

Daniela Bleichmar and Meredith Martin, eds., *Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. 224 pp. ISBN: 9781119217343. \$39.95.

The editors of this strikingly illustrated volume open by presenting the image of an imaginary *Wunderkammer*, filled with objects both natural and man-made compiled from across the globe. An embroidered north Indian tent, they propose, houses birds of paradise collected in New Guinea, while Tahitian shells and jewellery, a Japanese-inspired Mexican folding screen and various coloured manuscripts in multiple languages line the perimeters. Porcelain plates made in China and French mirrors made of Vietnamese tin hang from the walls. A curious collection indeed, and one rife with questions both ontological and epistemological. Daniela Bleichmar and Meredith Martin bring together, here, twelve essays were written primarily by art historians, spanning several centuries (roughly 1500-1800) and most of the world, each contribution considering one of the cross-cultural objects included in this fantastical cabinet of curiosities.

So why bring these objects together? Starting first as a conference held at the Getty Research Institute in 2013, and then published as a special volume of *Art History*, the authors have clearly thought through not just what these individual objects meant and how they travelled, but why such a volume is necessary for scholars across disciplines and historiographic leanings.¹ Even in 'local' studies of material culture, they argue, objects like manuscripts, luxury goods, and natural specimens are considered either as belonging to their creators or their eventual owners; little attention is given to how these objects *moved*, and how movement itself might change and define their status. The term 'hybridity', often helpful in describing how local and foreign practitioners produced new forms of knowledge and material culture *in situ*, is well considered throughout the volume. Most of the essays grapple with and move beyond the notion by arguing that such objects were constantly transformed and transforming—that hybridity is, and was, just the starting point for understanding global knowledge production. By focusing precisely on objects designed to travel, a vastly understudied theme in scholarship on both art and science, the authors not only illuminate the rich visual and material culture moving across oceans, but demonstrate that mobility itself 'made objects not only itinerant but also polyvalent, mutable, and interpretively richer than if they had stayed at home'.²

In considering how and why objects travelled in the Early Modern period, the authors situate themselves at the intersection between several well-developed bodies of literature. Scholars like Nicholas Thomas, Igor Kopytoff, and Arjun Appadurai have demonstrated the rich interpretive lens through which historians can study objects as indicative of cross-cultural contact and exchange, and Martin and Bleichmar seamlessly move between such foundational texts and more recent museum displays and digital projects that point to new, still undervalued, methods of historical practice. Critical interrogations of geographical boundaries and connectivity, deeply bound up in political and economic Early Modern historiography, are enriched by many of these essays; drawing on scholars like Chandra Mukerji and Craig Clunas, the volume challenges simplistic one-way movements between East and West, undermining traditional colonial hierarchies.

¹ Daniela Bleichmar and Meredith Martin, eds., *Art History (Special Issue): Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World* Objects 38.4 (2016): 604-619.

² *Ibid.*

Claudia Swan opens the volume with its only natural object, tracing the exchange of birds of paradise between the Netherlands, the East Indies, and Ottoman territories around the turn of the seventeenth century. These curious natural specimens, she argues, often serving as diplomatic gifts, transcended their economic value and entered the realm of the wondrous, creating an aesthetic or even affective economy. Nancy Um similarly deals with objects employed by Dutch East India Company (VOC) merchants, examining furniture shipped to Yemen as administrative tools—although seemingly unmoveable in their size and weight, VOC servants used writing desks and cabinets in recording and communicating their mercantile activities. Demand for these objects facilitated new a new artisan market, as workshops based in India strove to create smaller, more mobile versions of furniture specifically for VOC shipping and travel. ‘Unmoveability’, winding its way through the volume, provides an especially effective way of studying movement itself. In one of the volume’s most arresting contributions, Meredith Martin turns her gaze to the mirrors at Versailles as indicative of the complex trade economy between the French and Thai courts in the late-seventeenth century. By tracing the movement of mirrors—perhaps the most fragile object imaginable—from Thailand to France, Martin aptly demonstrates the two-way political motivations at work in diplomatic gift-giving, bound up in performative and ceremonial court negotiations.

