of twenty three, he saw an Indian woman biting a piece of deerskin she had on her lap. She was apparently killing the lice that had infested her husband’s skin shirt. Heye bought the shirt, the first item of his Indian collection. “The collecting bug seized me and I was lost,” he wrote at a later date.
The “bug” became progressively evident, not surprisingly emerging as a substitute for emotional involvements. His wealth enabled him to cultivate his greed and possessiveness without any pangs of guilt or regard for other people's feelings. His collecting habits echo Thomas Phillipps's crudeness and total self-centeredness. Heye’s ruthlessness destroyed at least two of his three marriages, and both his children committed suicide.

Little illustrates a man's disposition better than his rituals. Once a year Heye purchased a new automobile and raced across the United States from coast to coast. Here and there he would stop, “look up the local mortician and weekly-newspaper editor, and ask for word of people lately deceased, or soon likely to become so, whose possessions might include an Indian collection.” On these trips Heye also visited Indian reservations. “George would be fretful and hard to live with,” a former staff member remarked, “until he'd bought every last dirty dishcloth and discarded shoe and shipped them back to New York. He felt that he couldn't conscientiously leave a reservation until its entire population was practically naked.”

His unrelenting obsession shows a solid measure of ambivalence toward the Indians. By stripping them “practically naked” he carried home his badges of victory. Heye once suggested to one of his associates, that he “would make a killing by doing some more [excavating] work,” and the man contentedly agreed. “And that’s just what we made—a killing. World's and world's of pots, fifteen hundred years old, and skeletons, shell beads, gaming stones.” Remarks such as these reveal an essential element of the affective components of the man's ruthlessness, quite at variance with Judeo-Christian ethics. The aggressive-narcissistic aspirations of these actions are not so far removed from those of the headhunters of Borneo or New Guinea.

As the acquired object brings with it additional support and hence narcissistic enhancement, envy and brute sadistic instincts play a large part in the perpetual search for personal triumph in order to ward off one's susceptibility to helplessness and frustration. Heye's explicit vocabulary and actions imply a notion of this complex interdependence of hidden rage, destructiveness, and obsessional control. His suggestion of “making a killing” is at least a symbolic correlate to both the headhunter's endeavors and the unconscious rage caused, as we have seen, by the baby's helplessness and his need to cling. It is then that fear and anger come to the child's aid in his maneuver at self-rescue, as I described in Paul's attachment to his rag dog Mickey.

As the acquired object brings with it relief from doubt and frustration, there also comes a better notion of successful action. This reduces tension and is experienced as a sense of joy. Thus, in the case of many collectors, jealousy and a competitive spirit play a large part in this restless search for personal triumph.

In this connection, it is unequivocally more pertinent to consider the struggle between an involuntary and passionate craving for possessions on the one hand and, on the other, social pressure, lack of conscience, and embarrassing fears. This conflict puts many people in a double bind. The question is, then: How and to what extent do the restraining injunctions alter tension and the discharge of the compulsion? Or, perhaps more frequently: How does the longing lead to behavior or temptations that the collector himself, were he able to view them objectively and reasonably, would acknowledge are contrary to expectations of decency and consideration?

The Peruvian shell collector's feelings of resentment and envy when exposed to a truly unique collection expressed themselves in the form of thievery and rage. Heye's attitude was not less brutally impulsive than Verres's strong-arm tactics in Sicily. And quite similar sentiments moved Christina of Sweden when she ordered her troops to ransack Prague in the autumn of 1648, and brought five shiploads of the Emperor Rudolf II's art treasures to Sweden. Her covetousness, in many ways a reaction to her kyphosis (hunchback), was known throughout Europe, and her quest to satisfy her vanity and eccentric demands transcended any moral expectations.

These vignettes give ample evidence of the occasionally curious roads some collectors travel in order to pursue their aims. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the auction rooms, where the tense and occasionally electric atmosphere can bring to the fore the play of human emotions among those who actively participate.

