

THE GLOBAL LIVES OF THINGS

The Material Culture of Connections
in the Early Modern World

Edited by **ANNE GERRITSEN** and **GIORGIO RIELLO**



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The Global Lives of Things considers the ways in which ‘things’, ranging from commodities to works of art and precious materials, participated in the shaping of global connections in the period 1400–1800. By focusing on the material exchange between Asia, Europe, the Americas and Australia, this volume traces the movements of objects through human networks of commerce, colonialism and consumption. It argues that material objects mediated between the forces of global economic exchange and the constantly changing identities of individuals, as they were drawn into global circuits. It proposes a reconceptualization of early modern global history in the light of its material culture by asking the question: what can we learn about the early modern world by studying its objects?

This exciting new collection draws together the latest scholarship in the study of material culture and offers students a critique and explanation of the notion of commodity and a reinterpretation of the meaning of exchange. It engages with the concepts of ‘proto-globalization’, ‘the first global age’ and ‘commodities/consumption’. Divided into three parts, the volume considers in Part One, Objects of Global Knowledge, in Part Two, Objects of Global Connections, and finally, in Part Three, Objects of Global Consumption. The collection concludes with afterwords from three of the leading historians in the field, Maxine Berg, Suraiya Faroqhi and Paula Findlen, who offer their critical view of the methodologies and themes considered in the book and place its arguments within the wider field of scholarship.

Extensively illustrated, and with chapters examining case studies from Northern Europe to China and Australia, this book will be essential reading for students of global history.

Anne Gerritsen is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Warwick. Her previous publications include *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming China* (2007).

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PREFACE

The Global Lives of Things is a joint effort of several scholars working at the intersection between global history and material culture. Their papers were presented and discussed at several events organised as part of an AHRC-funded International Network on 'Global Commodities' active between 2011 and 2013 and coordinated by the Global History and Culture Centre at the University of Warwick. The Victoria and Albert Museum (Glenn Adamson and Marta Ajmar), the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts (Karina Corrigan), Bilgi University, Istanbul (Suraiya Faruqi) and our colleagues at Warwick, Maxine Berg and Luca Molà helped us organise a series of events that took place in London, Warwick, Istanbul and Salem. These meetings and a large conference that took place at the University of Warwick in December 2012 allowed us to develop a series of conversations with an increasingly large number of colleagues interested in exploring the ways in which objects – be they traded commodities, gifts, rarities, artworks or everyday mundane artefacts – came to shape the lives of people across the globe and at the same time created new and sometimes unpredictable connections.

The papers included in this volume only represent a small part of these conversations, and it is not possible to mention all of our partners. A few people shine through their absence here, but deserve special mention. Dana Leibsohn has been an inspiration from the earliest beginnings of this project. Even if circumstances conspired against her, her support and critical commentary has been invaluable for us. Michael North delivered the keynote lecture at our Global Commodities conference, and his work on transcultural mediation, especially of Netherlandish art and material culture was and remains important to us. Several contributions delivered at our workshops and conferences have appeared in the

volume *Writing Material Culture History* edited by Gerritsen and Riello, whilst others will appear in a forthcoming book entitled *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* edited by Zóltan Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello.

*Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello,
September 2015*

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THE GLOBAL LIVES OF THINGS

Material culture in the first global age¹

Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello

In 1652, the Spanish painter Antonio de Pereda (1599?–1678?) completed a large canvas entitled *Still Life with an Ebony Chest* (Figure 0.1).² The painting depicts a group of objects on a surface covered in a red velvet cloth. In the centre stands the ebony chest that gives the still life its name, a woven cloth hanging down from the top drawer. Five different vessels stand on the top of the chest, including two red ceramic vessels decorated with small pieces of quartz from Mexico, a gourd-shaped vessel with silver mounts, a transparent glass vessel, and an Italian bowl.³ The chest is flanked by a chocolatière with a wooden implement to stir the chocolate on one side, and a two-handled Talavera pottery jar on the other.⁴ In the foreground, we see round wooden boxes containing chocolate, and breads, biscuits and cheeses, and on the left hand side, three cups and a spoon on a silver tray. The three cups on the tray are all different: a small blue-and-white Delftware cup on the left, a small lusterware bowl from Manises on the right, and a taller cup with spreading, damaged mouth rim and a fine underglaze blue decoration. The wide variety of shapes, sizes, materials, textures and colours is lovingly depicted, and the signs of use in the broken biscuits, the crumpled cheese paper, and the chipped porcelain cup all serve to enhance the tangible qualities of what is displayed.

Art historians have described this as one of De Pereda's masterpieces, displaying his 'visual acuity and technical accomplishment'.⁵ Art historians have tended to view this painting first and foremost *as painting*, paying close attention to aspects such as the brushwork, the use of light, the theme of the painting, and its significance in De Pereda's wider oeuvre. But the painting invites multiple types of viewing, both today, in the present, as it did in the past. The tangible quality of the objects in the painting, for example, suggests stories of use: of chocolate stirred, food eaten, jugs poured, and drawers opened and shut.⁶ Of course this painted juxtaposition of objects has complex meanings, but if we focus briefly on the objects



FIGURE 0.1 *Still Life with an Ebony Chest*, by Antonio de Pereda. Spain, 1652. 80 × 94 cm. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. GE-327. © 2015. Photo Scala, Florence.

themselves, then we can ask questions about their origins: when, where and how did De Pereda acquire these objects, and what did they mean to him?

Arguably, the meanings of the objects depend on their ‘social life’, as Arjun Appadurai would have it. Before these objects were selected and placed together on a single canvas by the artist, they each circulated in ‘specific cultural and historical milieus’ in which ‘desire and demand, reciprocal sacrifice and power interact to create economic value in specific social situations’.⁷ These ‘things’, then, have value, meanings, and trajectories. The publication of Appadurai’s 1986 edited volume, *The Social Life of Things*, and the writings of other anthropologists, archaeologists and art historians encouraged social and economic historians to look at ‘things’. In the wake of *The Social Life of Things*, scholars in a variety of fields turned to artefacts. Material culture, materials and materiality, making things, and desiring things had all been studied before, but gained newfound importance from the 1980s onwards.

A decade after Appadurai’s study, the intellectual landscape changed again through what we might call ‘the global turn’, linked to the publication of several key works in the field of history, the ongoing growth of globalization in our contemporary socio-political, cultural and educational environment, and the decreasing

significance of political and cultural boundaries.⁸ Across the disciplines, the word 'global' started to appear in titles of research proposals, projects, articles, and books.⁹ Of course the particular interpretation of the word varied and continues to vary widely, but its application generally implied a challenge to national approaches to history. Since the global turn, cross-border connections and interactions take precedence over the boundaries and narratives that seek to suggest the importance of separate nations. We ask different questions, and our eyes have been opened to the interactions of people, ideas, and things across cultural and geographical zones. The 'things' we see in De Pereda's still life, then, are not just things with social lives, but with global trajectories.

