

illuminating the history from below, for those in the past who did not leave written records or were marginalized by society or education. The fields of social, cultural, and gender history all can be enhanced with historians widening their gaze to include objects.

Hannan and Longair offer some guidance in determining the “value” of objects, from financial to emotional, and how the “biography” of an object can be revealed with research, but more space could be devoted in the book to what happens to objects and artifacts as they move from generation to generation, with succeeding narratives infusing objects with new meaning. A different set of narratives is ascribed to objects when they enter the museum or other environments to become parts of permanent collections.

While the book’s “how-to” directions can be a little clunky at times, I recommend this slim guide for undergraduate and graduate students, and it would be a helpful primer for museum specialists grappling with the many meanings of their artifact collections. Unfortunately, while much is covered in the book, the authors do not speculate as to where material culture studies are going. Despite being published in 2017, there

is almost no discussion of technology like 3D printing. This technology represents a potential for disruption in the field if objects can simply be printed and act as replicas of the original. How does this problematize the value of objects? The authors might have drawn on archivists and museum professionals for some guidance. To take one example from that field, should an original analogue video format be preserved or the remastered, digital version? Some of these cross-disciplinary questions from the world of cultural conservation might have helped elucidate some of the questions that are emerging around 3D printing. Moreover, the opportunity for engaging in digital scanning, whereby objects can be visually manipulated and viewed from any angle in digital platforms is changing how researchers can access material culture objects from museum’s holdings.

Despite these omissions, Hannan and Longair offer much insight into the complex lives and afterlives of objects, and they deliver focused ways for how student historians might augment or even supplant the textual record with that of the object, and how such a study can help them better understand aspects of the past.

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Review of

Van Horn, Jennifer. 2017. *The Power of Objects in Eighteenth-Century British America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Pp. 456, 11 colour plates, 130 B&W illustrations, notes and index. ISBN 978-1-4696-2956-8, \$49.95.

The Power of Objects posits that assemblages of objects were a means by which regional and then national identities developed in the major ports of British America, particularly before and after the American Revolution. The consumption and production of material culture by elites, including the upwardly-mobile middling sort such as merchants, planters, politicians, and others with imperial interests, were central to this evolution. Objects were used to build status, create networks, and establish social position. These included artworks ranging from engravings and prints to formal portraits and sculpture; furniture;

ceramics, and more unusual “material things” such as artificial limbs and live-tooth transplants.

The book examines themes such as how shared imagery among artwork by the same artist found in different ports or regions projected and built not only mercantile connections, but concepts such as social status, civility, and at first at least, empire. Van Horn’s thinking about the active role objects played in early America and their effects on human behaviour is shaped by the network concepts of Bruno Latour, Daniel Miller, and various scholars of the Atlantic world and early empire. The argument is illustrated, literally