

Things in Motion

Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice

Edited by Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie



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Contents

List of Figures	ix
1. Making Things out of Objects That Move <i>Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie</i>	3
2. Things in Motion: Itineraries of Ulua Marble Vases <i>Rosemary A. Joyce</i>	21
3. Journey's End(?): The Travels of La Venta Offering 4 <i>Susan D. Gillespie</i>	39
4. Places to Go and Social Worlds to Constitute: The Fractal Itinerary of Tarascan Obsidian Idols in Prehispanic Mexico <i>David L. Haskell</i>	63
5. Glass Beads and Global Itineraries <i>Elliot H. Blair</i>	81
6. Stones in Movement: Tracing the Itineraries of Menhirs, Stelae, and Statue-Menhirs in Iberian Landscapes <i>Marta Díaz-Guardamino</i>	101
7. Geologies in Motion: Itineraries of Stone, Clay, and Pots in the Lake Titicaca Basin <i>Andrew Roddick</i>	123
8. The <i>Kula</i> of Long-Term Loans: Cultural Object Itineraries and the Promise of the Postcolonial "Universal" Museum <i>Alexander A. Bauer</i>	147
9. Healing Space-Time: Medical Performance and Object Itineraries on a Tanzanian Landscape <i>Jonathan R. Walz</i>	161

CONTENTS

10. Native Basketry and the Dynamics of Social Landscapes in Southern New England <i>Heather Law Pezzarossi</i>	179
11. The Living Past: Itineraries of Swift Creek Images through Wood, Earthenware, and Ether <i>Neill J. Wallis</i>	201
References	221
Index	273

I

Making Things out of Objects That Move

Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie

This volume derives from a School for Advanced Research short seminar held in Santa Fe on May 8–9, 2012, entitled *Things in Motion: Object Histories, Biographies, and Itineraries*. The seminar reunited speakers from a 2010 American Anthropological Association symposium of the same name, which focused on the circulation of materials in archaeological and museum contexts. With two additional participants, the 2012 seminar provided the opportunity for a productive, intense, and comprehensive exploration of movement as a fundamental capacity of things.

The participants in the symposium and seminar proposed as a complement to the concept of object biography a more complex construct, “itinerary,” which traces the strings of places where objects come to rest or are active, the routes through which things circulate, and the means by which they are moved (Joyce 2012a, 2012b; see also Hahn and Weiss 2013a). Itineraries are spatial and temporal, and they converge with sites and routes singular, multiple, virtual, and real. They have no real beginning other than where we enter them and no end since things and their extensions continue to move. Itineraries may include stoppages, knots, or nodes (Küchler 2003). Our understanding of an itinerary may be fragmented, filled with gaps. While most of the contributors to this volume use concepts of biography, as well as itinerary, they do so acknowledging that biography

commits them to equating the lives of things to the lives of humans in ways that do not always realize the full potential to trace the conjunctions of things over time and space.

Both the seminar at SAR and the preceding AAA symposium used the phrase “things in motion” to translate “object itineraries.” Our purpose is in part to advocate for a broader engagement with the mobility of things of all kinds, including materials in the world and in the workshop, words about manufactured goods, and images that purport to be of absent things implied by present things. Given the long and contentious history in anthropology and archaeology regarding the distinction between objects and things, it may be worth emphasizing why we did not use “thing itinerary” in place of “object itinerary.” First, object itinerary is here offered as a specific alternative to the now well-entrenched concept of object biography. Although Igor Kopytoff (1986) used both “thing” and “object” in the essay that initiated the biographical approach, the term “object biography” became the standard within and outside anthropology (Dant 2001; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hoskins 2006). Object itinerary is intended as an alternative to object biography, and retaining the parallelism signals that.

A second reason to employ the term “object itinerary” comes directly from the discussions of the differences made by turning to things as things. In the formulation of thing theory, Bill Brown (2001:3) distinguished between objects and things by pointing out the capacity of objects to arrest our attention and the tendency of things to “lurk in the shadows.” He continued:

We look through objects because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts.... We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us...when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily. The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation. (B. Brown 2001:4)

The contributors to this volume are engaging with objects, things that have been freely used as facts in a variety of archaeological arguments. Where they construct biographies, they are clearly engaged in fixing things as objects of knowledge. To the extent that itineraries begin in the same

MAKING THINGS OUT OF OBJECTS THAT MOVE

way, they begin with objects. We contend that to the extent each contributor here has turned away from the biographical toward the moving, to the thoroughly spatialized and temporalized flow of things, each is engaged in shifting what start as objects into things, contributing to that “changed relation” between things and humans. To call the mediating construct an itinerary of things would be to presume the outcome of this process. One implication of shifting from object biographies to itineraries of objects as things is the acknowledgment that the texts we write are part of the ongoing engagement of things with humans, which undermines the objectivity of objects and replaces it with the relationality of things. Asserting this, however, presumes a reading of the recent history of material culture and materiality that we have not yet demonstrated. That is the topic of the next section.