Luxuries and global trade

The objects De Pereda depicted form only the tip of a vast iceberg of objects that were exchanged and commodities that were traded throughout the early modern world. From Chinese traders in the Southeast-Asian archipelago and merchant communities stretching across the Indian Ocean in the thirteenth century, Islamic merchants exchanging goods across the Silk Roads in the fourteenth century, the first explorations initiated by the Portuguese crown in the late fifteenth century, the Spanish ventures into the Americas in the sixteenth, the arrival of the Dutch and English trading companies in the Asian seas in the seventeenth, to the global annexations and colonizations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, goods moved across vast distances.¹⁰ Trade and exchange was far from new of course; goods were traded across significant distances in the ancient and medieval worlds, too. Roman commentators were allured and appalled by 'oriental' luxuries such as spices, precious stones, silks and cottons.¹¹ The so-called 'Silk Roads' that traversed Eurasia continued to be a major thoroughfare of all sorts of luxury goods moving over short and long distances.¹² Spices such as cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and pepper originated in Asia, were traded across Central Asia via the Levant by caravan, and formed part of the European medieval kitchen.¹³ Other goods that were traded across vast distances and circulated widely throughout Europe included indigo, lapis lazuli and other ingredients required for dyestuffs and painters' pigments, Chinese silks, and of course precious stones and metals.¹⁴

Janet Abu-Lughod's work has shown us that already as early as the thirteenth century, goods, people and ideas circulated in what she designated as nine separate zones of interaction.¹⁵ These included, for example, a zone that reached from Beijing in the north, along the eastern seaboard of the Chinese (Mongol-Yuan) empire into the South China Sea and connected the rich commodities of the Southeast-Asian island kingdoms with the seats of imperial power in China, Japan and Korea. Other zones included one that incorporated most of the Indian Ocean, another that connected the extremities of the Silk Roads, and areas in Central Asia, Northern Africa, the Mediterranean, northern Europe, and so on. But the trade in goods across distances moved a significant step towards becoming truly globe-encompassing with the 1572 establishment of the Spanish colonial outpost of Manila in the Philippines.¹⁶

From the late sixteenth century onwards, then, we see not only the long-distance trade in high-value luxury goods for the elite markets, but ever-growing regular flows of commodities traded in bulk across vast distances.¹⁷ Within the Ottoman realm, for example, the consumption of exotic luxuries and tradable commodities used in everyday life flourished. The Safavid Empire in what is now Iran was also one of the most important nodes in the global flows of commodities. Europe, too, received substantial quantities of Asian goods through the trade of a series of chartered companies including the English (est. 1600), the Dutch (est. 1601), the French (est. 1664), and the smaller Swedish, Danish and Ostend companies.

The silver tray on the table in De Pereda's painting points to the Spanish silver that started to flow across the globe from the late sixteenth century onwards. It was silver that had facilitated the earliest exchanges of goods between Europeans and traders from far-flung locations, for example in the Levant. However, silver was only mined in a few places, and until the sixteenth century, remained a rare precious metal.¹⁸ With the expansion of the Spanish empire into the Americas, the colonisers were able to exploit local resources, including the silver-rich mines of Potosí in what is now Bolivia.¹⁹ The silver mined in Potosí was shipped in Spanish galleons to Europe, to Manila, into the South China Seas and the Indian Ocean. Chinese demand for silver was high, especially because of the new requirement to make all tax payments in silver rather than in kind (mostly silk and grains) in the Chinese empire from the late sixteenth century onwards.²⁰ In return, the Europeans bought vast quantities of commodities and goods manufactured in Asia. The silver tray, then, betrays a vast global system of trade and exchange, with Habsburg Spain and late Ming-early Qing China as dual centres.

The ebony chest that lends its name to the still life also points to the global connections of the early modern world. Precious woods like ebony, mahogany, rosewood and cedar were valued by cabinetmakers for their hardness, colour and shine, and used in cabinets and chests of various kinds, picture and mirror frames, musical instruments, and religious objects.²¹ Some hardwoods were native to Europe, but in the mediaeval era, ebony was imported via Venice and the Levant from East Africa and Southeast Asia, and after the establishment of colonial outposts in the East and West Indies, brought to Europe by ship.²² The marquetry decorations on the small chest of drawers may well be ivory or another contrasting wood transported across vast distances before being made into this elegant, lockable chest.²³

Apart from silver and precious woods, ceramic vessels, and especially porcelain vessels, are objects that signal global connections.²⁴ The global variety in ceramics production is impossible to capture in a few lines, but some broad generalizations could be made. On the whole, Chinese, Korean and later Japanese potters preferred thinner vessels with monochrome or underglaze blue decorations fired at high temperatures, referred to as porcelain, while in the Islamic world and in the Mediterranean regions, brightly coloured pigments were applied to a tin-glazed surface, producing ceramics known as majolica or faïence. Ceramics were also traded and exchanged between these zones of preference and taste, and out of these exchanges and contacts emerged new forms and designs, such as, for example,

blue-and-white Delftware, and blue-and-white Puebla wares.²⁵ The vessels depicted in De Pereda's painting provide examples of several of these different ceramic traditions.

The colourful bowl on the right-hand corner of the ebony chest, for example, is an Italian majolica bowl, decorated in shades of red, green, cream and brown, with flowers, leaves, medallions and a winged, crowned human figure. The two-handled jar to the right of the chest is, similarly, made of stoneware, covered in a cream-coloured tin-glaze, and decorated with red and green pigments. Another example of this type of pottery is visible in the small bell-shaped cup with red decorations on the silver tray. This type of ceramics was manufactured throughout the Islamic world, the Mediterranean, and the technology spread northwards from there to Antwerp, Delft and the British potteries in the sixteenth century.²⁶ These, then, exemplify the local tradition of ceramics manufacture.

Several of De Pereda's vessels, however, exemplify the global trade in ceramics. The red vessels decorated with quartz flowers standing on the chest, for example, were brought to Spain from Mexico. The tall cup with the cracked rim standing behind the others on the tray, has a thin body and a fine light-blue landscape design, and most likely represents a piece of imported Chinese porcelain. Both the Portuguese and the Spanish purchased vast quantities of porcelain in Asia and delivered these to consumers in the Americas, along the African coasts, and in Europe. Once the Dutch, English, French and Swedish trading companies also established themselves in various locations throughout Asia, the quantities of traded ceramics rose substantially, leading to speculations about the overall quantities of porcelain shipments that number in the millions. The small blue-and-white cup on the left-hand side of the silver tray, finally, exemplifies the blends of traditions that emerged from the contacts and exchanges in ceramic traditions and styles. It is a tin-glaze object, possibly made in Delft, in a colour scheme and decorative pattern that appropriates ideas of the Chinese porcelain tradition.

