The Culture of Materials and Leather Objects in Eighteenth-Century England

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Abstract

This study of leather examines material culture in England, c.1670-1800. Following raw hide to leather, leather to object, and object to possessed commodity, this thesis traces the production, retail, and consumption of three representative leather objects: saddles, chairs and drinking vessels. The analysis of these three objects is principally informed by materials, and draws on inventories, advertisements, literary and technical texts, visual sources and ephemera, and other object types with which they shared consumption contexts, practices of making or decoration.

This thesis argues, first, that the meanings consumers derived from materials, which informed their responses to objects, were created across the full life-cycle of a material: from production to consumption. Second, while leather exhibited principal properties which made it useful across several objects, its meanings and associations played out differently and unevenly across different object types. Thirdly, and consequently, in the relationship between materials and object types, objects operated as the site in which consumers could access the meaning of materials. This thesis ultimately argues, therefore, that historians should consider the relationship between object types and materials, in which each contributed towards the meaning that consumers derived from the other, to address consumer experiences of objects in the eighteenth century.

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Chapter 1 - Why Leather?

In present-day British retail an increasing number of vegan leathers are becoming available, used for a range of furnishings, items of clothing and accessories. Some of these are artificial materials comprising a plastic coating, but many are drawn from organic materials and produced according to traditional tanning methods, replacing animal skins with the fibrous matter of mushroom, pineapple and cork. Demand for these materials responds in part to ethical concerns for the treatment of animals, but also to increasing tension surrounding the carbon footprint and environmental damage caused by the production of wholly synthetic materials. Meanwhile, their popularity – or otherwise – is interesting as it cuts to the way in which human concern for animals and environments, as well as knowledge of objects and materials, is played out in a distinctively consumer setting. For those using products made of vegan leather it is a key selling point that it looks and feels like the genuine article, but it is essential that the material is derived from non-animal sources.

This thesis is about the consumption of leather objects in England between c.1670 and 1800. Although leather usage can be observed in the historical and archaeological record at virtually every point since the globally earliest-known leather artefact – a shoe dating to 3,500 BCE – the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain and Ireland are particularly interesting as the fortunes of a material can be situated in a decisive chronological framework: a period traditionally identified as experiencing important changes within consumption practices.[1] Here, many of the same consumer concerns which characterize twenty-first-century engagement with vegan leather can be observed between consumers and vegetable-tanned animal hides:

[1] ''Oldest leather shoe' discovered', *BBC News Online*: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10281908. Accessed September 5th 2018.

knowledge of the production process, the importance of the animal origins of this material and how its value derived from physical and observable qualities such as colour, suppleness and feel.

Historians have generally been attentive to the impact of a range of changing consumer conditions – such as advertising techniques, shopping opportunities and spaces for conspicuous consumption – but this thesis argues for the need to be as attentive to the properties and perceptions of the material from which a good was made when assessing consumer responses to, and engagement with, objects. Focusing on materials provokes questions about the broader history of objects, their stories of production and how human senses were implicit in physical acts of consumption, in so doing suggesting that the material from which a good was made encoded its consumption in specific ways. Traces of consumer engagement on such objects show how these objects were used; accordingly, these traces of engagement demonstrate that materials were an important part of the way in which objects were consumed. Furthermore, across the period the materials a good was made from were central to the descriptive and identifying language associated with objects. Unpicking the significance of materials, through the dimension of language, therefore also has relevance to the intangible aspects of the consumption of goods.

Leather is a valuable case study to test this relationship between consumers and materials because it was an incredibly versatile material with socially broad applications. Taking leather as the basis for an investigation into the consumer-material relationship generates a set of object sources which have broad coherence based on a shared constituent material, but which also encompass a substantial range both in terms of object type and the social rank of their consumers. A set of leather objects may include on the one hand the buckets and flails of rural labourers (Figure 1.1), and on the other the finest furniture of elite households. Indeed, the two objects in Figure 1.2 date within forty years of one another in the eighteenth century. While they are both characteristic leather objects, on face value they are far more different than they are similar. The shears case held by the Museum of English Rural Life relied on toughness and leather's protective abilities, while the gilt panel served far more decorative ends. Leather, in short, was not always the same material. Capable of being supple, brittle, shiny, matte, colourful, dark, moulded and flexible, leather could include the softest chamois on one hand, and the most rigid *cuir bouilli* on the other.[2] 'Leather' was one term, representative a ranging family of materials and goods.