All auction sales follow certain prescribed procedures, which form a clearly delineated, ritualistic pattern. In Great Britain particularly, the calm and seemingly dispassionate conduct of
the auctioneer stands in sharp contrast to the tension found among some of the bidders. And it is instructive to observe the bidders’ behavior. Fear, covetousness, greed—all combine to build an occasionally hysterical fever arising not only out of the urge to possess. There is also the contagion of the frenzy and the direct challenge of competition.

In this sphere of one-upmanship, unconscious impulses of rivalry, fear of failure, and feelings of inferiority may often be counteracted by deceptive, and, indeed, self-deceptive, forms of ambition and manic extroversion. This atmosphere in the salesroom, not unlike that of a poker game, frequently tends to incite unconscious cravings for possession, triumph, and trophy-gathering that culminate in the crescendo of not only carrying away the prize but oftentimes also of attracting attention and even applause. Was it the intention of some collectors to put themselves on the stage?

But the majority of collectors do not attend auctions, and not many of those who do exhibit extremes of behavior. Still, the circumstances may be persuasive enough to bring otherwise less overt character traits to the fore. The atmosphere of rivalry and intrigue, the chance of immediate rewards, and the prospect of acquisition of objects someone else once owned and so provided with a pedigree, all help to create an environment in which decision-making can become quite independent of a bidder’s better judgment.

I remember that, on one occasion, a few days before an auction sale, a young, well-informed collector of old medals gave me an illuminating description of the historical and aesthetic elements, the rarity and variations in design of some pieces included in the sale. He also gauged their true market value, and after some calculations and careful consideration, he informed me that he had decided to bid on two special items in the sale of the importance of which nobody else would fathom. And, he added, under no circumstances would he go beyond a certain price.

On the day of the sale I saw him once again, and once more he repeated his resolve not to exceed his carefully established and realistic limit. Somewhat later I saw him again in the salesroom.

Shortly after the first and less important items had been sold, a middle-aged man entered the room. His presence seemed to cause a stir among a few of the people at the sale. A bit later the first medal my friend had wanted was offered. After a few hesitant moments he nodded at the auctioneer. There were several other bidders, and soon the price had reached the high estimate in the catalogue although it was still below the limit the collector had set for himself. For a few moments there was no other bid. But just before the auctioneer’s hammer went down, the newcomer signaled a further bid.

Now a chase began, with each denying the other the triumph. It soon became apparent that whoever finally got the medal would win only a Pyrrhic victory. As is all too common at auctions, the collector had abandoned his resolve and had not unexpectedly made a higher bid than the medal was worth. What is more, he also had abandoned his rational self. Indeed, the very climate of the salesroom environment has impelled many collectors to abandon logical decision and self-restraint in favor of competition and, not inconceivably, exhibitionistic grandeur. In this case, I believe, the collector gave in to his possessive instinct. This in turn triggered a fugue state, brought on by fear of a narcissistic humiliation in case he had to suffer defeat at the hands of a competitor.

Or did the medal become more desirable merely because someone else wanted it? And, possibly, did the medal, rare and exceptional as it was, actually become a love object?

The event itself ended pitifully. Later, at home with his loot, the collector started to cry and shudder like a helpless young boy, confused and guilt-ridden, full of self-reproach, angst, and torment. It was a kind of ex-post-factum self-punishment.

This is a concrete illustration of a characteristic superego decompensation in a particular social and public milieu. But as this milieu supports narcissistic action for self-enhancing aims, it also tends to induce alterations in autonomy and critical judgment. The collector wanted to show "them." He also had the self-deceptive conviction that he alone knew, better than his symbolic fathers or brothers, or the fraternity in the auction room, the true worth of the medal, and that he had made a discovery and, by implication, deserved the trophy.

The charged atmosphere of the gambling casino and the auction room tends to create a prototypic ambience among those in attendance. As a result, judgment and perception can be blunted or reduced, and it is at this time that the passive-recep-
tive longing of the gambler or the object hunger of the collector succumbs to the potentially mesmerizing effect of the room itself. Characteristically, people tend to be "carried away," as the self-explanatory expression implies.