Textiles, too, were traded in vast quantities throughout the early modern period. De Pereda shows at least three types of cloth in his painting: a deep red velvet; what looks like a small piece of linen to wrap the biscuits; and a small cloth probably of American origin. Whilst the velvet and linen are clearly European (though velvet was mastered only in the thirteenth century by Europeans in imitation of Chinese velvets), the small American cloth takes us back to a pre-Columbian design tradition. It provides us also with a counter-narrative as it is a 'global thing' that did not achieve global success. It was the textiles of the East Indies (India) and not those of the West Indies (the Americas) that became commodities with a global appeal. Chintzes, calicoes and other textiles produced in India found markets across and beyond the Indian Ocean well before the arrival of the European trading companies. Textiles had been the most common traded commodities since antiquity with the best silks coming from China and the best cotton textiles from India. The artist's choice of an American cloth might have been an aesthetic preference though at the time he was painting, Indian cotton textiles were still rare in Europe. Only in the second half of the seventeenth and during the eighteenth century did they become

extremely popular and fashionable, not just among European but also among African and American consumers.²⁷

The choice of an American cloth might have been partly motivated by the fact that it matched well a series of implements for the preparation of drinking chocolate, a very American commodity that was slowly finding success in Europe.²⁸ De Pereda captures one of the elements of what Alfred Crosby has defined as the 'Columbian exchange', the exchange between the Americas and Afro-Eurasia following the 'discovery' of the New World.²⁹ A series of plants, animals and diseases from the Americas found their way to Europe, Asia and Africa and vice versa. The European diet was revolutionized from the sixteenth century onwards by new foods, not just cocoa, but also the nutritious potato, corn, the indispensable tomato as well as peppers, beans and pumpkins. The turkey was one of the animals transplanted from the Americas though its provenance – at least in the English language – was often confused with that of other fowls of Turkish origin. A series of plants from the Afro-Eurasian continent arrived in the Americas as well: these include common fruit such as the banana, grapes, peaches, pears and oranges and vegetables such as onions and olives. Animals such as horses and cows made their first appearance in the new world in the sixteenth century.³⁰

Chocolate is here representative not just of a commodity from the Americas new to Europeans but of a larger category of beverages unknown to Europeans before 1500 that include also coffee from the Arabian Peninsula and tea from China.³¹ These have in the course of the past five centuries become global commodities that are cultivated and consumed around the world.³² Key to their success was not simply their transplantation to other continents but their potential to be cultivated in plantations. This is the case for sugar, an Old World sweetener that started to be mixed with the bitter cocoa beans to suit the European palate.³³ Sugar changed the landscape and the economy and social structure of several areas of the Americas.³⁴ By the seventeenth century it was grown in large plantations through the exploitation of slave labour from Africa. Crops therefore, perhaps more than manufactured goods, had a profound effect on the relationship between different continents, on people's habits and on the lives of millions of Africans.³⁵

From global things to the global lives of things

From the early sixteenth century onwards, then, the world of trade began to transform the world of goods. This was true not only in Europe, but also in East and Southeast Asia, the Islamic empires of Safavid Iran, Mughal India and the Ottomans, along the African coasts, in the Americas, and in Australasia. The interior of this imaginary shop (Figure 0.2), painted in Europe, only gives a small inkling of the vast diversity of goods that became available to consumers with the growth of global trade connections.

A very different range of luxury items than we saw in De Pereda is for sale here: lacquered chests, cabinets and boxes, screens, picture frames, tall wooden stands, a variety of Chinese porcelains ranging from delicate little bowls and lidded jars to



FIGURE 0.2 *Interior of a shop*. Netherlands, 1680–1700. Gouache on paper, mounted on wooden panel. H 26.3 cm × W 43.6 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, P. 35–1926.

large vases and bowls, red earthenwares, Indian chintzes, Persian paintings, small ivory devotional sculptures and an array of folded fans. There are groups of customers in the shops, seated and standing by the pieces of furniture, testing the fabrics, and selecting fans, dressed in a wide range of what seem to be Asian costumes. The objects are foregrounded, literally, by standing in the foreground of the painting, but also by filling every part of the surface, right to the top of the painting, to the point of sacrificing the sense of physical space in the shop. The viewer sees an abundance of objects, in rich variety of materials, colours, textures and designs. The viewer also sees a variety of markers and identifiers: styles of clothing and headdress depicted in the portraits and paintings but also in the clothing of the shop's customers make it difficult to locate the shop within a single cultural context. Equally, the flora and fauna that grace the paintings, textiles, porcelains and pieces of furniture suggest an extra-European world without determining a specific cultural or geographical context.

The absence of a clear pathway for the viewer to enter and inhabit the space of the shop, and the lack of a consistent viewing perspective of the objects on display, mean that the viewer remains on the outside of the world depicted, unsure of the physical location of the space he or she views. Beyond the European architecture of the shop, there are few markers to suggest where the shop is located or who its imagined consumers are, leaving the objects to speak for themselves. But the objects also raise questions: Where have these objects come from? Where will they go from here? What do the objects mean, for whom, and why? The painting presents a world of global goods, but suspends these objects in an undefined space, urging us

to ask further questions. In order to make sense of the world of goods depicted in this painting we need to make an analytical move; viewing objects as traded commodities that have been moved from A to B is not enough; in order to understand what is on display here, we need to identify the ‘things’ as global things and trace their trajectories, so that we see the accumulation of meanings that objects acquire as they travel. To see the objects as things with global lives, we need a repertoire of disciplinary, methodological and conceptual tools, so as to draw on a variety of insights, ranging from art history, archaeology and anthropology to literature and historical studies, especially global history.³⁶

The study of things

We have started with examples of ‘things’ that are represented via the medium of a painting, but also two-dimensional works such as prints, drawing and etchings. For historians of European art, the fine arts, especially the art of painting, have always had pride of place. The fine arts, in this classification, revealed the imagination, the eye and the hand of a great master.³⁷ The decorative arts, such as ceramics, glass, furniture, carved stones, wood, ivory and gems, metalwork, and textiles, in contrast, were not produced by an individual master, but in a workshop context.³⁸ The emphasis on the process of making things (e.g. in a workshop), and thus the emphasis on precious materials, designs, modes of manufacturing and practical application, often absent in the study of fine arts, are crucial for the study of the decorative arts. The object, in that context, is seen as the artistic outcome of a combination of specifically selected and prepared materials, finely tuned skills and craftsmanship, and the designs and decorative schemes shaped by taste, fashion and use. Each of these has the power to elevate an object into the realm of the decorative arts; a high quality material, exquisite skill or extraordinary design can lift an object from its ordinary object-ness to the level of an artistic object.

Histories of art, the decorative arts and museum studies have come to question the prominence given to outstanding ‘works of art’. What happens, for example, when we move from the aesthetic consideration of a painting as in Figure 0.1 to the physical form of one of the objects represented? Figure 0.3a is a small Chinese porcelain cup of the Ming dynasty. It is not the one represented in the painting but it is not dissimilar. This cup is not in any sense a ‘work of art’. In fact it was one of the hundreds of thousands such things produced in the kilns of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province, China, and traded to Japan, the Middle East, India, Europe and already by the early seventeenth century to the European settlements of North America.³⁹ Like the gourd-shaped vessel with silver mounts in De Pereda’s painting, Chinese cups and other porcelain arriving in Europe in the sixteenth century were expensive and rare and as such deserved to be mounted either in silver or gold (Figure 0.3b).⁴⁰ The best Chinese porcelains were treasured as items of collecting by the European, Persian, Indian and Ottoman elites from the sixteenth century onwards. They were often arranged into collections: assemblages of artefacts that were not appreciated merely as ‘works of art’ or as simple commodities for consumption but as representations of an expanding world of wonder. The so-called



FIGURE 0.3a Crow's cup, produced in Jingdezhen, 1600–1625. H 8.1 cm. Rijksmuseum AK-R-BK-14772-A.