Figure 1.1: The head of an eighteenth-century threshing flail, used to separate grain from their chaff and straw. Museum of English Rural Life, object number 68/596.

[2] *Cuir bouilli* relates to a technique for creating a hard, wood-like material by wetting and drying tanned leather under controlled, warm conditions. See chapter 6 of this thesis.

Figure 1.2: A 1785 leather case for sheep shears, Museum of English Rural Life object 65/104, image © the Museum of English Rural Life (left), a 1740s gilt leather panel, Victoria and Albert Museum object number 1653-1871, image © Victoria and Albert Museum, London (right).

Figure 1.3: Object 65/104 at the Museum of English Rural Life, pictured with a corresponding pair of shears.

Equally importantly, some object types which used leather in this period exhibited continuities from earlier object types and therefore offer an opportunity to study continuity in a period so often characterized by change. While still exposed to the broader changes in commerce, industry, design and technology that traditionally characterize the eighteenth century, objects such as eighteenth-century leather upholstered chairs continued to use leather in much the same way as their seventeenth-century counterparts, and these material practices would seldom change into the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, and drawing on the opportunities presented by a material culture approach, this thesis asks what leather – both as a material in itself and as a constituent part of a range of goods – meant to consumers in this period, and how important leather was to the consumption of goods which were made from it. In response, it argues that the meaning of materials was created across their full life cycle and played out inconsistently in different object types. As a result, object types and materials operated in tandem to create meaning for consumers through the practicalities of object types on the one hand, and the distinctive culture of individual materials on the other.

To arrive at this argument this thesis uses a material culture approach to object studies of goods which are all made solely or largely of leather. As one part of understanding the 'meaning-making' work performed by objects, this thesis asks how a close focus on a specific material – here leather – may inflect a traditional material culture approach. In so doing, this thesis makes several points about early-modern material culture: a category that functioned as a broad and multifaceted category which encompassed the spectrum from unfinished raw materials to finished commodities. The 'meaning-making' process happened in consumption, but also in design and production. As a result, materials should be understood to not have only existed in a material form, but in particular cultural ways too and be considered to possess their own material culture. This thesis will draw attention to cultural mechanisms that work to shape the meaning of both materials and objects, at both the production and consumption stage.

This chapter introduces the thesis by setting out the context for leather in this period, elaborating on the rationale and value for a close single material study of this material, defining some of the key terms which will be used throughout the thesis and by detailing the source selection criteria used to identify the object types that form the bulk of the main body of the thesis. The following chapter will outline in greater depth the approaches this thesis takes to these sources.

Leather

This section explores what is already known about leather. Although the material has not received the substantive, recent academic attention given to materials such as silk or cotton, a combination of more traditional historical studies, archaeological reports and some recent publications provide historiographical context. Archaeological excavations point – with some qualification – to where, and in what contexts leather items were used, and the archaeological, museum and documentary records collectively portray the kinds of leather objects which were owned and consumed in the period. Historical scholarship has analysed some leather objects and established how the manufacture, trade and distribution of the material was organised in the period. This thesis builds on existing studies of leather by, first, providing an approach which pulls together the practices of production with the cultural meaning of objects and archaeological or conservation-based approaches to their consumption, and secondly by extending a cultural approach to a range of leather objects which goes beyond historian's existing focus on footwear and dress culture.