This leads me to examine one remaining aspect of collectors' conduct in the salesroom setting. I happened to be present when I had the chance to witness the exact opposite of the abandonment of one's ordinary critical powers. In this case, an ambitious collector's skillfully composed scheme made him the winner in a contest for a very desirable specimen. Again, a rather large group of aficionados had gathered for an auction of papyri and manuscripts, some of them known, reproduced, and exhibited at various occasions. Other items had recently been discovered, and a couple of them had surprised the connoisseurs. Such conditions often help to start rumors and can be striking manifestations of strategems of cupidity. The skeptics take cover. Others may research the state of the parchment or paper, the color and the script. But in view of our question the items as such are of little concern.

The sale took place in a London auction room. There was no empty seat, and several of the leading dealers and collectors had taken the more prestigious seats around the cloth-covered table in front of the auctioneer's desk. The sale began punctually as is customary. One man with a well-known and exemplary collection had seated himself in relaxed fashion at the table. His gestures and body movements indicated that he was settling down for the length of the auction as he arranged himself comfortably with the catalogue in front of him, and a couple of morning newspapers and a shopping bag beside his chair.

The first few items that were offered he ignored. Then one manuscript seemed to draw more than average attention from the audience. He was one of the bidders but abstained shortly before the hammer came down. He participated once again for one of the following items but eventually seemed to hesitate and finally pulled out of the competition. During the next few offerings he began glancing through the morning papers, helped himself to a candy, and made a production out of getting something out of his shopping bag by bending down rather demonstratively to his bag. There remained a few other lots before the last and most important items, namely, those recently discover-

ered illuminated pages that had evoked so much discussion in the book world. At this moment, perhaps coincidentally, the shopping bag fell on its side causing a moment of commotion; and while the auctioneer, as it seemed, unperturbed by the distraction, invited an opening bid on one of the important items, which was followed by the customary few seconds of silence, the collector stood up, assembled his newspapers, took the catalogue and shopping bag, and worked his way back to the entrance and seemingly out of the salesroom.

Everyone in the room had seen what the man had done, and everyone was convinced of his lack of interest in the pages being offered. This added to the uncertainty of the faint-hearted because almost all the likely buyers were well aware of his expertise in this area. And before his potential rivals had a chance to compose themselves, the hammer had come down, and the manuscript had been sold. The price was reasonably low.

Meanwhile, the collector had vanished or so it seemed. But no. Instead, he had taken a place at the entrance from which he could be seen by the auctioneer but barely be observed by the audience. He got his reward, and he could be proud not only of it but of his strategy.

In looking over this entire scenario, it is striking to consider how well orchestrated the man's procedures had been. He had studied the manuscripts thoroughly and had convinced himself of their authenticity. He knew he wanted them. He also knew how to produce signals that added to his competitors' insecurity, as well as to the auctioneer's. Implicitly, he fully understood that rational thought and even knowledge would give way to uncertainty and doubt given the proper stimulus.

The practical proof of how correct his maneuver had been was in his success. He had counted on the all-pervasive internal tension and the need for evidential support that mark the collectors' ego constellation. He also knew that his apparent lack of enthusiasm would evoke uneasiness or insecurity in others, and lead to his good fortune. A seasoned collector himself, he was well aware of both the appetite but also how to conceal it.

There are, of course, many other avenues collectors, and especially experienced ones, know in order to satisfy their ambitions. Here it has been my intention to sketch some profiles of
conduct. They shed light on a few characteristic ways people travel to satisfy their unconscious needs of these magic objects. Like holy relics, "collectibles" seem endowed with extraordinary qualities that help dispel old self-doubts and fears of vulnerability because they recede behind sentiments of pride and accomplishment.