FIGURE 0.3b Porcelain cup produced in China with silver-gilt mount applied in England, c.1585. Gilbert Collection © The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



FIGURE 0.3c Porcelain cup, produced in Jingdezhen, China, before 1613. H 8.2 cm. This bowl was part of the cargo of the VOC ship *Witte Leeuw*. Rijksmuseum NG-1978-127-8859-W

kunstkammer (or cabinet of curiosity) was a form of collecting in the early modern period. Many of the famous cabinets of curiosity also laid the foundations for museum collections, including science museums and ethnographic collections.⁴¹ A further approach is therefore based on thinking about objects beyond their classifications and individual characteristics. Early modern collections combined natural and man-made products into a single unifying system, raising important questions on the distinction between natural things and artefacts.⁴²

For our purposes here, it is crucial to recognise the contribution of the critical scholarship on collecting and the histories of collections and museums, especially the value of seeing how, why and where things were put together, understanding the construction of histories and meanings of objects that occurs when creating collections, and recognising the explicit and implicit value judgements about things that always emerge when objects are situated within collections.⁴³ But with a few notable exceptions, the emphasis in much of this work has been on the European context of collecting and (museum) collections.⁴⁴ Moreover, the shift in this scholarship towards context and away from things means that we tend to focus on the collection as a whole, and lose sight of the specific trajectories of objects before they entered such collections, or indeed after they became part of the collections.

For archaeologists, objects also exist in collections, the so-called 'assemblages' in which they were excavated. Especially, though not exclusively, for the prehistoric archaeologist, the material remains form the primary material connection with the past and the only access route into this world, and the approach to objects is, thus, far more inclusive.⁴⁵ All of the material remains of the past that reveal traces of human activity, referred to as artefacts, are considered part of the assemblage of material culture, including food remains, waste piles, and the traces of architectural structures.⁴⁶ Excavated artefacts, then, are more readily studied in their wider context, and it is the context that is mobilized to make sense of the artefacts and their trajectories, use and meaning. By mobilising every single trace of evidence that the site and its artefacts yield, a wealth of information can be unearthed. An example might be some of the recent discoveries in maritime archaeology. One of the largest findings to date is the cargo of the Dutch East India Company's vessel *Witte Leeuw* that was lost off the island of St. Helena on 13 June 1613. It was part of the VOC convoy on its way back to the Netherlands when it was attacked by two Portuguese carracks. The vessel was found only in 1977 when seven of the ship's 25 cannons, large quantities of pepper and beautiful porcelain were recovered in a large-scale maritime archaeology enterprise (Figure 0.3c).⁴⁷ Often funded by commercial companies making a profit from the sale of the found treasures, this 'digging of the sea' is indicative of the varied biographies of things.⁴⁸

Anthropologists might question things as signs with social and cultural significance, but archaeologists and anthropologists share some of their approaches to objects.⁴⁹ Both are interested in all objects as evidence of human practices and in the cultural contexts in which those practices emerged, in contrast to the selective practices of the art historians and historians of collections. Anthropologists interested in history would likely question the relationship between people and artefacts. In the

case of our three porcelain cups, anthropologists might wish to understand why, how and through which processes such objects were used; why they survived intact rather than ending up broken or shipwrecked; what was their meaning not just in elite practices of collecting but in the everyday lives of millions of people. They might question why early modern Europeans thought of enhancing the value of Chinese porcelain by setting them in precious metal, a practice alien to many other cultures. They might ask whether such a cup would have been better placed to be an item of gifting (many ambassadorial gifts included mounted porcelain) than the more simple (one might say untouched) cup and whether the latter retained stronger connections to its place of origin than one manipulated, reshaped and mounted.

One understands the importance that anthropology has had in the study of material culture – past and present. If the history of collecting questions the boundaries between natural and artefactual, anthropology challenges the long-standing ‘common-sense opposition between the person and the thing’.⁵⁰ It advocates a more profound understanding of things so as to achieve deeper insights into us as human beings. The investigation of the everyday through a close analysis of its material forms has been a methodology championed since the mid-1980s by a variety of scholars, first among whom is Daniel Miller. With Miller and Appadurai, the historical study of things changed thoroughly. Since the publication of *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987) and *The Social Life of Things* (1986), ‘history can unabashedly begin with things’.⁵¹ Things have been transformed from objects that stand in the background, to subjects that take centre stage. As Appadurai’s mobilization of Marx’ ideas about fetishism and the value of materials, and Simmel’s ideas about the importance of exchange for the value of things has made clear, things, which he refers to as commodities, have economic value ‘in motion’, as they circulate in social life.⁵²

Things in history and global history

Historians, on the whole, readily borrow terms and methods from across a whole spectrum of disciplines. That is why history often refers interchangeably to objects, artefacts and things. Generally, the historian has seen the analysis of texts and documents as a mark of his or her craft. When historians have focused on things, it has often been from a quantitative perspective.⁵³ The shift from objects to goods, and from qualitative to quantitative approaches that we see in much of this work is captured by the term consumption. Over the years, the study of (the history of) consumption has grown into a vast field. Early key figures in this field include Neil McKendrick and John Brewer, as we see in the 1982 publication of *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, and the research project led by John Brewer, entitled ‘Culture and Consumption in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, which led to the publication of the famous *Consumption and the World of Goods*.⁵⁴ Almost without exception, the studies discussed in this large tome dealt with European goods, and especially English and Anglo-American goods. There are references to France, the Netherlands, and to

the European consumption of Asian goods, but consumption is seen as a largely European phenomenon, and one related to the emergence of a peculiarly European early modernity.⁵⁵ On the whole, then, the consumption of goods in other parts of the world was not part of this wave of academic production.

Two related developments had a very important impact on this state of affairs. One was the emergence of global history, and the other the improved communication between area studies and disciplinary fields such as (art) history and literary studies. To begin with the second point, it is important to note that when the group of contributors to *Consumption and the World of Goods* first gathered in the late eighties and early nineties, the scholarship of area studies specialists was hardly read outside of the specialized fields like Islamic Studies, Latin American Studies, or Chinese and Japanese Studies. The journals they published articles in, the publishing houses that produced their books, and the conferences they attended were all focused on the specialized field and catered only for an audience of experts. A small group of individuals, who not only read the work of scholars well beyond the boundaries of their own fields but also wrote for readers from a much wider spectrum of disciplinary and geographic specialisations made a key difference. With the publication of their work, which straddled several disciplines and theories and drew on wider and comparable methodological studies, it gradually became less acceptable to address only the narrowest of area studies specialists, and more common to expect scholarly studies to draw on such traditionally 'area studies' materials.