Lesley Clarkson has established some of the baseline historical understandings of the leather trade in the early modern period in England. Clarkson finds that, from a consumption perspective, 'the farmer made heavy demands on leather', and highlights frequent overlaps between leather manufacture and agrarian industry.[3] In particular, Clarkson finds a close association between 'specialist' centres for leather objects and pastoral grazing areas in the midlands, such as Northampton.[4] From a production perspective, Clarkson also closely investigates probate inventories of tanners and reaches three conclusions about the organization of this trade. First, leather crafts could be conducted with very small amounts of capital. Second, fixed costs such as tools and labour were relatively low, with the predominant costs incurred being stocks of raw hides and rent. Third, while 'light' leather crafts – such as glove and breech manufacture – were often incorporated within shared sites, this was rarely the case for the 'heavy' leather crafts – such as shoes, saddles, and straightforward tanning.[5] Clarkson provides two explanations for this distinction: that the particular skills necessary in the 'heavy' trades were unique to individual objects and did not easily combine, and that 'heavy' trades generally produced standard products while 'light' crafts generally made bespoke objects.[6] Providing a backdrop to this, D.M. Dean has emphasized the political restrictions placed on all facets of the trade – from producing to buying, selling, importing and exporting – that resulted from both public and private parliamentary bills, emphasizing competing interests in the fortunes of the trade.[7]

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[3] L. Clarkson, 'The Organization of the English Leather Industry in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *The Economic History Review* 13.2 (1960), p. 245; 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England', *The Agricultural History Review* 14.1 (1966), pp. 26-27. See also L. Clarkson, 'The leather manufacture' in G.E. Mingay (eds) *The agrarian history of England and Wales, c. 1750-1850,* (Cambridge, 1989).
[4] Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England', p. 27.
[5] Clarkson, 'The Organization of the English Leather Industry', pp. 248-252.
[6] Ibid, p. 252.
[7] D.M. Dean, 'Public or Private? London, Leather and Legislation in Elizabethan England', *The Historical Journal* 31.3 (1988), p. 529.

In 2008 Philippe Minard, having identified leather objects as ‘belong[ing] to this universe of objects of everyday life that are at the core of the “revolution in consumption” in 17^{th} and 18^{th} century England’, turned the focus towards the processes quality control of leather hides in eighteenth-century London.[8] Minard outlines the tensions which ran between three significant companies – the tanners, curriers and cordwainers – throughout the ‘creation of skins inspection’ in the eighteenth century, as hides which were passed from butchers to tanners and from tanners onwards were subject to scrutiny to protect the quality of finished goods.[9] The tanners’ contradictory position is summarised by Minard as a desire to rid themselves of the ‘yoke’ of top-down inspection, while pushing for enhanced standards of regulation ‘upstream’ – between the butchers and themselves.[10] The Tanners’ Company argued that the buyers should be their own inspectors, but at the same time sought to avoid the issues of ‘ill-flaying’ of hides; free competition, they argued, would be a guarantee of quality in itself.[11] Minard uses these points to suggest that leather is a useful case study of an instance where ‘opportunism’ is documented in the historical record, but ultimately argues for the significance of where these tensions were located. As the most significant tensions were located between companies at a stage when the leather was only partially finished, rather than at the point of sale between consumers and individual manufacturers, Minard argues that the debate over quality existed between experts with specific knowledge of the internal composition of materials, rather involving consumers.[12]

[8] P. Minard, ‘Micro-Economics of Quality and Social Construction of the Market: Disputes Among the London Leather Trades in the Eighteenth Century’, *Historical Social Research* 36.4 (2011), p. 151. See also C. Wilcocks, *Cordwainers: Shoemakers of the City of London,* (London, 2008), pp. 71-73.
[9] Ibid, pp. 156-159.
[10] Ibid, p. 153 and 166.
[11] Ibid, p. 155.
[12] Ibid, p. 165.

The importance of Minard's research, as well as the earlier publications by Clarkson and Dean, is to demonstrate that material processes such as flaying and tanning had both political and economic implications in the eighteenth century. Taken together, these authors also demonstrate three different approaches to leather: as something produced, as something dealt or traded and as something consumed. These three approaches to a material can also be taken as distinct accents in the life-cycle of a material, and this interpretation will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 2. These three different approaches also reflect three different histories contained within a single subject matter. This is, in turn, represented in the range of sources from the period which historians may consult in analysing contemporary leather objects; the differences between these three approaches as they pertain to the sources consulted in this thesis will be discussed below.