FROM MATERIAL TURN TO NEW MATERIALISMS

The “material turn” began in anthropology and related disciplines in the 1980s (Miller and Tilley 1996; Preda 1999). A number of useful reference works provide historical overviews of how these studies have developed and changed in anthropology and archaeology since then (Boivin 2008; Hahn 2012; Hicks and Beaudry 2010a; Hicks and Beaudry 2010b; Knappett 2012; Miller 2005b; Myers 2001; Tilley et al. 2006b). Much of the work in anthropology (and archaeology) was explicitly grounded in a much earlier philosophical “turn to things.” This philosophical move was captured in Edmund Husserl’s famous quote “back to the things themselves,” from an unfinished work originally published in German in 1936 and translated into English in 1954 (Gosden 1994:103; Husserl 1970). Posing the question “What Is a Thing?” Martin Heidegger (1967) in lectures given in 1935 (though not published until 1962) explored the implications of the then current scientific and commonsense understandings of things. Eugene Gendlin (1967:249–250) analyzed Heidegger’s understanding of the “thing-concept,” in which a thing “is a certain sort of explanatory scheme, a certain sort of approach to anything studied.... It is an approach that renders whatever we study as some thing in space, located over there, subsisting separate from and over against us and having certain properties of its own. It is as obvious as ‘that orange-colored chair over there,’ or ‘an atom,’ ‘a cell,’ ‘a self,’ ‘a sense datum,’ ‘body.’” This sense of the separation of things from the people engaging with them, whether in science or in everyday life, was for Heidegger an error.

In a lecture delivered in 1950, published as “The Thing,” Heidegger (1971) discussed a ceramic vessel, attempting to identify its “thingness,”

not simply the characteristics it had as an object represented by, made by, or used by a human subject. He identified its intrinsic nature as a container shaped around empty space rather than as an object made for human purposes, even though the vessel had to be shaped in order to contain the empty space that then had the potential to be filled.

Following these philosophical beginnings, one of the central tensions in the turn to things has been and continues to be between things and objects: things in themselves and as part of human projects. Thus, the thing theory that emerged as one of the products of the turn to things criticized scholars who “look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture—above all, what they disclose about *us*),” arguing that as a consequence “we only catch a glimpse of things” (B. Brown 2001:4).

The turn to things illuminated the critical role of previously marginalized entities—nonhumans—in social theory (Appadurai 1986b; Dant 2005; Gell 1998; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Holtorf 1998; Hoskins 1998, 2006; A. Jones 2002; Joy 2009; Kopytoff 1986; Marshall 2008; Meskell 2004, 2009). Since their professionalization in the nineteenth century, archaeology and its cousin, museum studies, have been grounded in the study of the objects made by humans, not seemingly requiring a “material turn.” However, a new material culture studies developed out of the desire to elicit from artifacts meaning and social value, not simply technological or behavioral attributes (Hicks 2010). These approaches emphasized recursive relationships between people and objects (Gell 1998; Gosden 2005; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Keane 2006; Miller 1987, 2005a; Tilley et al. 2006a:4). People and things came to be modeled as “entangled” with each other (Hodder 2011a, 2011b, 2012; N. Thomas 1991). Depending on the theory employed, humans and objects were further understood as mutually constituted through their interactions, rather than engaging with each other from autonomous and a priori subject or object statuses (Miller 2005a).

A specific anthropological orientation to this intersubjectivity of objects and humans can be traced back to the early work of Malinowski (1922) on *kula* exchange (see Bauer, chapter 8, this volume). The seminal 1925 essay by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (1954), explained how certain objects come to be “inalienable,” forming part of the personhood of their makers or givers. This concept of “inalienable possessions” (Weiner 1985, 1992), first developed through the study of formalized *kula* exchange, which extended the “personhood” of individual humans through space and time, has been broadened to include a multiplicity of objects (Battaglia 1983; Gell 1998; Munn 1986).