By the late 1990s some historians started to question the Euro-centred perspective of much of the literature on consumption. They did so by investigating similar phenomena in different areas of the world including the Ottoman Empire, Ming and Qing China, Edo Japan, Latin America and East Africa.⁵⁶ This extra-European literature came to challenge the very notion of a consumer revolution by highlighting how similar processes were in place elsewhere in the world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. European historians too started to acknowledge that the local or national scale of investigation of consumption was ill suited to explain the ways in which a possible European consumer revolution relied on commodities coming from elsewhere in the world, the type of world captured by De Pereda in his still life. But it was not just about consumption: Maxine Berg proposed the idea that Asian commodities such as porcelain and textiles caused a material transformation in Europe and sparked the imagination of consumers and producers alike. She showed how European manufacturing came to be reshaped by Asian products through processes of imitation and innovation that eventually led to what we call the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁷

A second important change of direction came not from academia but from the museum world. An exhibition such as *Encounters*, held at the V&A in 2003, showed the value of thinking about different commodities ranging from porcelains, to carpets, cotton and silk textiles, tiles, decorative artefacts and maps, within larger historical explanations that could capture not just their specific historical meaning but also their changing values across time and space.⁵⁸ This was just the first of a number of 'global' (both in scope and in audience) exhibitions sometimes tackling specific

geographic areas in new and unexpected ways. This was the case of the exhibition entitled 'Turks' at the Royal Academy in London in 2005.⁵⁹ This shift towards wider geographies was beautifully represented in the British Museum's series entitled 'A History of the World in 100 Objects', presented by the museum's director Neil McGregor.⁶⁰ More recently, similar approaches have been adopted in new ways of presenting textiles as in the case of the 2013 'Interwoven Globe' exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.⁶¹

In conjunction with these developments, the field of history itself changed direction, away from narrowly-focused national histories and towards studies that focused on border and contact zones, and away from studies that presumed a European or Western priority towards studies that took seriously the developments and transformations that occurred within different context and periodization throughout the world. For some, it became crucial to refer to this new field as global history, others attached these developments to the field of world history, with its long-standing devotees in US academia, and for others still, a more inclusive and less nation-based approach began to characterize their practice, even without the term global or world history. What matters for us is the impact of all these developments on the historical study of objects. Instead of merely studying Western goods, or focusing on consumption in Western contexts, this global turn meant that historians began to see objects as part of wider stories that crossed geographical and chronological zones.

The global turn transformed the ways in which historians studied objects. They began to see the connected histories that led to the circulation of objects throughout the various parts of the world. Very few geographical spaces stayed outside the reach of the connections forged by the global circulation of goods, although the extent, intensity and variety of global goods changed significantly depending on the space and time. This transformation in the approach and outlook of the scholarly community led to the production of a wide variety of studies that featured goods that were termed 'global' in one way or another. To stay close to home, the editors of this book have in different ways addressed a global dimension through the analysis of specific 'global things'. Giorgio Riello in his work on cotton explains the complex web of design, material, economic and technical factors that connected producers in India and consumers across the Indian Ocean and beyond.⁶² Whilst his work addressed the macro picture and argued for the materiality of things as one of the major aspects of a so-called first phase of globalization, Anne Gerritsen, in her work on Jingdezhen's porcelains, investigates the relationship between the local and the global. Production for global markets also has a significant impact on the centre of production itself, and on the regional consumption of such global commodities.⁶³

Several further developments, however, are important for explaining the pieces that are part of this particular volume of papers, and the choice of title, which includes not only the word 'global' but also the word 'lives'. We are not only interested in trajectories that span time zones and geographical variations, but we are concerned to explore the transformative impact of these trajectories on the goods

themselves. Individual objects, composite objects, and complements of goods bear the traces of their lives in different contexts, spaces and times, like the marks of age on a face, the creases of wear in an item of clothing, or the cracks in the spine of a well-read book.

Objects of global knowledge

Things have always played a key role in the creation of knowledge, be it knowledge of natural and cultural phenomena or the more formalized ideas that constitute science and technology. After all, new instruments made new observations and measurements possible, which in turn led to the development of new hypotheses and theories. According to Toby Huff, the Dutch invention of the telescope in 1608, and the subsequent possibility of observations of both the minute (microscopy) and the remote (astronomy) eventually led to Newton's insights about the force of gravity, which form the basis of modern Western science.⁶⁴ Toby Huff's telescope, but also things like the steam engine and the spinning jenny, clocks, wheels and levers all form part of the rich repertoire of the historian of science and technology.

To study scientific instruments *as things*, however, is a reasonably new development, and emerged as part of a reconceptualization of what 'science' and its history might be.⁶⁵ Rather than thinking of science as the outcome of a linear trajectory that began with the enquiries of great men within Western civilisation, scholars have begun to investigate the multiple trajectories of what we might refer to as scientific culture. That shift in focus opened our eyes to the important contributions of women in science, of global connections, interactions and exchanges in the development of European science, and of the importance of collecting, understanding and displaying *things* for scientific development.⁶⁶ It is because of these developments that we now speak of cultures of knowledge.⁶⁷

The astronomical clock (Figure 0.4) is a good example of the entangled histories of scientific objects. This astronomical clock was probably manufactured in eighteenth-century Canton, where merchants and manufacturers from various parts of China and Europe mingled. The clock's movement was made in China, by a clockmaker who seems to have worked with a late eighteenth-century English model. Several unusual choices and creative adaptations suggest the Chinese clockmaker integrated notes or drawings of the English example with his own expertise to make an entirely new creation. It combines an ornate wooden stand, which would not look out of place in any wealthy Chinese household, a large round clock face with a chart that shows the stars as they are visible from southern China, joined into traditional Chinese constellations, and surrounded by a thin circle, divided into the twelve Chinese zodiac signs. Beyond that are two metal brass rings the show the seasons, the quarter hours and the minutes, making it possible to tell the time in both Chinese and European fashion. The only other known astronomical clock like this was made one hundred years later in Suzhou, China, and is now in the Forbidden City. The flows and cross-currents of objects, materials, people and ideas that form



FIGURE 0.4 Astronomical clock. Wood, metal and glass. China, eighteenth century. H 82cm, W 38 cm. The Oriental Museum, Durham. Gift from Sir Charles Edmund Hardinge. DUROM.1960.880. Reproduced by permission of Durham University Museum.

part of the global life of this object, include its acquisition by Charles Edmund Hardinge (1878–1968), and its arrival in Durham in the United Kingdom.