Other contributions explore the various meanings of ‘translation’ borne through mobile objects across oceans. Bleichmar’s essay tackles this issue most explicitly, unravelling the multiple types of linguistic, contextual, and physical translations of the famous *Codex Mendoza*, a Mexican pictorial manuscript produced in 1542. Within this single document, Bleichmar argues, we see both pre-Hispanic and European traditions in conversation with each other; rather than representing a stable object, the *Codex* was defined by its movement across space and media. Later in the volume, Sofia Sanabrais examines another form of translation in the reworking and spread of the traditional Japanese folding screen in Mexico from the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries. Initially sent to New Spain as diplomatic gifts (a form of exchange privileged throughout the volume), Mexican artists transformed them into secular *biombos*, sent on to Spain and absorbed into its colonial fabric. Indeed, many of the objects featured in the volume, from porcelain plates to German automata, moved not just from one place to another, but between multiple locations, continually reworked and transformed while acquiring new meanings and uses. Hybridity, as they state, seems too simplistic of a term here.

The volume’s lack of chronological or geographical structure mirrors the design of *Wunderkammern*: forced to move from eighteenth-century Yemen to sixteenth-century Mexico and back to late-seventeenth century French courts, the reader gains an appreciation for the sheer globality of these objects, their utter lack of comparability encouraging a more nuanced understanding of how things are created, how they move, and how they are consumed. While by no means making an argument for atemporality or universalism (indeed, the authors argue the opposite), refusing to comply structurally with such boundaries allows the essayists to follow objects on their own terms, moulding the collection of essays into a whole more significant than the sum of its parts. One wonders, given the broad range of subjects, how natural specimens like plants and animals—whether dead or alive—might fit into this narrative of travel.

Admittedly, the volume’s broad geographic and temporal range, along with the authors’ admirable refusal to sacrifice specificity, occasionally leads to some bogging down in detail. For example, each essay necessarily begins with a brief overview of regional political history, sometimes too short to situate the reader but at other times too long to allow adequate focus on

the object itself. Similarly, some objects seem better defined than others, although all leave the reader salivating for more. Nevertheless, Bleichmar and Martin have assembled a stunning collection of objects and essays, filling a gaping hole in the history of Early Modern global exchange. All the chapters thoughtfully engage with both art and science, successfully employing various methodologies to ask and answer new questions about why we should care about objects in and of themselves. This is a remarkable volume for historians across a wide range of disciplines and provides a much-needed model for writing beyond boundaries.

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Dale Tomich, ed., *The Politics of the Second Slavery*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016. 280 pp. ISBN: 9781438462370. \$85.00.

With both *Slavery and the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830-1848* (1990) and *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and the World Economy* (2004), Dale Tomich established the explanatory potential for the Second Slavery. Expanded by Anthony Kaye, Ada Ferrer, and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, this sub-field within Slave Studies focuses on links between capitalism and slavery within the Atlantic World. In *The Politics of the Second Slavery*, disseminated by the Fernand Braudel Center, Tomich offers a collection of essays that further explores Second Slavery through discussions of international proslavery and transnational anti-slavery. The work engages structural studies of antislavery by Eric Williams and David Brion Davis, and more recent works on the rhetoric of abolitionism by Christopher Brown and Seymour Drescher.

Tomich established the historiographical paradigm of Second Slavery to provide links between the rise of nationalism and the changing institution of slavery during the nineteenth century. After the 1780s, slavery expanded due to the influences of new industrial machinery and the technologies of finance capital. For Tomich, the transnational analysis of capitalism and slavery within the field of Second Slavery upsets previous positivist notions that often asserted a new moral order rose out of the Enlightenment to critique and slowly chip away at the institution of slavery. Instead, slavery expanded in the nineteenth century because a new profit motive emerged whereby slavery and capitalism became economic siblings.

To introduce the edition, Tomich examines British influences upon the political economy of the nineteenth century Atlantic World. English legal mechanisms affected perceptions of the slave trade through a new form of British World-Economic Hegemony, which rose to dominance after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. This British hegemonic system developed after the destabilization of mercantilism caused by the American Revolution and the Haitian Rebellion. After Vienna, British forces negotiated the end of slavery within an international order that did not want to close the institution. States that wished to resist British hegemony established various 'slave zones' meant to protect slavery from British legal power.

Rafael Marquese and Tâmis Parron continue the analysis of these slave zones through a co-authored essay on the dialogue between Southern proslavery forces in the United States, planters within the Second Spanish Empire in Cuba, and amongst Brazilian *saquaremas*. However, similarities between these groups changed over time, as international links became untenable due to local inconsistencies, even as Southern annexationism cultivated after the Compromise of 1850. Schmidt-Nowara's contribution follows with a discussion of Spanish