To understand how things are enmeshed with the lives of humans who

make, use, exchange, modify, destroy, and deposit them requires an ontology that rejects the essentialist division of persons from things (subjects from objects) that has dominated Western thought since the development of European modernity (Alberti et al. 2011; Alberti, Jones, and Pollard 2013; Gell 1998; Jones 2002; Kopytoff 1986:84; Latour 2005; Miller 2005a; Mouffe 1993; Olsen 2007; Santos-Granero 2009; Strathern 1988; Watts 2013). This commitment to new ontologies could align archaeology with an emergent conversation that crosses disciplinary boundaries and is characterized broadly as “new materialism” (Ahmed 2010; Bennett 2010; Connolly 2013; Coole and Frost 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012). New materialists call for recognizing things as “integral parts of relationships and subjectivities rather than as instruments of meaning appropriated by a prior subject” (Trentmann 2009:306). Coole and Frost (2010:8) identified a goal of new materialisms as “describing active processes of materialization of which embodied humans are an integral part, rather than the monotonous repetitions of dead matter from which human subjects are apart.”

Even in the first stages of the turn to things, analytical focus was directed toward processes that make and unmake both objects and people in contextual and historically contingent ways, what Lucas (2012:166) calls “materialization” and Miller (2005a:8–9) “objectification.” Humans would no longer be considered preexisting and self-contained social agents, “homogeneous and unified entities,” but would be understood instead as “decentered, detotalized...subject[s] constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation” (Mouffe 1993:12; see also Miller 2005a; Strathern 1988; J. Thomas 2007). Social persons could be plural, dividuated, partible, fractal, and distributed in time and space (Busby 1997; Gell 1998; Strathern 1988; Wagner 1991).

Similarly, because persons and things assume each other’s places through transactions, the social agency once attributed only to humans, who monopolize the subject position, was expanded to include objects as legitimate agents, actors, or actants engaged in alliances that have effects on humans and on nonhumans (Gell 1998; Gosden 2005; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Ingold 2012; Knappett and Malafouris 2008; Latour 2005; Olsen 2010; Robb 2012; Strathern 1996). Considerable debate has centered on how to characterize the activities that things are part of: Do objects “have agency”? Are objects causal in the same ways that human beings are? Questions like these have advanced archaeological understanding of the effectiveness of things (Knappett 2002, 2005, 2011a, 2011b).

Yet, although a relationist ontology foregrounds the mutual constitution

of humans and nonhumans, in many respects, the meanings and agency of things were still often seen as dependent entirely on the actions and motivations of humans (Appadurai 1986a:4), that is, on “social” relations (Gell 1998:12). Things thus remained marginalized, permitted only to “live out the social life of men” and thereby “reaffirm the agency of those humans they pass[ed] between” (Pinney 2005:259). The concept of an agent too often remained modeled on the human agent and thus did not significantly transform the previous material causal frameworks of subject-object relations. Many scholars debating object agency simply delegated to things a capacity presumed to be inherent in (some) humans but denied to most beings, whether human, nonhuman animal, or composed of other materials.

Some archaeological work grounded in the writing of Bruno Latour (2005) sought to avoid this trap by creating a “symmetry” between humans and nonhumans, that is, not giving priority to humans over things and nonhuman animals (Olsen 2003, 2007, 2010, 2012). Symmetrical archaeology distributes causal effectiveness across a network of humans and nonhumans, including things. Some proponents of symmetrical archaeology have said that “things are us” (Webmoor and Witmore 2008:61), simplifying a plethora of competing concepts and models seeking to handle this seismic shift in our understanding of the nature of being, such as hybridity, post-humanism, dialectical seeing, symmetry, materiality, personification, objectification, network, entanglement, and meshwork (Alberti et al. 2011; Dawdy 2010; Hodder 2011a, 2011b, 2012; Ingold 2007a, 2010a, 2011; Knappett 2005, 2011a, 2011b; Latour 1993, 2005; Miller 2005a; Olsen 2003, 2007, 2010, 2012; Shanks 2007; Strathern 1988, 1996; Webmoor 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008; Witmore 2007).

Yet, to allow that “things are us” is to perpetuate the separation of humans and objects (Olsen 2007:585). The artifact separated from the human remains an “empty space” until humans invest it with significance (Pinney 2005:257). Such anthropocentrism typifies “the long dictatorship of human beings in philosophy” (Harman 2002:2). In the social sciences, it has been identified as a legacy of the Durkheimian premises that “society” is the proper focus of study (Miller 2005a:37, 2010:76–78) and that artifacts are merely a means for materially projecting or reflecting social needs (Latour 1993:52; see also Olsen 2007:580, 2010:17). Materials themselves may disappear from research ostensibly devoted to them, which shifts quickly away from things toward humans’ concepts of things and the social relationships facilitated by things (Hicks 2010:69; Ingold 2007a, 2012). In contrast, from a new materialist perspective, the properties of materials

emerge from their interactions with others, including through engagement in technologies (Conneller 2011).