The first part of this book dedicated to ‘Objects of Global Knowledge’ investigates the specific topic of materials and materiality in the early modern world. The three papers included in this section emphasise the properties, meanings and knowledge embodied by different materials. Part of the attractions of commodities ranging from porcelain to cotton and lacquer rested on their material properties. But such material properties created also global exchanges of knowledge and came to influence notions of manipulation of materials and, as Pamela Smith argues, the bodily and conceptual interventions on the natural world. Smith sets the context by considering artisanal practices in the vast space of Eurasia and focuses on the

properties of mercury and sulphur. She argues that material fluxes were created and in turned reshaped systems of knowledge, thus integrating history of science within the study of material culture and global exchange. What she proposes is to see knowledge not as bounded within a particular cultural context, but built on the shared foundations that emerge from the global exchange of things and people.

Christine Guth's chapter on shagreen is another example of global knowledge. Shagreen is a leather made from shark and rayskin, with very specific practical and aesthetic properties: it is waterproof but not slippery, strong but malleable, and attractive because of its textured variegations. As Guth's study shows, throughout early modern Europe and America, the Ottoman and Persian empires, India, South-east Asia and Japan, shagreen became desirable, but only because interactions through trade brought increased knowledge about this material. Sites of shagreen production and consumption were local and global at the same time: local, because the material formed part of different cultural repertoires that assigned meanings to the material, but global, because the material depended upon the global knowledge that emerged through networks of trade and the circulation of exotic goods in the early modern world.

Similarly, Pippa Lacey's material, coral, has global and local iterations shaped by the emergence of global knowledge during this period. Like shagreen, coral forms part of very different repertoires of knowledge and meaning, but because it grows naturally in only a few sites, it could only circulate in and out of those repertoires through global networks of trade and knowledge. Lacey refers to this as the 'coral network', which connects the eighteenth-century Chinese court with the Mediterranean, and Chinese imperial desire for its colour and 'curiosity' with the East India Company merchants' desire for tradable goods and financial profit. Very different knowledge systems, then, are connected through the properties of the material: the ways in which it was grown and harvested, preserved and transported, measured, assessed and valued, transformed into other goods and represented in art and visual culture. All three pieces show the interconnected nature of knowledge, shaping and shaped by the exchange of commodities and materials over vast distances.

Objects of global connection

Connectivity has been a key concept in recent global histories. Yet the shaping and articulation of connections in the early modern world was far from being either unilateral or univocal. A great deal of the history of trade – focusing as it does on large categories of traded commodities – has tended to portray commercial connections as the movement of goods from places of production to places of consumption. This type of easy material connection (from 'A' to 'B') is problematic as it rarely reveals the complex linkages across spaces, how often connections broke down, the shifting meanings that artefacts assumed within and between these spaces and the fact that mobility often reshaped artefacts physically and changed the very cultures entering into contact through exchange. Artefacts are a good way to consider the processes of connections affecting the early modern world. An example

can be found in a rather prosaic object such as the late seventeenth-century knife in Figure 0.5. It is an object that captures the connection between early seventeenth-century India and England in its material shape. The slight curve and rounded blade was a typical product of the metal production of the city of Sheffield in England, though it is stamped with the dagger mark used by the Cutlers Company of London.⁶⁸ The handle however was made in India, probably in Goa, and represents a lady dressed in Indian costume, a motif that was particularly fashionable in late-seventeenth century Europe.⁶⁹ These types of ivory carvings were made by Goanese craftsmen specifically for the European market.

An object like this hints at the commercial connection between England and India via the English East India Company, but also shows how craftsmen engaged in steel-blade making in England and carvers of ivory objects in Southern India unwittingly came to cooperate in the production of an object specifically destined for European consumers. It also shows the processes of acquisition of meaning of objects, especially if we think that neither of the producers probably saw the finished artefacts. Indeed, the Goanese craftsmen might have had little understanding of the final usage of what they carved. This object – by virtue of taking shape in



FIGURE 0.5 Knife, c.1660–1680. The blade was probably made in Sheffield, England, whilst the carved handle was produced in Goa, India. Steel, with ivory handle. Victoria and Albert Museum 522–1893 (currently on display in the British Galleries, room 56e, case 1).

space, literally moving across continents – shows how meaning is created in layers and how different actors might only temporarily appropriate objects.

It must be said that this knife was not intended for dining, but was probably treasured within the space of a cabinet of curiosities. This is a topic considered by Mariana Françaço in her analysis of early modern South American feathers and featherwork. These were some of the most prized and sought-for items in European collections of curiosities. Once made for ritual use by Tupi societies of Brazil, after the first contacts with Europeans these indigenous peoples started manufacturing feather ornaments to be traded with foreigners. While this fact points to a possible categorization of such artefacts as global commodities, Françaço's paper argues that their meanings and values can only be understood locally: the appreciation and categorization of featherwork varied according to different reception contexts. By considering the *Ballet de la Carmesse* that took place in The Hague in 1655, and comparing it with other contemporaneous festive events where South American featherwork was displayed and used, Françaço investigates the performative display of these objects. *Kunstammer* pieces were not necessarily 'museified' but found practical use as well. This in turn allowed for the incorporation of the New World into the symbolic language of Northern European court festivities and court diplomacy.

Nuno Senos expands the analysis of the purchase and collecting of 'exotic' objects by concentrating on a specific space. This is the palace of one of the wealthiest aristocrats in sixteenth-century Portugal, D. Teodosio, duke of Braganza, the son of a hero of the war in Morocco, brother to a viceroy of India, who died in 1543. An impressive probate inventory of more than 1,600 pages was produced. This is the largest inventory to have survived from sixteenth-century Portugal and one of the largest in Europe, providing a unique view of the contents of the duke's palace. Senos' paper focuses on the various entries that reflect the duke's interest in the objects from different parts of the Portuguese empire ranging from chronicles, maps and nautical instruments, to bezoar stones, mounted coconuts and Chinese porcelain. Reference is also made to the ways in which these goods were kept and used or displayed in the palace as Senos questions the concept of 'collection' as a pertinent one to understand the duke's relationship with these objects.

Susan Broomhall takes us to the opposite side of the world and explores how objects were used, or expected to be used, in the development of relations between Dutch East India Company officials and the indigenous peoples they encountered in what is now Australia. By using the extensive documentation of the Company, her contribution explores the nature of objects that the Dutch expected would be useful for building and sustaining fruitful economic, practical and emotional relationships between their cultures. In particular, it considers the historical and archaeological evidence of the objects that Dutch East India officials did employ as they negotiated with indigenous peoples on the north and west coasts of Australia. She thus proposes a provocative argument in claiming that objects, bound in complex relationships with emotions and expectations, profoundly shaped the nature of Dutch encounters with the landscapes and peoples of Australia, creating unanticipated geographies, histories, and connections in the process.

The final paper of this section by K vin Le Doudic considers instead the confined space of one Indian port city: Pondicherry. By using probate inventories, surviving artefacts and a number of other ‘ego-documents’, Le Doudic considers the consumption patterns of both local Indian inhabitants and the small but influential French community resident in Pondicherry. His paper analyses through the buyers’ origin (nationality, social and professional position) how commodities played a role of interface and became nodes in the construction of the commercial, social and cultural relations between two distinct groups of people: Europeans and Asians. The well-known notions of exoticism and hybridity are here questioned. He argues that the two cultures came together around the same goods but without sharing the same stylistic references, perception of space, or relations to material culture on a broad sense (which define the cultural and financial values of the objects).