By far the most prolific author of leather-centric texts was John W. Waterer. Although his extensive bibliography of texts primarily surveys the breadth of leather objects used in a range of historical periods and brings an ornamental focus to the decoration of these goods, he also shares a historiographical position with Clarkson, Dean and Minard in sketching out guild structures. Broadly speaking, Waterer's research – albeit fairly outdated by modern standards – illustrates that in a long chronology between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries the scope and number of guilds reduced so that a smaller number of guilds were responsible for the regulation of a greater range of objects. Although guilds such as the Skinners, Saddlers, Girdlers and Cordwainers remained largely unchanged, by the mid-seventeenth century the Leather-sellers incorporated the White-tawyers, Pouch-makers and Pursers, the Bottelers had been incorporated with the Horners and the Curriers had incorporated the Tanners and Dyers.[13] Despite this reasonably substantial change, Waterer also argued that by the eighteenth century

[13] J.W. Waterer, *Leather in Life, Art and Industry,* (London, 1946), p. 118.

the role of these guilds had declined considerably. By the nineteenth century taking up freedom of a company was still common, but ‘meaningless except, perhaps, as indicating a certain degree of respectability’.[14]

Waterer’s titles include *Leather in Life, Art and Industry* (1945), which covers the trade and a range of objects, *Leather and the Warrior* (published posthumously, 1981), which explores saddles, shields and other items of military garb, while *Leather Craftsmanship* (1968) focuses on items of decorative arts which were crafted from leather and *Spanish Leather* (1971) narrows in on gilt-leather panels as a unique object study (Figures 1.2 and 1.4). The limitation of Waterer’s research is in its chronologically general nature. As a manufacturer-turned-collector, and a collector-turned-curator and historian, Waterer’s research was fuelled by his interest in the material, rather than in any particular historical period. Furthermore, Waterer’s texts do not generally comment on the historical nature of consumption, nor very widely on the contexts in which these objects were consumed. Accordingly, Waterer’s treatment of some periods is brief or incomplete, but there are few authors whose coverage of a single material is so extensive.

[14] Ibid. p. 119.

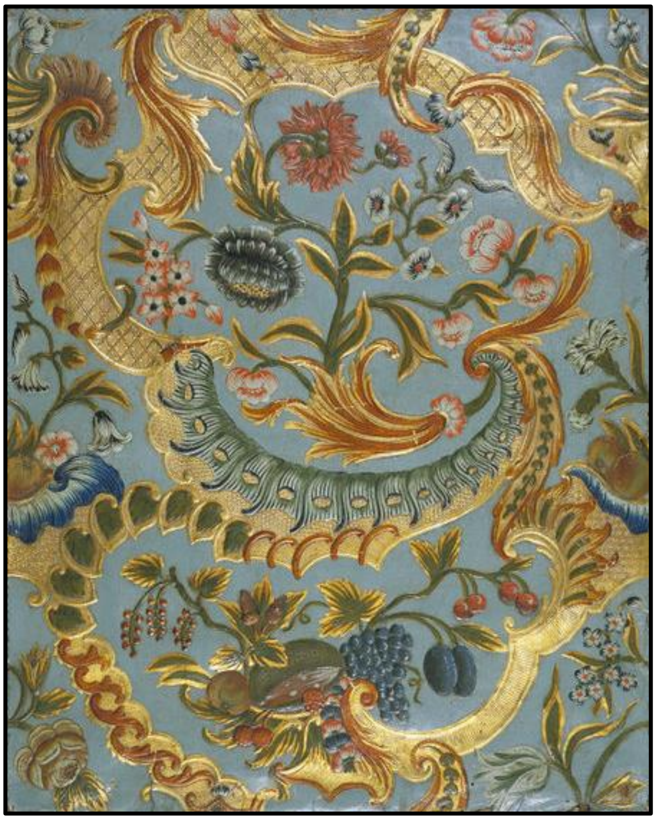

Figure 1.4: An example of a mid-eighteenth century leather panel which survives in excellent condition, produced in the Netherlands, dated c. 1740-1770. V&A object number 475-1869. Image © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