New materialism, while questioning any ontological dualism that privileges human subjectivity, is also rooted in realism. Manuel DeLanda said that “any materialist philosophy must take as its point of departure the existence of a material world that is independent of our minds” and went on to argue that “all objective entities are products of a historical process” (interviewed in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:39). Such a realist epistemology—a recognition that “a world exists apart from all human access to it” (Harman 2010:24) despite deep philosophical suspicions (Harman 2002:104–105)—allows for the recognition that things will always “contain properties in excess of those which have been interpreted and made use of under any given circumstances” (Keane 2006:201; see Bennett 2010:20).

Keane (2006:201) called this “bundling.” Bundling contributes to the shifting values, uses, and meanings of things over time as contexts for their presencing and changes in their physical conditions (Keane 2003:414). There may be “communities of objects” with their own logics and trajectories of history (Gosden 2006:425). In short, “humans are not at the center of social change” (Hodder 2011b:182). This leads to the question of the role of time and transformation in the material turn.

Movement as Method

An ontological shift from stasis, totality, essentialism, and boundedness to travel, flow, incompleteness, and permeability became the hallmark of some late twentieth-century reactions against “the fixity of spatial order” (Cresswell 1997:367). From this perspective, matter is always in flux and can only be followed (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Rockefeller 2011). Things and people are constantly engaged in what Karen Barad (2007) called “intra-action,” constantly undergoing change (rapidly or slowly) and constantly refiguring their subjectivity, value, and agential possibility: “*matter is substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency*” (Barad 2003:822; see also Coole 2013). This perspective requires new analytic models of movement or flow in archaeology (Hahn and Weiss 2013b; Hicks 2010:82; Ingold 2009, 2011).

In the 1970s the “new archaeologists” were readily adopting flow charts from early computer programming to describe social or technological change, and Michael Schiffer’s (1976) “behavioral archaeology” lives on in the “life history” approach to artifact manufacture and use (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001). In social anthropology, the concept of the “social lives of

things" (Appadurai 1986b) was introduced to turn attention back to things themselves in order to correct the overemphasis on the social consequences of object transactions inherited from Mauss (Hicks 2010:83). Even if one accepts the humanist bias that things derive their meanings from humans, Appadurai (1986a:5) famously asserted that methodologically, "we have to follow the things themselves [because] it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context."

Following things has been approached in different ways. The movement of commodities or classes of goods may be encapsulated as "consumption" (Miller 1987; Mullins 2011), tracked in cultural geography as "commodity chains" (Foster 2006). As things move across cultural and national borders, they become recontextualized, acquiring innovated values and relations with people and other things (Myers 2001; N. Thomas 1991).

Based on the observation that things could be interchangeable with human persons and thus have their own social lives (Appadurai 1986b), a popular form of analysis emerged that involved writing the biographies of things based on their life histories. In Kopytoff's foundational essay, "The Cultural Biography of Things," he explicitly equated the biographies of people and things as a rationale for a methodology:

In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people:... Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized "ages" or periods in the thing's "life," and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (Kopytoff 1986:66–67)

The biographical approach created an equivalence between things and people. Like people, things might even act in "malicious" ways to deter or prevent human intentions (Gell 1998; Jones and Boivin 2010).

The metaphor of biography as applied to objects posited a linear sequence from birth to childhood, adulthood, old age, death, and disintegration, like the life course experienced by humans (Holtorf 1998:23; see also Moreland 1999). In line with this linear narrative, excavated artifacts were often described as having experienced a "social death" (Chapman and Gaydarska 2007:9; Joy 2009:543). Earlier stages of birth or maturity were assessed by use wear, residues, breakage, or other signs of intra-activity discernible on the now dead artifact.

The biography-of-objects approach has been productive. Yet, it has its

limits (see Joyce, chapter 2, this volume). A biographical approach to things in motion is sometimes restricted to singular inalienable “biographical objects” (Hoskins 1989, 1998) suffused with aspects of the personhood of their makers, givers, and receivers. Other researchers have argued that the biographies of commodities and everyday objects can also be illuminating (Gaitán Ammann 2005; Hoskins 1998; Kopytoff 1986; Mauss 1954[1925]; Weiner 1992). Object biographies may be most interesting when there are more explicit reasons to imagine that things are alive in the manner of humans. In some animistic ontologies (Alberti et al. 2011; Ingold 2011; Santos-Granero 2009), objects are explicitly considered to be living entities that undergo birth, transitions, and death. Such a quality is attributed to “sacred” objects in many cosmologies (Moreland 1999).