The papers in this second section of the volume thus provide a variety of ways of interpreting connection in the so-called first global age. They consider both commercial and cultural connections and critique established ideas that see Europe as a key node of global connectivity in this period. They focus instead on rather distinct spaces of connection that range from the interior of a palace to the structure and life of a port city to the wider connections between the Americas and Europe but also between the Americas and Asia, Europe and Asia and Europe and Australasia. Rather than focusing on ‘anonymous exchange’ and tracking the movement of goods to and from different points of the globe, the chapters here included emphasize the interlocked material and cultural complexity of exchange across continents and cultural zones. They show that notwithstanding the long-distance networks of early modern trade, exchange was often not anonymous at all. It might involve networks of gifting and collecting; purposeful reinterpretations of the meanings associated with specific objects; or even the material re-shaping and transformation of objects through processes of customisation, alteration, and re-combination.

Objects of global consumption

As we have already seen, consumption has been a key way of approaching material culture. An interest in the ways in which novel forms and patterns of consumption emerged in early modern Europe led to important research on the ways in which non-European goods came to be part of the consuming habits of rich and poor alike. This strand of research has been particularly important for the eighteenth century when, it has been argued, exotic and novel objects came to reshape material expectations, manufacturing methods and social practices.⁷⁰ Yet such a history should not be taken to be solely about Europe’s engagement with other continents and the ways in which non-European commodities impacted on European consumption. The last decade – in line with what we said in the previous section – has seen a proliferation of studies in which the consuming habits of people in different parts of the world were reshaped by artefacts, commodities and technologies from other world areas or continents.

Take for instance this image of a fruit well known to us all: a pineapple (Figure 0.6). It was drawn in the late sixteenth century by John White, an English artist and early settler in North America. In 1585 White was commissioned to draw the inhabitants of the New World during his time at Roanoke Island. He compiled a beautiful album that is now at the British Museum in London, containing among the many this image of a pineapple. The pineapple was indigenous to the area between southern Brazil and Paraguay. Its cultivation spread throughout Latin America, eventually reaching the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico. What Columbus called *piña*

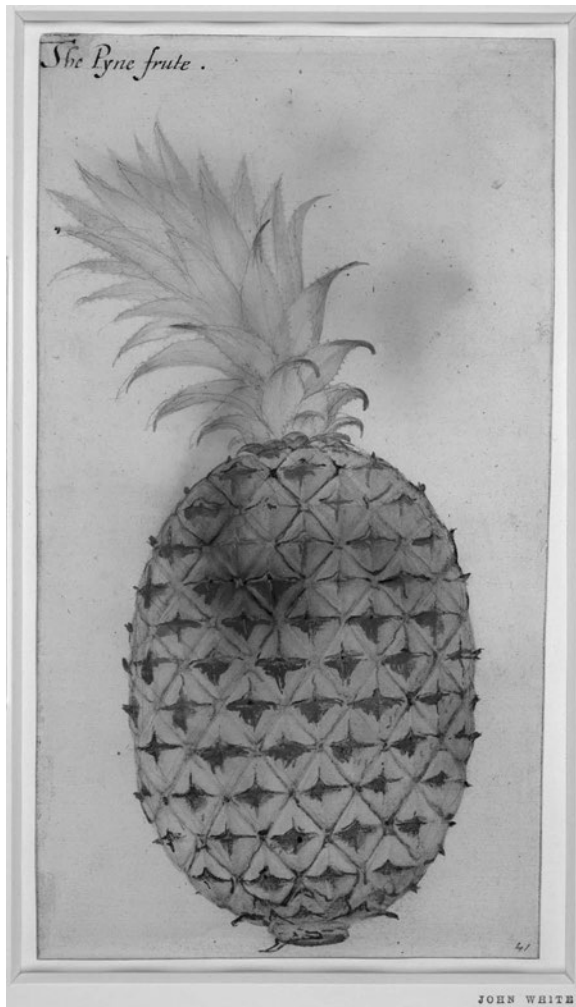


FIGURE 0.6 *Pineapple*, drawing by John White. Watercolour over graphite, touched with white, 1585–1593. © The Trustees of the British Museum Prints & Drawings 1906, 0509.1.41.

de Indes (pine of the Indians) was one of the many American plants that found its way to Europe and eventually Asia in what Alfred Crosby called 'the Columbian exchange'.⁷¹ It was introduced into India by the 1550s and via the Pacific to Hawaii and the Philippines. Still a rarity in Europe in the late sixteenth century, it is unclear whether White had seen a pineapple before arriving on the shores of the Americas.⁷²

The pineapple is a fruit whose cultivation spread across the globe. Today not many people would be able to recognise it as an American plant and fruit as we mostly associate it with the Pacific and Hawaii in particular. Its global impact might have been less profound than that of other American crops such as maize, tomatoes and potatoes that after 1500 revolutionized both diets and the cuisines of different areas of Asia, Europe and Africa. Yet, the pineapple shares with other crops a truly global reach.

The final part of this book focuses on raw commodities rather than manufactured products. A great deal has been written on tropical commodities (cocoa, sugar, tea and coffee) but far too often these beverages and sweeteners have been considered only in relation to changing consuming habits in Europe, or to be more precise in North-western Europe. The papers included in this section of the book challenge this narrative and consider new geographies such as that of Russia and its engagement with tobacco, or the global shift of sugar cultivation. They also complicate narratives of consumer desire according to which novel products are sought after by consumers. The papers included here show instead that novel products were sometimes contentious, were opposed or subject to outright bans. In other cases they found acceptance but did not trickle down the social ladder, remaining instead at the reach of a smaller elite. The cultivation of new commodities on a large scale had also profound environmental consequences as Urmi Engineer details. All of them came with a baggage of knowledge about their properties and effects on well-being that influenced their acceptance and success among consumers.

An example of a commodity that was much debated and fought against (in the past as much as in the present) is tobacco. Tobacco was fought against in Europe as much as it was in Mughal India. Matt Romaniello considers instead the trajectory of tobacco in seventeenth-century Russia. Here too, the Tsar implemented the empire's first prohibition against tobacco sales in the 1620s. By 1649, the government instituted a ban against all consumption, a restriction that would last for another fifty years until it was reversed by Peter the Great. What was the world's longest tobacco embargo did not hinder the success of this new substance. Russia's imperial subjects adopted the tobacco habit, though a combination of smuggling and regional trade networks created distinctive consumption customs. In European Russia, tobacco was first introduced as leaf for pipes and early cigars by English and Dutch merchants, before a transition to snuff that began in the eighteenth century in a conscious adoption of contemporary European elite culture. In western Siberia, the indigenous Ostiaks preferred instead to smoke tobacco in water-pipes, adopting the custom from their primary suppliers in Safavid Iran and Mughal India. In eastern Siberia, Chinese ball tobacco for pipes became the regular habit among the Chukchis and Kamchadals. The Russian Empire's tobacco habit, therefore, was

supplied by Western European empires, the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and, eventually, directly from the Americas. Romaniello argues that the spread of this global product did not unify the Russian Empire with a common habit, but instead revealed strong regional distinctions that remained largely unaffected by increasing consumption.