In addition to more traditional historical studies, the existing knowledge of contemporary leather consumption has also been built up by data from archaeological excavations. Leather remains have survived in a range of conditions, but there are some limiting qualifications that need to be applied here. First, a comprehensive synthesis of leather findings is yet to be compiled and so there are no dominant and widely-accepted patterns of consumption drawn from archaeological data. Secondly – and based on the reports consulted in this thesis – the nature of the remains themselves can often be limiting for historical analysis. As these remains are more often fragments or incomplete objects there is a limit to how specific object-consumption patterns can be, and those fragments are generally only characterised as one of a few key object categories. Thirdly, the widely-used archaeological periodisation of 'post-medieval', while useful for differentiating these remains from the full swathe of archaeological data, tends to limit specifically eighteenth-century patterns being established.

Drawing on reports from the publication which covers early-modern finds in the greatest depth – *Post-Medieval Archaeology* – provides some characterizations of eighteenth-century finds. Leather objects in this context have typically been identified as items of dress culture, and typically been found in urban contexts. This was the case for adult leather shoe fragments dated c.1680-1750 found at Victoria Wharf, Limehouse, a leather heel and sole dating from c.1656-1760 from a Bristol Fort, a nineteenth century leather truss from an Oxford chapel burial ground, leather caps dating from the mid-eighteenth century at a Kingston-Upon-Thames burial ground and late-eighteenth century shoe fragments at Adlards Wharf, Bermondsey.[15]

Further reports demonstrate the kinds of assemblages within which leather remains have been found and illustrate the scope for ambiguity in attributing these remains to object types. Leather has been found in shared assemblages with wood, ceramic, metalware and glass dating from the early modern period in spaces of drinking and dining.[16] In one example, an excavation of a Georgian house in Temple Balsall, two complete leather bottles were found in the buttery, alongside milkpans, platters, barrels, a creampot and other Ticknell ware.[17] In another,

[15] K. Tyler, 'The excavation of an Elizabethan/Stuart waterfront site on the north bank of the River Thames at Victoria Wharf, Narrow Street, Limehouse, London E14', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 35.1 (2001), p. 72; A. King, ''Not fullye so loftye': excavations at the Royal Fort, St Michael's Hill, Bristol', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 48.1 (2014), p. 26; R. McCarthy, S. Clough, A. boyle and A. Norton, 'The Baptist Chapel burial ground, Littlemore Oxford, *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 46.2 (2012), p. 284; L. Bashford and L. Sibun, 'Excavations at the Quaker Burial Ground, Kingston-upon-Thames, London', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 41.1 (2007), p. 141; D. Divers, 'The post-medieval waterfront development at Adlards Wharf, Bermondsey, London', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 36 (2002), p. 57.
[16] M. Preusz, J. Beneš, L. Kovačiková, P. Kočar, J. Kaštovský, 'What Did They Eat, What Did They Drink, and from What? An Interdisciplinary Window into Everyday Life of the Early Modern Burgher's Household in Český Krumlov (Czech Republic)', in *Interdisciplinaria Archaeologica* 5.1 (2014), pp. 67-68.
[17] E. Gooder, 'The finds from the cellar of the Old Hall, Temple Balsall, Warwickshire', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 18.1 (1984), p. 149 and p. 169.

however, a 2016 excavation in Southwark, 265 pieces of leather were founds amongst fragments of ceramic, glass, clay, pewter, copper-alloy, wood, bone and ivory. Although approximately 160 of these pieces were identified as shoes, some remaining 105 pieces were not ascribed to any particular object category; as the excavation included the site of the 'Ship and Ball' tavern it is possible that some of these fragments related to objects for drinking and dining, but the ambiguity still remains.[18] Similarly, excavations of post-1750 clearance sites in Cambridge in 2017 indicate the problematic nature of identifying leather artefacts from perishable remains.[19]

