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prehensive examination of the written components of a British “strategic culture” as we are likely to get for the early modern era.

Wayne E. Lee, University of North Carolina

TARA HAMLING and CATHERINE RICHARDSON, eds. *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010. Pp. 378. \$104.95 (cloth).

This ambitious and engaging volume gathers together papers delivered at a conference at the University of Birmingham’s Shakespeare Institute in 2007. Contributors include art historians, archaeologists, historians, curators, and literary scholars. Essays are grouped thematically, while a second table of contents lists essays by object type (clothing, shoes, tableware, domestic goods, etc.). The volume is weighted heavily toward historical study, with very little theoretical or phenomenological reflection. Instead, archaeologists like David Gaimster and Dinah Eastop and established literary scholars like Natasha Korda and Lena Cowen Orlin provide very precise object histories, always tuned, however, to scenes of meaning and use, both in situ and over time. The diverse pieces converge in their commitment to understanding the performative, practical, and sensuous life of objects in acts of worship, courtship, care, consumption, conviviality, and commensality. Some highlights from the volume follow.

Part 1, “Evidence and Interpretation,” sets up methodological questions for the volume as a whole, proceeding by way of case study, not theoretical exposition. The opening essay by Sara Pennell begins with the abundance of shards in archaeology in order to consider what the fragility of china might tell us about consumption and value in the eighteenth century. Walking historian Giorgio Riello reflects on the difficulties of telling the story of an action rather than an object. In search of the “thingness of the thing” rather than its metonymic deployment, Stephen Kelly’s “In the Sight of an Old Pair of Shoes” looks critically at the display of footwear in contemporary museological settings.

Part 2, “Skills and Manufacture,” opens with a compelling analysis of the pins and aglets (lacing cases) found in the excavation of the Rose Theater, from which the cover photo is also taken; engagingly written by Jenny Tiramani, both a theater designer and a dress historian, the essay illuminates the art of Renaissance self-fastening. The theatrical interface continues in Natasha Korda’s tour de force reading of the role played by Dutch immigrant women in the English clothing industry and their characterization and costuming on the stage.

Part 3, “Objects and Spaces,” starts off with a stunning essay by David Gaimster on archaeology in the age of print. Contrasting a minimalist supply list distributed to Virginia colonists with the far richer physical record of middling life revealed in both American and English digs from the seventeenth century, Gaimster argues that the consumption of luxury goods was fueled not by trickle-down emulation but by “horizontal” or “intra-community competition” among members of the merchant classes (136). In another essay in the same section, Dinah Eastop delivers an intriguing account of the practice of hiding garments and other household objects as apotropaic acts in the cavities of domestic buildings.

Part 4, “Sound and Sensory Experience,” explores early soundscapes through studies of fans and handbells (Flora Dennis), organs, pricksong and psalmody in post-Reformation English churches (Jonathan Willis) and the use of bagpipes in late medieval England (John J. Thompson). Part 5, “Material Religion,” reconstructs the multimedia sensorium of medieval and early modern devotion. Richard L. William provides a “cultural biography” of a humble Three of Hearts playing card fashioned into a portable triptych by a recusant imprisoned in the Tower in 1571 for treasonous acts. A gripping piece of detective work

as well as iconographic analysis, Williams's piece celebrates the do-it-yourself ingenuity of English Catholics as well as the secret life of playing cards.

Part 6, "Emotion/Attitudes towards Objects," tests the extent to which early consumers became attached to the objects they owned, wore, or read. In "A Very Fit Hat," Catherine Richardson, one of the volume's editors, looks at the appearance of outerware in two ecclesiastical depositions concerning contested courtships. The hats in question, tokens purchased in expectation of marriage, demonstrate the "visual sensitivities or dimensions of communities in this period—the way information moves between them by sight and then by word of mouth" (297). In "Empty Vessels," Lena Cowan Orlin reads wills for signs of affective attachment to bequeathed objects; far from recording sentimental bonds to daily things, she concludes that these documents consistently drained goods of their meaning so that they could be "imprinted anew" (or sold for cash) by the next generation (307).

In the final essay of the volume, the book's other able editor, Tara Hamling, reconstructs the social and symbolic life of a seventeenth-century oak chair, its high back carved with the story of Adam and Eve. Such a chair, Tamling argues, was an exercise in political theology rather than an invitation to sit; designed for display, such massive affairs celebrated patriarchal privilege while neutralizing the threat of graven images by divorcing depictions from devotion. In the same essay, Hamling explores the haptic or sensual affordances of wood in paneling and overmantels; wood's promise of physical comfort supplemented the spiritual comfort provided by Old Testament domestic narratives.

In sum, this lively and informative volume offers a series of swift sketches of objects in everyday life. Although grounded in historical method, the essays remain poetically open to the affective call of household things, including their inevitable decay over time, the marvel of their occasional survival, the tangible appeals of their physical affordances, and the way they link, or fail to link, us with the past.

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GABRIEL HEATON. *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: From George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. 272. \$99.00 (cloth).

Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments is a welcome contribution to the burgeoning critical interest in what Gabriel Heaton calls "the wider entertainment culture" of early modern England (3). This lucid and authoritative book takes as its subject forms of theatricality that occurred side by side with those often better-known dramas performed in the playhouses. These entertainments further testify to the seemingly limitless appetite within early modern society for theater and spectacle. Its author was a research fellow on the John Nichols Project at the University of Warwick—which was in itself an important manifestation of this critical trajectory—and this volume bears all of the hallmarks of the careful scholarship that has emanated from the Project. The book also participates in a lively body of critical discussion of the centrality of collaboration in the making of early modern culture. Heaton's account of the fascinating, complex stories that underlie the creation and reception of these royal entertainments is ably contextualized throughout.

Heaton's book addresses the variety of dramatic entertainments produced for the monarchy in this period in venues ranging from palace yard to livery company hall to aristocratic mansion. His summary of the "clear division in style" between what he characterizes as the charming if homespun and whimsical Elizabethan royal entertainments and the more solemn and artistically ambitious productions for James and his family is neatly put and convincing (120–21). Heaton also goes some way toward revealing how intertwined court entertainments could be with civic entertainments, implicitly questioning the polarized court versus City narrative that has unduly dominated scholarship of this period (he stresses the court