The idea that the trade in raw commodities had consequences beyond the creation of new consuming patterns is also embraced by Urmi Engineer's analysis of sugar. The significance of sugar as a global commodity has been explicated by Sidney Mintz in his seminal work, *Sweetness and Power* published in 1985.⁷³ Literature on the history of sugar focuses on labour issues, cultural aspects of consumption, and issues related to health and nutrition. Engineer's contribution examines instead the ecological consequences of sugar from a global perspective. Such a perspective is often adopted in analysis of commodity chains and commodity production in the twentieth century. Here Engineer makes an argument for extending such a methodology back at least to the seventeenth century. The establishment of large-scale sugar plantations in the Caribbean, she argues, had profound ecological and environmental consequences, which resulted in widespread deforestation and soil erosion. This is especially evident in the transformation of tropical forests in Saint-Domingue/Haiti and Cuba, as well as in the swamp country of Louisiana. Moreover, sugar plantations also required the draining of wetlands, and the building of canals and irrigation ditches. These alterations in the landscape transformed the region's ecology, as the construction of sugar plantations and port cities attracted *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which served as a vector for yellow fever transmission. Because sugar plantations depended on West African slave labour, West African diseases, including yellow fever and malaria, became part of the Caribbean disease environment.

A final paper by Christine Fertig and Ulrich Pfister brings us back to the relationship between trade and consumption in Europe. Their paper however focuses on an area such as Germany that only in recent years has been researched in its global connections. Fertig and Pfister connect the trade in coffee and other tropical produce to new notions of well-being. By considering the toll registers of the port of Hamburg in the period 1733–98, they show the strong and steady growth of the coffee trade to become the second most important item in Hamburg's maritime imports at the end of the eighteenth century. They argue that coffee consumption made it easier for lower-class households without land to subsist on progressively meagre rations of grain. They thus challenge Jan de Vries's notion of a consumer revolution by showing that notwithstanding the increase of consumer items in Hamburg's toll registers, the phenomenon remained restricted to small elite groups. The final part of their contribution focuses on commodities that were considered to aid bodily well-being and serve medical purposes. The growth and differentiation of this trade suggest globalization of expedients to physical well-being. Overall, then, these studies show the complex trajectories of these commodities, contentious in past and present due to their addictive nature and yet ubiquitous in many parts of both the early modern and modern worlds.

Conclusion

The Global Lives of Things seeks to make a contribution to a new field, where global history and material culture intersect. It considers how in the early modern period, the social lives of things were global: they transcended the cultural and political boundaries of nations and even continents. This book does not claim to cover all material manifestations, but focuses on the small but crucial portion of material culture that contributed to the creation of long-distance social and economic connections. Methodologically, contributions included in this volume do not limit themselves to the analysis of broad social processes and phenomena of classes of objects over the *longue durée*. They often embrace a micro-methodology reminiscent of the 'cultural biography' approach and focus on the individual experiences of specific commodities/artefacts. Taken together, the complex trajectories of these objects reveal a world of movement and interaction, shaped by raw and manufactured commodities that in themselves told tales of other places and unknown lands. The global lives of things help us tell the stories of these interactions.

Notes and references

1. The research and writing of this introduction has been possible thanks to the support of the AHRC International Network 'Global Commodities: The Material Culture of Global Connections' led by Gerritsen and Riello and by the Philip Leverhulme Prize and the Leverhulme Network 'Luxury and the Manipulation of Desire: Historical Perspectives for Contemporary Debates' led by Riello.
2. Antonio de Pereda's dates are unclear. He was born in Valladolid in 1599 or 1611, and died in Madrid in 1669 or 1678.
3. See Figure 76 in *Treasured Possessions from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Victoria Avery, Melissa Calaresu and Mary Laven (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 74–75. For a description of the painting and a detailed identification of all the objects in the painting, see Cinta Krahe, 'Chinese Porcelain and other Orientalia and Exotica in Spain during the Habsburg Dynasty' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leiden, 2014), 241–242. A gourd cup very similar to the one depicted here is in the Távora Sequeira Pinto Collection in Porto (Portugal), and appeared in the exhibition entitled 'Luxury for Export: Artistic Exchange between India and Portugal around 1600' held at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 2008. The authors of the catalogue identify the Porto cup as 'probably Goa'. Pedro Moura Carvalho, *Luxury for Export: Artistic Exchange between India and Portugal around 1600* (Pittsburgh, PA: Gutenberg Periscope Publishing, 2008), 50–1. The gourd depicted in the painting has also been described as 'a lacquered gourd bowl of the type imported from Mexico'. William B. Jordan and Peter Cherry, *Spanish Still Life from Velázquez to Goya*. Exhibition catalogue, National Gallery, London (London: The National Gallery, 1995), cat. no. 30, p. 88.
4. The jar is identified as made in Talavera in Jordan and Cherry, *Spanish Still Life*, 88. On chocolate and its implements, see Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).
5. Jordan and Cherry, *Spanish Still Life*, 87.
6. It has been suggested that Pereda owned at least some of the luxury objects depicted in his still lifes, as they appeared in several of his paintings. Jordan and Cherry, *Spanish Still Life*, 87.
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68. The improper use of London marks was not uncommon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1624 a Sheffield cutler working in London had some of his knives confiscated because 'they had the dagger counterfeited upon them being Sheffield

knives'. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77653/knife-vigo/> (last consulted 23 June 2015).

69. Costume was one of the ways in which Europeans understood and analysed the non-European world. This was done through a number of costume books – collections of images of the dress of different parts of the world that were popular in Europe since the second half of the sixteenth century. They also represented the costumes of the people of different parts of the world on maps, prints and drawings, on artefacts such as porcelain and in carvings such as that decorating this knife. Kristen Ina Grimes, 'Dressing the World: Costume Books and Ornamental Cartography in the Age of Exploration', in *A Well-fashioned Image: Clothing and Costume in European Art, 1500–1850* ed. Elizabeth Rodini and Elissa B. Weaver (Chicago: David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, 2002), 13–21; Odille Blanc, 'Ethnologie et merveille dans quelques livres de costumes français', in *Paraître et se vêtir au XVI^e siècle. Actes du XIII^e Colloque du Puy-en-Velay*, ed. Marie Viallon (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2006), 77–91; Gabriele Mentges, 'Pour une approche renouvelée des recueils de costumes de la Renaissance. Une cartographie vestimentaire de l'espace et du temps,' *Apparence(s)* 1 (2007), 1–21; Chandra Mukerji, 'Costume and Character in the Ottoman Empire: Dress as Social Agent in Nicolay's *Navigations*', in *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800*, ed. Paula Findlen (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2013), 151–169.
70. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*.
71. Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*.
72. Kaori O'Connor, *Pineapple: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013).
73. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.