Taking this particular example of a category of assemblage – drinking and dining – further demonstrates some of the problems that archaeology has faced in identifying leather remains, as the record also includes multiple examples where organic materials more broadly were unable to be identified. Writing of an excavation which included the former site of the King's Arms in Uxbridge, Middlesex – a clearance group dating c.1785-1800 – Jacqueline Pearce has commented that organics survived in few cases, and that tavern assemblages could be generally summarised by a few key findings: ceramic and glass vessels, specialized glassware such as wine glasses and large amounts of clay pipe stems.[20] Pearce also comments that tavern excavations themselves are relatively rare, and in the English examples she subsequently explores – of the Tun Inn in Guildford and the Bowling Green Public House in Leicester – there are similarly not only no leather remains identified, but also no recorded organic materials

[18] J. Pearce, 'Down at the old Ship and Ball – taverns, trade and daily life in the London Borough of Southwark', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 50.2 (2016), p. 181 and p. 206.
[19] C. Cessford, 'Throwing away everything but the kitchen sink? Large assemblages, depositional practice and post-medieval households in Cambridge', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 51.1 (2017), pp. 164-169.
[20] J. Pearce, 'A late 18th-century inn clearance assemblage from Uxbridge, Middlesex', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 34.1 (2000), p. 145.

in the reports.[21] Something similar can be said of a comparably recent excavation near Newgate Street in East London – a site which included eighteenth-century taverns such as Dolly's and the Swan and Gridiron, among other spaces of food and drink consumption.[22] Despite an extensive range of ceramic and stoneware drinking vessels, as well as some glassware, the only organic object find recorded here was a single ivory cutlery handle.[23]

The problem facing archaeological classification of contemporary leather objects relates to perishable material remains, then, and this in turn poses a challenge to historians working with the material culture of not just leather, but a range of organic materials. This issue was neatly summarised in 2014 by Linda Hurcombe who, coining the phrase 'missing majority', described the problem 'that the majority of material culture is made up of organic raw materials, that most of these are highly perishable materials, and that their absence has severely affected our interpretation of their significance'.[24] As a result, Hurcombe argues both that the 'durable materials of stone, pottery and metal […] dominate archaeological reports and resulting discussions'.[25]

Archaeological evidence also informs a historical understanding of industrial practices and where tanning was situated, mirroring the production-centred approach of Clarkson, above. Central to research in the tanning process, which will be explored in chapter 1, have been Michael Shaw and Roy Thomson. Considering the case of Northampton, Shaw and Thomson

[21] Ibid pp. 172-173. See also K. Fryer and A. Shelley, 'Excavation of a pit at 16 Tungate, Guildford, Surrey, 1991', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 31.1 (1997).
[22] S. Watson, J. Pearce, A. Davis, G. Eagan & A. Pipe, 'Taverns and other entertainments in the City of London? Seventeenth- and 18th-century finds from excavations at Paternoster Square', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 44.1 (2010).
[23] Ibid, p. 187.
[24] L. M. Hurcombe, *Perishable Material Culture in Prehistory: Investigating the Missing Majority,* (Oxford, 2014), p. 2.
[25] Ibid. pp. 12-13.

have demonstrated how contemporary tanning practices in a busy English town improved in response to published innovations between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[26] The nature and language of these innovations will be central to chapter 3 of this thesis. Most recently, the work of the Centre for Human Palaeoecology & Evolutionary Origins at the University of York, focusing in particular on its strand of ‘Biological Evolution’, has experimented with technologies enabling bioarchaeologists and zooarchaeologists to understand the animal origins of skin- or tissue-based objects.[27] This technique has proven particularly meaningful in the case of parchment or vellum, a skin-based material used in this period for hand-drawn maps, art and documents (Figure 1.5). By identifying the animal material at the root of production processes, this archaeological technique enables researchers to identify microscopic traces of animal matter which illustrate agrarian and rural practices of animal cultivation. Accordingly, the potential of these findings is to illustrate the full range of industries which were implicated within the manufacturing processes for parchment and vellum and establish a more expanded production process.