1. Peter Bull with some of his teddy bears. Photo: Topham Picture Source, U.K.
4. Vanitas, by Edwaert Collier (about 1662); Dutch. Vanitas paintings of the seventeenth century were inspired by the prevailing religious concepts trying to show the ultimate triviality of earthly goods and possessions. Those objects of ostentation and pride are frequently found in curio cabinets. With permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.


8. Medical paraphernalia and instruments. Photo: Christie's, London.

10. Interior of a collector's living room displaying a variety of New Guinea sculptures. Anonymous collection, U.S.A.

The Promise of Pleasure

The purpose of the present book was to arrive at a better understanding of the phenomenon of collecting. I have not been dealing here with collecting as an isolated manifestation. As in clinical work I wanted rather to arrive at a deeper insight into a variety of characteristic elements of certain processes in the human experience. More specifically, I wanted to examine collectors' motivations and the dynamics of their undertakings. I was looking for convincing insight into what constitutes the impelling factors of their passion, their commitment, and the nature of their occasionally baffling conduct in response to their wishful longings.

Not surprisingly, the various profiles and vignettes presented here illustrate quite different personalities from disparate eras and walks of life, with different aims, styles, and preferences. But styles and preferences are surface deflections or, in psychoanalytic parlance, secondary elaborations, in most cases influenced by one's environment, social and cultural, and more often than not by the prevailing values and dominant traits of the living generation.

But then there are different attitudes in response to a variety of stimuli, as for example, Lady Schreiber's infatuation with porcelain after her sons showed her the chinaware they had garnered in the course of their journeys, or in Lord Bath's case where collecting, even though in a different field than the one his ancestors had pursued for about five centuries, is considered a family obligation. Or take John Steinbeck's amusing and quite down-to-earth mockery: "If the battered, cracked and broken stuff our ancestors tried to get rid of now brings so much money, think what a 1954 Oldsmobile, or a 1960 toadstool will bring... I guess the truth is that I simply like junk,")

In listening to collectors' descriptions of their habit, one soon becomes aware of the force of the causative circumstances that seek satisfaction. Obtaining one or another object is a prerequisite of finding relief from what one lady described as "unbear-
able restlessness." It is more than an impulse. Rather, I see it as an in essence defensive move, initially with the aim of turning disillusionment and helplessness into an animated, purposeful venture. If collecting is kept within these bounds it is by no means an unhealthy ego defense. It is a device to tolerate frustration and a way of converting a sense of passive irritation, if not anger, into challenge and accomplishment.

Collecting is not simply a response to certain manifest stimuli, as a rare coin collector of my acquaintance claimed because he remembered when he first found a penny and shortly thereafter began hoarding old coins, even before he entered school. There are many similar examples, of course. However, further exploration showed with amazing frequency that the inclination itself was an undeniable reaction to earlier states of frustration. This appears, at least temporarily, to dominate a person's behavior and, in a more definable way, has a curious double function because acquisition acts as both a palliative and a stimulant. After the collector has found a new object or made another acquisition, it seems to serve as an acknowledgment of his worth, at least consciously and for a while. Meantime he no longer feels haunted by self-doubt.

I began my study by restricting myself to the observation of contemporary collectors whom I could meet. Many allowed extensive interviews. (There were even several who had heard about my project and got in touch with me in order to be interviewed. A porcelain collector of note called me on the telephone and started the conversation by saying: "I must be in your book!") They all gave me their reasons. However, enquiring now and then how their collection had begun, they arrived surprisingly often at almost forgotten memories of butterflies, of postal stamps and baseball cards, of matchboxes and candy wrappers; and the gifted actor, the late Peter Bull, showed me and told me in detail about his well-known collection of teddy bears.270

It suggested to me that there was an affective core and a causal link which entail a predisposition to collect; that the primary motivation, due to an underlying experience of hurt or unsafety and the subsequent recurrence of moodiness or depression, needs the object as an antidote in order to regain one's equilibrium and self-composure.
Obtainment in whatever way—bought, found, or even acquired by scheming or tricky means or thievery—works like a mood regulator and provides the owner with a potential sense of success or triumph, and occasionally of grandeur, as is the case with the winner at the gaming table or the astute buyer in the auction room. This is anything but complacency because most collectors are aware of the temporality of their ingrained longing for magic security.

