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With *Object Lives and Global Histories in Northern North America: Material Culture in Motion, c. 1780-1980,* editors Beverly Lemire, Laura Peers, and Anne Whitelaw have assembled a rich volume that uses material culture methods to study objects and their circulation across northern North America and the world. From artwork, souvenirs, hide coats, and deer hoof bags crafted by Indigenous hands to settler depictions of Native peoples and appropriated sweater designs, the authors connect a wide swath of “things” to various historical actors and environments. Taken together, the essays, which the editors call case studies, illustrate the essential nature of material culture to understanding the long histories of Indigenous agency, settler colonialism, and survival across centuries of relationships between the Native populations and Europeans of northern North America.

This volume is organized into chapters that can be read together but also work as stand-alone pieces. Between many of the essays are short “Sidebars” where some of the authors further their analyses of the objects or images in their longer essays. As expected of any work on material culture, the entire volume is filled with stunning photographs. *Object Lives and Global Histories* begins with an introduction and methodological chapter that lay out the processes of assembling the volume. From there, the essays move mostly chronologically from the late eighteenth century onward. The essays are also organized thematically, with the first several pieces covering winter clothing and outdoor activities, including hide coats, Red River coats, and tobogganing. Two of the middle essays move to visual culture. Here, the authors examine the materiality of nineteenth-century lithographic prints and images of wampum. The final set of essays include artwork and souvenirs created by Native peoples, and importantly Native women, in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century. These essays move from national parks established by the Canadian and US governments to sanitoria for Indigenous patients with tuberculosis. Ultimately, the organization of the chapters allows the reader to make
connections across time and space but still appreciate the specific histories and methods shared in each essay.

Collectively, the essays in Object Lives and Global Histories engage with existing scholarship on spatial and temporal histories of “the North,” as well as material culture of encounters between Indigenous and imperial actors. For these authors, northern North America offers an opportunity to move past well-examined spatial frameworks like the Atlantic world and the Global South and instead center the contingencies of a geographic area defined by distinct cultures, networks, and climates. Moreover, by de-emphasizing national and state borders, the authors make an important statement about the Indigenous land their studies cover. Like the spatial framework, the expansive chronology of this volume is also intentional, and part of the editors’ and authors’ goal of “Indigenizing the academy through different valuations of temporality” (p. 9). Rather than using Western frameworks like the long eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the authors instead account for Native timescapes and the extended legacies of Indigenous agency and settler colonialism with their alternate periodization. Finally, by addressing relationships between Europeans and Native peoples through objects circulating in northern North America, this work redirects from more conventional emphases on histories of imperialism and commodity exchange in American and European metropoles, as well as tropical climates tied to the Atlantic slave trade.

The scholarly interventions made by Object Lives and Global Histories are noteworthy, but this work’s methodological impact makes it essential reading for scholars of material culture and North America. This volume is not merely a collection of essays. It is the product of years of cooperative work between academic scholars, heritage researchers, and museum professionals. As the editors detail in the volume’s first chapter on methodology, the participants in the project came from a variety of cultural, geographical, and academic backgrounds. When they came together for virtual meetings, and eventually group visits to view objects in collections from Canada to the United Kingdom, they brought with them perspectives that prompted new questions and insights. Their collective use of classic material culture methods such as “close looking,” object lives, and object agency, combined with the insight of object makers and Indigenous knowledge keepers, results in chapters that dive deeply into material, written, and unwritten histories of the people, places, and things at the center of this work.

The volume’s tenth chapter, “Dew Claw Bags, Indigenous Women, and Material Culture in History and Practice,” best encapsulates the methodologies at work in Object Lives and Global Histories. Rather than an essay composed of written paragraphs organized around a single argument, this piece is a documented and edited interview between editor Beverly Lemire and Judy Half, a Plains Cree knowledge keeper of Saddle Lake Cree Nation in the area northeast of Edmonton, Alberta, who was a research collaborator on this project. The objects at the center of this piece are leather and fur bags with deer dew claws attached to them. Throughout the interview, Lemire poses questions to Half about dew claw bags, which the researchers examined in multiple collections. Half’s responses are a combination of information about the bags themselves and their broader place in her community. But the beauty of this interview is that its structure allows Half to move beyond the specific topic of the bags and discuss how colonialism impacted generations of her people, including immediate members of her family. The reader learns of the ceremonial place of the bags, the role of women in different ceremonies and communities as a whole, as well as the broader histories of displacement of peoples in the Treaty 6 area of western Canada. By including this interview, the editors give space for Half to talk about the place of important objects in her community...
while intentionally acknowledging and respecting the oral traditions surrounding the dew claw bags.

There are many positive aspects of this volume, but given its methodological strength, *Object Lives and Global Histories* is well suited for teaching. Instructors of material culture methods courses will find it particularly useful for illustrating how researchers examine and analyze objects. Beyond material culture, courses on North American history, Native American history, borderlands, and colonialism will find much of value in the essays. Several chapters deal with Metis histories and discuss hybrid cultures across the area the United States and Canada claim as their border and would thus work well alongside work by Joshua L. Reid (Snohomish) and Benjamin Hoy, for example.[1] Yet the essays could have gone further in discussing histories of slavery and captivity among Indigenous and European populations in northern North America. From scholars such as Christina Snyder and Brett Rushforth, for example, we know that material culture was an important part of captivity among Native Americans across the continent, and thus would have fit well in this volume.[2] Nonetheless, Lemire, Peers, Whitelaw, and the authors in *Object Lives and Global Histories* should be commended for their work on this impressive collection that will surely impact how scholars think about material culture, collaborative research, and decolonizing the academy for years to come.

Notes


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