Object Biographies and Itineraries

The biography metaphor introduced by Kopytoff (1986) has apparent shortcomings, beginning with the difficulty of singling out such “benchmark” events as “birth” or “death,” which are both obvious and critical to delimiting human biographies (Hahn and Weiss 2013a:7). Many objects made long ago have never died in a sense that can be compared to human mortality, remaining in use as heirlooms, regalia, or ritual objects or being transformed by their entry into curated spaces. The biography metaphor is stretched to its limits when we have to say that objects “die a number of times” as they enter or depart social relationships (Joy 2009:543). Objects can be taken apart or modified. Under the biographical approach, such changes have been described as being “murdered”; other objects may be “reincarnated” in a new assembly that is recognizably different from an earlier existence (Moreland 1999:198, 209). These applications of the biography metaphor are based on an assumption that continuous bodily integrity is essential for the continuity of existence. Questionable already for humans, when applied to things, this breaks down entirely since they can be and often are transformed continually while remaining connected to their past stages.

In contrast, the itineraries metaphor captures the dynamics as artifacts are dug up from resting places and enter into new social contexts, without introducing exoticized life stages or reanimation from the dead of zombie things. An itinerary approach does not assume that things are *constantly* traveling or are defined by their movement. They may experience long periods of stasis (Hahn and Weiss 2013a:9) or persistence (Knappett 2013:47). Retrieved from attics or archaeological deposits, they are moved to collections and museum displays, or, if immovable, they are refurbished

and endowed with new meanings (Moreland 1999; see also Bauer, Díaz-Guardamino, Joyce, Law Pezzarossi, this volume).

Itineraries have the potential to resist the imposition of a boundary between a thing and representations of it, allowing us to ask when a reproduction or translation of a thing remains actively connected to it. Things may travel via textual descriptions, drawings, and photographs (Díaz-Guardamino, Haskell, Wallis, this volume). Necessarily conceived of in the biography metaphor as “afterlife” actions, such contemporary extensions of agential possibility have often been recognized as critical to the meaning and effects things have today (Gosden and Marshall 1999:170; Meskell 2004:57). In a framework of itineraries, such potent phases of activity in the contemporary world are not separated by a sharp temporal break between a time of the past and a time of the present (Joyce 2012a). Instead, they are continuing parts of the way things work agentially in concert with other things, humans, and a variety of forces.

In the case of literally traveling things, distinctions have been created concerning the social consequences of “what *may or may not* be circulated” (Meskell 2004:21). The circulation of things and people may be organized around performative transactions, “bringing their embodied qualities and metaphorical associations to bear in contexts of social interaction” (J. Thomas 1999:73; see also Coole 2013; Walz, chapter 9, this volume). The durability and movements of things are facilitated or impeded by their physical nature and method of construction; by mechanisms of transfer from one owner to the next, which may include oral or textual recitations of their history (Weiner 1992:38); and by the qualities of the places, persons, and containers that shelter them (see Haskell, Walz, this volume).

Circulating objects create and are caught up in multi-stranded “meshworks” that unfold in time and space (Ingold 2011; Knappett 2011b). Examining the itineraries of things requires consideration of technologies for circulation; of impediments and facilitators to movement; of natural and cultural transformations along the way; of whether objects travel intact or incomplete, with others or alone; of the landscapes that result from the places linked through their travels; and of the value of circulating objects for the production and reshaping of cultural relations that separate people, as well as for those that connect persons, places, and things across space and time.

Locating people and things in motion and at rest directs our attention to space, which, like things, was marginalized in intellectual disciplines that elevated the social above all else (Rodman 1992; Soja 1985). Like persons and things, in late twentieth-century theory, space attained a “‘real’

existence by virtue of networks and pathways, of bunches or clusters of relationships” (Lefebvre 1991:86). Against the prior neglect of space, the proposal emerged that spatiality is socially produced and exists as both “substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and as a set of relations” (Soja 1985:92). Itineraries are part of the production of spatiality; they form a “chain of spatializing operations...marked by references to what it produces (a representation of places) or to what it implies (a local order)” (de Certeau 1984:120). The itineraries of things considered on their own, without subordinating them to the itineraries of associated humans, advance the understanding of space as independently active. In a new materialist site ontology, the centrality of human subjectivity has been removed, and the necessity of a locale in which things assemble is foregrounded, giving things in motion the potential to initiate their own spatial relations (Woodward, Jones, and Marston 2012).

Following things in space means tracing the flows and extensions that transcend them, along with the references that circulated with them and “served as precedents of action” (Joyce 2012b). Although “itinerant” has taken on the meaning of one who regularly moves along a route, such as a priest (visiting parishes) or a circuit judge, its more general meaning is to travel from place to place; the “itinerary” is the route of that journey (Merriam-Webster 1993:623). The itinerary need not be a linear path (Hahn and Weiss 2013a:8; Joy 2009:543; cf. Knappett 2013:37). Each itinerary is unique. Multiple itineraries may converge, bringing into being the locales identified in site ontology, which are recognizable as converging with the sites of archaeological experience: “A site exists by virtue of its specific hangings together, its variations and its congealments... While these processes signal a tendency toward convergence on the part of loosely defined bodies, these need neither ‘touch’ nor abut one another in any [spatial or temporal] extensive sense” (Woodward, Jones, and Marston 2012:210).