The dynamics of these repetitive states of neediness due to infantile trauma have been well described by Rycroft: “An infantile traumatic experience is one which was not represented in the shell of the child’s immediate future nor in his general scheme of the nature of reality,” he wrote. “It is something which makes the bottom fall out of his world and which compels him either to recognize precociously the uncertainty and insecurity of the human condition, in which case he will grow up wise and unhappy but not ill, or to institute defences to enable him to deny that the disillusioning disaster has really occurred.”

Collecting is one of those defenses that promise temporary relief and bring new vitality because every new object effectively gives the notion of fantasized omnipotence—remembering the shell collector who in so many words confided in me how the beautiful cowrie (as well as other fine items in his collection) replaced people and kept it in a drawer hidden from the outside world. Even such casual remarks indicate how the ownership of objects and the pride and pleasure in their possession has more than one function: the object becomes a countermeasure to insecurity and thus a protective narcissistic shield. It also conveys the owner’s covert need to hear pronouncements of praise and admiration: “Admire the shell, which is me,” he is really saying by displaying his collection.

But this is not very different from a remedy that has an instant effect on a child’s grief when he feels left alone, and no help or soothing touch is forthcoming—it is the magic of the soft doll which will make the anxiety disappear. Or take the collector of holy relics: in order to counter future threats of damnation and the dread of burning in purgatory, his hoard of tens of thousands of holy bones and other relics would protect him against the threats and dangers of ultimate suffering. His persecutory delusions are supposed to explain his frenetic need to amass and exhibit his relics.

This, it seems to me, is of critical significance. Even though most collectors are aware of the temporality of their existence, this form of collecting or in the case of the two German churchmen during Luther’s time, their type of amassing relics and exhibiting them, not only provided the owners with a potential sense of relief but also bestowed a particular distinction. The ethnologist Konrad Lorenz described this inclination to display as triumph ceremony. While the concept pertains also to man, in this case it is largely a defensive maneuver caused by self-doubt or fragile self-esteem. As we have seen, the objects in a collection are meant to substitute for close touch with a real person who was not available when needed by the baby.

Here I should like to paraphrase an old statement by D. W. Winnicott: possessiveness, when it appears as a symptom, is always a secondary phenomenon, implying anxiety. During early childhood, when there is much need for touch and warmth and the knowledge of being wanted, lack of it results in deep insecurity, in greediness, in oral erotism and castration fear. These conditions often account for a flawed relationship with the outside world and end in finding more reassurance in objects than in a close bond with people, who cannot be trusted.

However, in the narcissistic stimulus-producing display of which men throughout history have given us, one finds evidence of a special kind of relationship between the collector and his environment. Have many collectors, in their focus on quite basic need fulfillment, abandoned their last vestiges of people, thus giving preference to objects and possessions? From this point of view, the collector’s boasting appears to be a display of grievance in disguise. A collector’s possessions not only serve his or her own gratification but also function for retaliatory purposes. Remember Balzac, who wrote to his future wife how all of Paris envied his walking stick and gold buttons; and even she herself, as the granddaughter of a former queen of France, was but the crown jewel he hoped to include in his collection.

This is not too surprising a conclusion. We have seen, after all, that much of the collector’s basic defense is not only having and holding and being in possession, but also using his objects as a culturally acceptable device for reasserting himself. He thus
turns his basic sensitivity, his disillusionment and frustration, into acts of triumph and braggadocio, quite like Don Juan, who had constantly to prove to himself that he was desirable and making people aware of his conquests. His adventures were not born out of love for these conquests but were rather evidence to let the world know that, regardless of his early sense of not being wanted, he could have any maiden of his choice; and also there were inanimate substitutes that came his way and demonstrated to the world what his mother or caretakers did not recognize: that he is special and is entitled to these objects.

