demic infighting is so intense because the stakes are so low." About the actual content of The West as America, this is what Dubin tells us: "It included paintings, sculpture, photographs, and prints—lots of them" (p. 159). The focus on participant playback also obscures the actual reception of most of these exhibits. "What did audiences think?" is not a question that generally interests Dubin, with the exception of his chapter on The West as America, which has a number of telling comment-book quotes from anonymous visitors. Finally, there is the inevitable Enola Gay story. Here it has a dispirited feel, as if the author didn’t want to map this depressingly familiar terrain, knowing that he would have little to offer that wasn’t available elsewhere but also knowing that to exclude this battle from a book on 1990s exhibit controversies would have seemed strange.

Early on, Dubin writes that “museums are not sealed in a bubble” (p. 8), but it seems to me that he is asking the wrong question when he goes on to wonder: "Why, exactly, have museums become battlegrounds?" These are all history exhibits (even and perhaps especially the one mounted in an art museum), and I expected to see the author venturing beyond the museum walls a little more, away from all the narrow, carping debates, and into the wider, if no less riddled with land mines, fields of public history. These dust-ups at American museums are just one part of a much wider context of history-making that includes the very public debates over the National History Standards and textbook content; the hue and cry over “Disney’s America” in Virginia; the struggles over public memorials and monuments; the concerns about veracity and memory in the movies; and on and on. After struggling through chapter after depressing chapter detailing brushfires set by small-minded, blindered people, I had hoped that the author would step back and describe the whole raging forest fire. Instead, in the last chapter Dubin offers some wan reiterations of previous issues (about “community,” stakeholders, and the role of the media) and then, amazingly, launches into a few more case studies, such as an exhibit at Ellis Island on Japanese internment camps and one at the Smithsonian on sweatshops. Interesting stories, each, but their presence in the final, summative chapter seems to distract the author from what he really should have been doing.

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Reading Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds, I came upon an illustration of a carved female head with a distinctive hairstyle I associated with ancient Egypt. It reminded me
of the woman represented on the finely carved wooden handle to a braided leather riding crop which hangs in my son’s room. I always had assumed the riding crop was from Egypt, but realized it likely was produced by the Mangbetu of northeastern Zaire, who, according to Enid Schildkrout, characteristically produced figurative carving representing women with elongated heads and fan-like coiffure resembling Egyptian royalty.

The riding crop was given to one of my brothers forty-plus years ago by my maternal grandparents as one of many souvenirs we received from their global travels, which included central Africa. This memento of a faraway place, of global travel when it was not the norm, and of my childhood, in which this artifact was a favorite weapon, was given to my son by my mother when he was interested in horseback riding. My son dismissed this fanciful artifact as not having any practical use, but was sufficiently intrigued by its antecedents to hang it in his room along with more recent souvenirs and icons of teenage popular music. In the context of the global world in which we live, the riding crop is one of a variety of commodities produced for exchange in the capitalist marketplace. However, it has a distinctive history, was produced in a specific cultural context at a particular historical moment, and embodies different meanings for producers and consumers.

For those of us who work in museums and have nineteenth- and twentieth-century collections, it is likely we have objects classified as souvenirs or “tourist art,” which tend to be dismissed as culturally and historically insignificant. To many scholars they are viewed as evidence of cultural decay among colonized peoples or the degenerate products of postcolonial societies. The essays in *Unpacking Culture* give us reasons to examine these objects more closely and, perhaps, see them as layered with meanings and embedded in multiple narratives. While objects have been central to “the telling of cross-cultural encounters with distant worlds or remote Others,” Phillips and Steiner argue that the binary construction of art and artifact masks “what had, by the late eighteenth century, become one of the most important features of objects: their operation as commodities circulating in the discursive space of an emergent capitalist economy” (p. 3). They position *Unpacking Culture* as an effort to redress the silences about the process of commodification in art histories and ethnographies, a process which is inherent in the encounter with imperialism and capitalism.

The essays in this volume shift the western gaze from the Other to Us, critically examining objects circulating in the networks of world art exchange, unpacking “the baggage of transcultural encounter with which they travel . . . and the meanings and memories stored inside” (p. 19). The volume builds on the pioneering work of Nelson Graburn, who provides an overview of the intellectual concerns in the study of the ethnic tourist arts and the change in understanding and attitude towards tourist arts within anthropology over the last thirty-five years. The themes threading through *Unpacking Culture* are familiar ones within the postmodern critique of anthropology and imperialism—co-opting native identity, reinvention of native tradition, native agency,
change and continuity—but the essays enrich our understanding of these processes through careful readings of objects and documents. One disappointment with this compilation by art historians is the absence of high quality photographs or, even better, a CD for reading the objects described. Although it is not possible in this review to touch on all twenty essays, they represent a broad geography and diversity of material culture including clothing, pottery, baskets, beadwork, masks, painted images, and totem poles.