Some things are meant to be used up or to disintegrate, to have only a temporary existence in a particular iteration (although they may be duplicates or “imprints” of an enduring virtual or actual prototype; Knappett 2013; Gillespie, Wallis, this volume). Some are broken apart so that their fragments will strike out on their own paths of movement (Gillespie, Haskell, Roddick, this volume). Others are purposely removed from circulation, hidden away or buried in the ground, either alone or with those similar or different—sometimes recognized archaeologically as hoards, caches, votive deposits, or offerings (Bradley 2000). Their fixity in a site might be a way to prevent them from moving, a special concern in the case of objects deemed capable of self-movement (Roddick, chapter 7, this

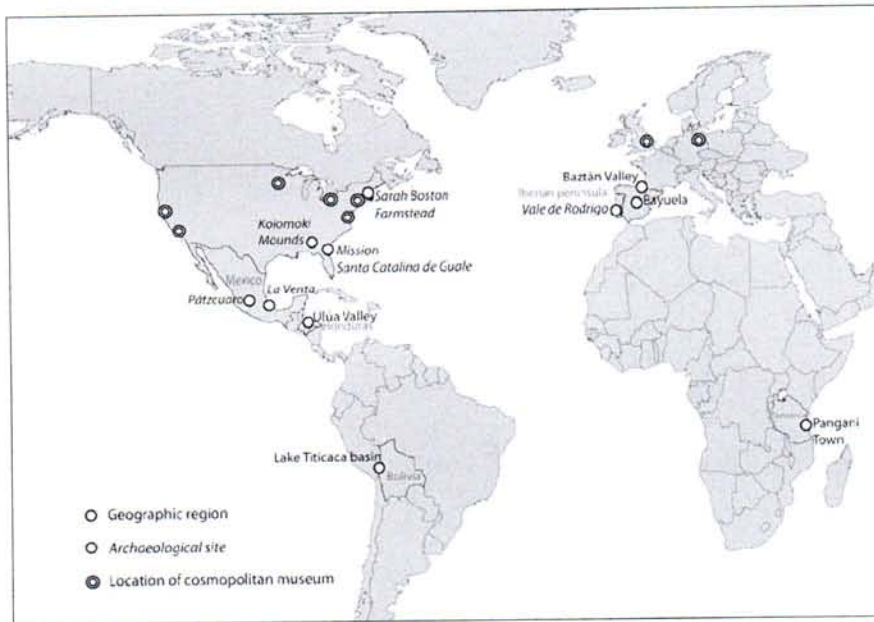


FIGURE 1.1
Selected geographic regions, modern towns, archaeological sites, and cosmopolitan museums discussed by contributors. Drawing by Rosemary A. Joyce.

volume), although even fixed things might be seen sometimes as things in motion (Díaz-Guardamino, chapter 6, this volume). The itineraries of things need not be limited to the physical travel of an object, but the concept allows us to recognize that the relations between things and their representations in story, song, image, and memory continue to create new sites, including specialized locales like museums (A. Jones 2007; Mills and Walker 2008a; see Bauer, Gillespie, this volume).

AN ORDER OF ITINERARIES

The seminar participants followed a wide spectrum of object itineraries from past and present contexts all over the world (figure 1.1). Some contributors to this volume use a life-history approach to talk about the movement of source materials to workshops, the organization of their manufacture and use, their subsequent movements as mediated by economic and ritual exchange, their deposition in places that became archaeological sites, their emergence through archaeological research and subsequent curation in museum collections, and even their representations in other mobile media (see Joyce, Blair, Díaz-Guardamino, Roddick, this volume).

Several chapters in this volume include considerations of what Roddick (chapter 7) calls “geologies in motion”—the movement of minerals and stones for utilitarian and non-utilitarian purposes. These movements range from the pilgrimages undertaken to acquire coveted ash to temper early pottery in the Bolivian Andes (Roddick, chapter 7) to the knapping of a special obsidian core treated as an avatar of a Tarascan god and the distribution of the resulting flakes throughout that Mexican empire as a measure of expanding state control (Haskell, chapter 4). They include consideration of the individual and joint travels of a group of jade figurines deposited together at an Olmec site in eastern Mexico (Gillespie, chapter 3), the crafting of marble vessels in prehispanic Honduras as indexes of the mountains from which the stone was derived (Joyce, chapter 2), and the movement and positioning of huge stone menhirs in Bronze Age Iberia (Díaz-Guardamino, chapter 6). Troubling the category of “raw material,” these chapters also urge us to consider the products of additive technologies, such as glass, as another instance of geologies in motion (Blair, chapter 5), challenging another of the dualisms questioned in new materialism: between nature and culture. These geologies in motion instantiate what Manuel DeLanda (interviewed in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:39–40) described as the ontology of “individual entities,” “singular or unique”: “First, the raw materials that will make up a new entity must be selected and pre-processed; second, they must be consolidated into a whole with properties of its own.”