And so it is with collectors as well. The objects they cherish are inanimate substitutes for reassurance and care. Perhaps even more telling, these objects prove, both to the collector and to the world, that he or she is special and worthy of them.

*Notes*

6. This coincides with an observation made by E. R. Dodds: “The Greek had always felt the experience of passion as something mysterious and frightening, the experience of a force that was in him, possessing him, rather than possessed by him. The very word *pathos* testifies to that: like its Latin equivalent *passio*, it means something that ‘happens to’ a man, something of which he is the passive victim.” See *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951; rpt., Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 185.
19. Here I am reminded of a perceptive observation by Joyce McDougall: “Such children run the risk later in life of living as though they were ‘not entirely real.’ They may then feel that they do not understand the world around them; they come away from others with nothing—in other words, ‘empty.’ This kind of split in psychic reality may well predispose people to addictive ways of dealing with the feelings of unreality and emptiness. In place of the transitional object of infancy, with its capacity for soothing the self, the child within the adult may continue to seek transitory objects—drugs, sexual rituals, other people, or endless compulsive pursuits that bring only temporary relief.” See J. McDougall, Theaters of the Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 77.
23. I owe the reference to Professor Sachs’s former student and successor, Dr. Agnes Mongan, formerly of the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
31. A number of collectors have expressed similar sentiments such as “I simply must have it,” or “I couldn’t do without it.” Remarks such as these illuminate an attempt of a narcissistic merging with the desired object. As child observation demonstrates, the object becomes subjectified and gives the owner-collector a momentary experience of satisfaction because it seems to restore a sense of omnipotence. These phenomena are reminiscent of the delusion that plays such a decisive role in the psychodynamics of fetishism.

37. Cicero, The Verrine Orations, 2.417–38 (p. 327f.);
44. In some areas of Melanesia and Polynesia, about a year after a relative’s death the skull is exhumed and cleaned; the lower jaw is fixed to the upper one and carefully decorated by covering it with a layer of clay mixed with resin. Sometimes cowrie and other shells are placed in the eye sockets to heighten the human likeness.
48. The etymological relation between cap (English), kop (Dutch),
coupé (French), coppa (Italian), and head is evident. The common root is the Latin caput.


52. The basic information can be found in Hippolyte Delahaye, Les origines du culte des martyrs, 2d ed. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1933); see also Bernhard Köting, Peregrenatio Religiosa (Münster: Regensberg, 1950), and Carl Meyer, Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters (Basel: Felix Schneider, 1884). For the Milan treasures, see Distinto ragguaglio dell’ottavo maraviglia del mondo (Milan, 1739).

53. Delahaye, Origines du culte, p. 60.


55. Amulet derives probably from the Latin amuletum, a means of defense. See Pliny, Natural History.


63. Robinson, The Times of St. Dunstan, p. 73.

64. See H. Fichtenau, “Zum Religionswesen im früheren Mittelalter,” in Mitteilungen des Instituts für Oesterreichische Geschichtsforschung 60 (1952): 75.

65. There is a well-known early description by Caesarius von Heisterbach, a so-called libellus which deals with the circumstances in detail. For further reference see A. Huyskens, Quellenstudien zur Geschichte der Heiligen Elisabeth (Marburg: Verlag Elwerth, 1908); E. Busse-Wilson, Das Leben der Heilgen Elisabeth (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1931), p. 278f. See also Huizinga, Herfstij der Middeleeuwen, p. 273, part 2.

66. Unless otherwise indicated, all the quotations in this chapter are taken from the original Phillips letters in the possession of the Robinson Trust and deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England. This chapter relies on correspondence and on A. N. L. Munby’s extensive Phillips Studies, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951–1960). I also had the privilege of a number of conversations and discussions with the late Tim Munby.

67. See Munby 291.

68. Munby 4133.

69. Munby 1860, 166.

70. The Leonardo drawing together with five Rubens drawings were acquired by the late Count Antoine Seilern, who was kind enough to show them to me.