Misunderstanding and misinterpreting tourist arts is a theme in many of the essays and particularly interesting in instances of cultural appropriation. Phillips provides a nuanced history of popular “Indian” souvenirs, bark and fabric objects embroidered in dyed moose hair, made in the Canadian town of Lorette. They were invented in the eighteenth century by French Canadian nuns, briefly taken up by genteel Euro-Canadian women, and in the early nineteenth century produced by Huron and Mi’kmaq artists. Phillips unfolds this history of production through careful reading of the iconography, uncovering the subtle differences in portrayal of ethnicity and the ways these portrayals coincided with views of the dominant culture. Parezo’s essay illustrates an anthropologist’s role in cultural appropriation. She brings to light a misguided effort by Frederick H. Douglas, curator of Native American art, to correct racial and cultural stereotypes within the dominant culture using the popular medium of the 1940s and 1950s, the fashion show. In his Indian fashion show, displaying exquisitely crafted Native American clothing from the Denver Art Museum’s collection, he intentionally constructs the image of Indian women as princesses to encourage identification by viewers.

Other stories explore native agency. Interestingly, native voices are mostly absent in this volume. One exception is Frank Ettawageshik, who gives personal insight into the cultural and economic significance of native-operated curio businesses in Michigan throughout the twentieth century. Rather than leading to decline, he argues, curio production contributed to preservation and revival of traditional art forms. Across the globe in North Sumatra, innovation in Batak weaving has been missed by experts who focus on the disappearance of particular textiles and materials and the use of European dyes and yarns. Based on a study of a contemporary Batak weaver, Sandra Niessen recovers the cultural concepts embedded in the techniques of ikat weaving and embodied in the daily lives of Batak women. These persist even as weavers experiment with new designs and colors reflecting modern fashion. Schildkrout’s essay on Mangbetu art describes the appearance of figurative carving as a consequence of European contact; the control of the art market by men, western and nonwestern; the implications for who is represented; the internal dynamics within Mangbetu society as relates to changing male and female roles in production; and who benefits from the new economic opportunities.

Another dimension of native agency explored in several essays is the manipulation and invention of tradition as economic strategies which
evolved in dialogue with intermediaries and consumers. In some instances, these actions have led to misunderstanding the significance of these objects prior to European contact, as is the case with totem poles among Northwest Coast tribes. Aldona Jonaitis details the emergence of carved totem poles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an icon of Indianness, authenticity, and wilderness through the collusion, at different times, of tour operators, the federal government, and native carvers. Contrary to popular belief, the prevalence and distribution of totem poles on the Northwest Coast landscape is less about the remnants of precontact beliefs and practices and more about nineteenth-century tourists' tastes and desires. In other instances, manipulation by nonwestern peoples of their attribution as the exotic Other is complex, often astute and sometimes confusing to nonwesterners. Chief Poking Fire's Village, built in the 1930s as a tourist attraction on the Mohawk reservation of Kahnawake in Quebec, was the invention of a native family, and combined performance space, display of historic artifacts, and sale of souvenirs mixing the imagery and material culture of Woodland, Plains, and Northwest Coast Indians. Trudy Nicks probes beneath the veneer designed explicitly for non-natives and describes the ways the village provided economic opportunity and cultural continuity to Kahnawake families involved in the production of beadwork for sale, giving additional meanings to the souvenirs produced.

Nicks's essay is one of the few that explicitly identifies cultural resistance as a strategy for cultural preservation. While many of the essays bring to light new perspectives and information about the interface between nonwestern producers and western consumers in colonial and postcolonial contexts, they inadequately investigate the native point of view and local context. There are exceptions, but taken together the essays in this volume add little to our understanding of the cultural dynamics within indigenous societies at particular historical moments. Specifically, we learn little about communities, community histories, and the lived experience of changing modes of making a living, changes in the mode of representation, the making of art out of loss, or survival of knowledge and traditions encoded in material culture.

I was surprised by how few native voices are represented in this volume and wonder if their absence is because the real focus is Us. I also was struck by Graburn's initiation into tourist arts through fieldwork and living within Inuit and Naskapi communities and by how few of the essays appear to be grounded in community studies. Reading this collection of essays, I felt that the postmodern critique has left anthropologists and other scholars bereft of the reasons and means for our scholarship. Ironically, the basis for filling this void may be community studies in collaboration with indigenous peoples and in conjunction with historical and even archaeological investigations. Nevertheless, Unpacking Culture is an important contribution to the ongoing endeavor to understand the consequences of colonialism, and offers new ways for interpreting objects frequently ignored in museum collections.

DOLORES ROOT

EcoTarium: Center for Environmental Exploration