The journeys of such “individual entities” after the selection and processing of materials, which involve discursive transformations that can be seen from the perspective of new materialism as the emergence of novel properties of things, are the subjects of chapters on paddle-decorated pottery in Florida (Wallis, chapter 11), European glass beads that were traded among indigenous groups in colonial North America (Blair, chapter 5), and the various items used as medicines in contemporary Tanzania, brought together by the retracing of nineteenth-century caravan routes as a healing ritual (Walz, chapter 9). In each case, things emerged in new assemblages along their itineraries, at newly emergent sites in missionized, colonial Georgia, Florida, and Tanzania, with their own newly emergent properties.

Several contributors deal with the metamorphosis of things from material objects to text and imagery—drawings and photographs—that now experience continued movement as they circulate in new media. The transformations that things undergo as they move from their makers to contemporary researchers are considered in chapters on the territorial boundaries

that emerged from the circulation in New England of historic Nipmuc basketmakers and the baskets they sold (Law Pezzarossi, chapter 10) and on new relationships in global museum practices whereby self-defined “universal museums” and “source nations” create webs of reciprocal obligation, stewardship, and cooperation as artworks move via long-term loans (Bauer, chapter 8). The itineraries of valuable objects through museum loans hark back to the kula ring of Melanesia, the original source of Malinowski’s, Mauss’s, and Weiner’s seminal anthropological theorizing on the circulation of inalienable goods.

In chapter 2, Rosemary Joyce makes the argument for preferring an analysis of itineraries over an object biography. Illustrating her position with the example of carved marble vases that were made in Honduras in the first millennium and circulate today as museum objects and items of cultural heritage, she traces their itinerary from quarry to art museum. The objects Joyce discusses are obvious candidates for object biographies: each is distinctive enough to bear witness to a singular experience, composed of stone that can be characterized chemically as stemming from a specific quarry, carved with imagery that suggests specific meanings, and recovered (when recovery is documented) from charged and socially powerful locales. Yet, the interrupted character of the biographies of the individual things, their restless motion, and, most of all, the way their movement in space made and continues to make things happen are illuminated particularly well by considering their itineraries.

In chapter 3, Susan Gillespie examines one remarkable set of things recovered in a specific site known to archaeologists as La Venta, on the Mexican Gulf Coast. This assemblage of stone celts and figures has attained international notoriety through a combination of representations in text and images and the literal travel of the objects to museums throughout the world. We are dealing here, as in Joyce’s chapter 2, with ongoing itineraries, not simply tracing something past and done. Gillespie teases out from the rich archaeological documentation, much of it long neglected, and the history of museum publication a number of ambiguities that speak to a desire on the part of modern scholars, museum workers, and the public to see the assemblage in a particular way. Her work takes each object that crossed paths at La Venta and asks, where was it coming from? She shows that rather than viewing these objects as primarily vehicles to represent either a narrative or a set of symbolic propositions, we can gain a better sense of their effects by treating them as agentive things in motion.

Dave Haskell, in chapter 4, also considers the circulation of stone during which the pieces of stone that move remain connected to the place

where they were collected. His chapter deals with the purposeful use by Tarascan people of West Mexico, prior to Spanish colonization, of blades struck from an obsidian core curated at a central place to create what he calls a “fractal subject,” distributed across space. This subject is a nonhuman person, a god whose material form was treated as an object during specific parts of his itinerary. By treating the movement of parts of this subject as itineraries, as they are described in colonial texts, Haskell highlights that the capacity to move was fundamental to this subject. The objects that traveled are absent, however, except as references circulated in documents created after Spanish colonization. Haskell extends the consideration of itineraries to the narratives that describe the itineraries of the obsidian blades themselves.

With Elliot Blair’s discussion in chapter 5 of glass beads and their journeys from European workshops to Spanish colonial places that became modern archaeological sites, we continue the emphasis on movement. Blair draws on Tim Ingold (2007b, 2009) to propose that what itineraries establish are Ingoldian meshworks. As Blair notes, this implies that the places where objects come to rest are better thought of as knots of the meshwork rather than as points on a network.