71. Copy of a letter to Lady Steele-Graves of August 11, 1863.

72. See Munby 311.

73. There are striking parallels between Thomas Phillips and another book collector, Richard Heber, who was nineteen years his senior. Heber’s mother died when he was only one week old, and he grew up partly in the care of a paternal aunt. At the age of ten he was severely ill. Like Phillips, he too received his education in a private school, but did exceedingly well, unlike Thomas. Heber’s impressive precocity is reflected in a letter to his father shortly before he fell ill: “I send you a line as I promised.... Caractarius is a very scarce book but I believe it is at Mr. Betham’s place where I would be much obliged to you to go, there being the very best Editions of the Classics of all sizes. His auction is to be very soon at Messrs. Southerbys... [C] Covert Garden [April 30, 1784].”

His father obliged. Seven years later Heber was a student at Oxford and buying books and prints, about which his father soon complained, as he did in a number of other letters, although their tone is conspicuously different from that of old Phillips’s letters: “The Charge of Ten Guineas which you mention for Prints is I think a very unnecessary article of Expense and I hope I see no more of the like extravagant complexion. ... It grieves me to observe that indirect breach of Your Word and promise.” Quoted from the collection of the Heber Correspondence in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

74. See Munby 29.

75. See Munby 313.

76. See Munby 223.

77. See Munby 338–41.
78. See Munby 2:28.
79. See Munby 2:28.
80. See Munby 4:33.
82. See Munby 2:63.
83. Johann Georg Kohl, Vom Markt und aus der Zelle (Hannover, 1868).
84. See Munby 4:32–36.
86. See Donald Adamson, The Genesis of “Le Cousin Pons” (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 121, quoting from Champfleury, Grand Figures d’hier et d’aujourd’hui (Paris, 1861), p. 84 ff. See also H. J. Hunt, Honoré de Balzac (London: Athlone Press, 1957), pp. 71–75. Le Cousin Pons, one of Balzac’s last novels, had appeared as part of the series Les Parents Pauvres and was first published in the Musée Littéraire du Siècle, and then again between March and May 1847 in Le Constitutionnel (see Adamson, Genesis, pp. 44 ff.), the title of the latter publication being Le Cousin Pons ou Les Deux Musiciens.
87. Honoré de Balzac, Cousin Pons, see Works 22:27 ff., and Oeuvres 6:53. My quotations from Balzac’s writings are from The Works of Honoré de Balzac and Oeuvres complètes.
88. In an earlier version of the novel Balzac paid even more attention to the details and finesse of those dinners: “Pons was a gourmandizer. His poverty and his craving for bric-à-brac restricted him to a diet so repugnant to his sensitive palate that, as a bachelor, he had solved the problem from the start by dining out every evening. Now when the stomach gets such schooling, the moral person is affected, is corrupted by the high degree of culinary knowledge thus acquired” (Cousin Pons, in Works 22:27–29, and Oeuvres 6:53).
91. His birth certificate of May 21, 1799, reads: “Un enfant malé par le citoyen Bernard-François Balzac... lequel me declare que ledit enfant s’appelle Honoré Balzac.” See G. Hanotaux and G. Vicaire, La Jeunesse de Balzac (1903; rpt., Paris: Librairie des Amateurs, 1921), p. 123.
94. Laure Survile, Balzac, sa vie et ses œuvres (Paris: Jaccottet, Bourdillat, 1858). This is one of the best sources of insight into Balzac’s life and personality.
96. Balzac, Correspondance 5.
103. Honoré de Balzac, Louis Lambert, in Works 4:146 (italics added), and Oeuvres 10:354.
106. Ibid., in Works 17:37 ff., and Oeuvres 8:770 ff.
117. Maurois, Prometheus, p. 328.
118. Maurois, Prometheus, p. 127.
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120. Balzac, Oeuvres 4:496.
125. Balzac, Correspondance 1:263f.
126. Balzac, Correspondance 1:111f.
129. Ibid.
132. Balzac, Correspondance 5:57 n. 2.
133. Balzac, Correspondance 5:64.
137. Ibid.
139. Champfleury, Note sur M. de Balzac (see Maurois, Prometheus, p. 518).
141. These events took place during the time of the Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) regime in China.

NOTES

159. Weiss, The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, p. 63. According to Weiss, the journey to Rome has recently been questioned, largely because their friendship underwent some changes in subsequent years. The doubts are based on their eventual alienation.
162. See Burke, Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Italy, p. 174.
165. Walser, Gesammelte Studien, p. 60.
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167. Walser, Gesammelte Studien, p. 55 nn. 2 and 3.
168. Dated Rome, September 27, 1430. See for this and the following letter Gordan, Two Renaissance Bookhunters, pp. 166–69.
170. Poggii Epistolae 1:331. See also Walser, Gesammelte Studien, p. 148.
171. Walser, Gesammelte Studien, p. 304.
172. See Gordan, Two Renaissance Bookhunters, p. 166f.
175. See Gordan, Two Renaissance Bookhunters, p. 166f.
179. Marie Boas, The Scientific Renaissance 1450–1630 (1962; rpt., London: Fontana/Colins, 1970), p. 121. According to Boas’s view the edict was given because of the practice to have the bones of Crusaders and pilgrims laid to rest in their homeland. But it was equally responsible “for the many subterfuges such as robbing gallows” for the purpose of anatomical dissection.
185. Many artists of the period and later started their training in painting and sculpture with anatomical studies. However, Leonardo insisted on his own dissecting. He wrote: “I have dissected more than ten [later he amended it to thirty] human bodies, destroying all the members, and removing even the smallest particles of the flesh which surrounded these veins... And as one single body did not suffice for so long a time, it was necessary to proceed by stages with so many bodies as would render my knowledge complete; and this I repeated twice in order to discover the difference.” See E. MacCurdy, The Note-

190. Julius von Schlosser, Die Kunst- und Wanderkammern der Spiirrenaissance (Leipzig: Klinkhardt and Biermann, 1908). Von Schlosser’s work is still the most comprehensive study of these collections. See also Alphons Lhotsky, Geschichte der Sammlungen (Vienna: Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums, 1941–1945).
191. Von Schlosser, Die Kunst- und Wanderkammern der Spîrrenaissance, p. 44.
197. See Gertrude von Schwarzfeld, Rudolf II, Der Saturnische Kaiser (Munich: D. W. Callway, 1960), p. 94. (I was unable to check this quotation.)
202. Ibid.
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204. The Diary of John Evelyn, p. 303.
205. The Diary of John Evelyn, p. 68.
206. See David Murray, Museums, Their History and Their Use, 3 vols. (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1904), 1:30f. Quoted from an English edition of 1691.
214. Huizinga, Dutch Civilization in the 17th Century, p. 79.
215. The Diary of John Evelyn, p. 21f.
222. Huizinga, Dutch Civilization in the 17th Century, p. 79.
223. The Diary of John Evelyn, p. 29.
226. A. Bredius, “De Schilder Johannes van de Capelle” Oud-Holland 10 (1892).

232. Beschrijvinge der weld-vermaarde koopslad Amsterdam (1662).
235. See also Peter Burke, Venice and Amsterdam (London: Temple Smith, 1974).
245. The Armenian magnate Calouste Gulbenkian refused visitors to his collection in his Paris mansion in the Avenue d’Iena. “Would I admit a stranger to my barn?” he used to reply. See Kenneth Clark’s introduction to Douglas Cooper, ed., Great Private Collections (New...


254. Needless to add, there was an issue of Oedipal rivalry. My informant’s disposition suggests that collecting travel guides is a secondary revision of his inclination as such.


256. Schreiber, *Journals,* 1:xvii. Lady Schreiber used to buy paintings before she became a collector of chinaware, fans, etc. Curiously enough she acquired paintings without ever having set foot in a museum. I owe this information to Mr. Francis Russell.


266. Edward Bibbring, “The Mechanisms of Depression,” in Phyllis...


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