In chapter 6, Marta Díaz-Guardamino pursues an analysis that leads her to conclude that what have been thought of as “raw” materials are not raw at all. She links the reuse of worked stones with the proposition that unworked stones could have already been curated prior to their shaping and marking with tools. She notes that the locales where stones originated were also subject to curation or, to put it another way, to being enfolded in itineraries.

Andrew Roddick exemplifies the thinking about these intertwined topics in his discussion in chapter 7 of early ceramic production in highland Bolivia. The incorporation of clays and non-plastic geological materials into the bodies of pots that were made and used in small-scale communities is in some ways a model of how objects start on their itineraries or, in older terms, of the birth of objects and the beginning of their biographies. Roddick treats the places where the materials fused in pots not simply as “raw” materials but as parts of taskscapes (Ingold 1993). The sources of these pots remain connected to them, and the traveling of the source materials to their place of assembly is, itself, a stage in a journey that made places at multiple scales. His consideration of the movement of things brings in the idea of the “flows and stoppages” (Gosden 2006) of objects in motion.

Alexander Bauer in chapter 8 brings us fully into confrontation with the contemporary knots formed by things thought of as “antiquities.” He

argues that cosmopolitanism and “glocality” can each be understood as products of the itineraries of things. Viewing the movement of things in its most evident contemporary form—the antiquities trade—Bauer argues that objects in motion are capable of creating new meanings and thus producing new cultural forms.

In chapter 9, Jonathan Walz also examines the capacity of things in motion to create new cultural forms today, by using what he characterizes as a “medical archaeology.” Also employing language drawn from the work of Ingold (2009), Walz describes how medical practitioners in the East African landscape he explores set objects encountered at knots back in motion. The conscription of things as parts of healing mixtures concentrated in containers forms assemblages not unlike the one that Gillespie examines: each constituent thing has its own history or biography that can be traced in space, and they are brought to rest together through a stoppage that is clearly temporary. Walz suggests that the knots where things are stopped together are “places of association and/or tension” where different human actors, including archaeologists and healers, can engage with them in distinct ways.

Heather Law Pezzarossi, in chapter 10, also considers how novel assemblages of people and things emerge in historically complex places. She knits together the travel of things, in this case, historic baskets made in New England by Nipmuc women, and the travel of representations of things, in this case, the circulation of references in regional histories, with the literal itineraries of the women who made these baskets and moved across a territory that was being reconceived as a new landscape. She draws on yet another genealogy for itineraries, citing de Certeau (1984:123): “In contrast to the hard lines and permanence of maps, the boundaries of itineraries are formed in the ‘compilation of stories’ that are linked to other stories, that then create places for interaction and mobility by articulating a ‘theater’ for the performance.” In working with things that exist today and wanting to understand their pasts, for Law Pezzarossi, the concept of itineraries allows keeping the things, now in museums, in the present while also letting them and references to them speak about their related pasts.

Like Roddick, Neill Wallis in chapter 11 emphasizes how an itinerary can be understood as consisting of flows and stoppages. He thus is able to describe the circulation of specific designs in what is now the southeastern United States as having flowed during the period of production of the pottery on which they were impressed, with a stoppage during a temporal break until they were revived through archaeological research in the nineteenth century. If we were to view this through the lens of object

MAKING THINGS OUT OF OBJECTS THAT MOVE

biographies, we would speak in terms of life, death, and afterlife. But that analysis would break down because the modern flows of Swift Creek stamped designs are mediated differently: by reconstructed paddles and their reproduction as items of graphic design. Wallis complicates what precisely is traveling, because he examines hypothesized objects: carved wooden paddles reconstructed today, based on partial imprints left on fragments of ceramic vessels that then serve as the basis for drawings reproduced in multiple media. Even in the precolonial period, when paddle-marked ceramics were being made, the itineraries traced by multiple vessels carrying related impressions are best understood as itineraries of images, not (just) of the things on which they were carried.

Ultimately, whether fully exploiting the concept of itineraries or continuing to rely on more biographical methodologies, the contributors to the volume, collectively, demonstrate the dynamic capacity of things in motion, from the point where things emerge from source material, to their circulation in the contemporary world, including their extended circulation through reproduction in other media. Our intention is to show that examining the itineraries of things multiplies the assemblages things form and multiplies the sites at which we can recognize things in motion. None of the things discussed here seems to have died. Their itineraries are continued by their movement in and out of museums and curation facilities, where many of them have come to rest temporarily, by the circulation of their images, and by their adaptation in sometimes unexpected contemporary material culture. Their itineraries also include the scholarship about them, to which this volume contributes, making it another site assembled by these active things.

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