[26] M. Shaw, ‘The excavation of a late 15th- to 17th-century tanning complex at The Green, Northampton’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 30.1 (1996); R. Thomson, ‘Leather manufacture in the post-medieval period with special reference to Northamptonshire’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 15 (1981); R. Thomson, *The role of leather science and technology in heritage conservation,* (PhD Thesis, University of Northampton, 2011); R. Thomson and Q. mould (eds), *Leather Tanneries: the Archaeological Evidence*, (London, 2011); M. Kite and R. Thomson, *Conservation of leather and related materials,* (Oxford, 2006).
[27] M. D. Teasdale, N. L. Van Doorn, S. Fiddyment, C. C. Webb, T. O'Connor, M. Hofreiter, M. J. Collins, and D. G. Bradley, ‘Paging through history: parchment as a reservoir of ancient DNA for next generation sequencing’, *Phil. Trans. R. Soc*. B 370, no. 1660 (2015); S. Fiddyment, B. Holsinger, C. Ruzzier, A. Devine, A. Binois, U. Albarella, R Fischer et al. ‘Animal origin of 13th-century uterine vellum revealed using noninvasive peptide fingerprinting’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112.49 (2015), pp. 15066-15071.

Figure 1.5: Map of the Manor of Somershall Herbert, Derbyshire, drawn on vellum, dated 1725. National Trust object 652631, image © National Trust/Ian Buxton & Brian Burch.

These technologies have already had an impact is in enabling museum collections to classify the types of leather used to make some of the early modern objects in their collections. One such collection which has benefitted was that founded by Waterer in 1946. As it was in 1946, the *Museum of Leathercraft* in Northampton rapidly expanded in scale and became the *International Museum of Leathercraft* and eventually the *National Leather Collection*, as it is today. The collection started with two leather drinking vessels, acquired by Waterer for the museum from a flea market in London. The collection survives today with approximately 11,000 leather objects from a range of historical periods, with strengths in early modern trunks and coffers, twentieth-century European furs and leather-made drinking vessels of varying sizes and forms. Waterer drew on the objects in this collection as the basis for his published works, exploring the change over time in their respective object types, function and cross-cultural variation between different national spaces of consumption.[28] Some of those same objects receive renewed attention in this thesis, with a much closer focus on the cultural contexts which informed their consumption.

Leather became increasingly viewed through a cultural lens during the ‘material turn’ of the 1980s and 1990s, compounded by a second-wave of ‘new materialists’ in the 2010s. In 2016 and writing of shagreen – traditionally understood as leather made from tanned shark or ray skin, used to cover the surfaces of objects such as the medicine case below – Christine Guth remarked that leather was ‘a cultural product, more than a natural one’ (Figure 1.6).[29] Otherwise recent research has been dominated by boots and shoes. In his 2002 PhD thesis, Riello focused on this object as indicative of taste and production in two major European cities – London and Paris – across the long eighteenth century. Riello defends his focus on shoes against ‘polite critics’ who describe shoe-research as ‘niche’ by insisting that ‘the focus on micro problems can be a good way to address a series of issues that otherwise can be interpreted only through general – but at the same time vague – investigations’.[30] Of leather specifically, Riello notes that:

> Leather was in the eighteenth century a material with many varied uses. In a world where nature was providing essential resources, leather exemplified a complex relationship between nature and transformation. It was the output of the animal world and the input of many different manufactures.[31]

[28] J.W. Waterer, *Leather Craftsmanship,* (London, 1968).
[29] C. Guth, ‘Towards a Global History of Shagreen’, in A. Gerritsen and G. Riello (eds), *The Global Lives of Things*, p. 63-65.
[30] G. Riello, ‘The Boot and Shoe Trades in London and Paris in the Long Eighteenth Century’, (PhD Thesis, UCL, 2002), p. 1.
[31] Ibid, p. 22.

Figure 1.6: An eighteenth-century medicine case held at Keddleston Hall, Derbyshire. National Trust object number 109109, image © National Trust/Glenn Norwood.

Riello's approach, while drawing largely on economic data, differs from earlier scholars such as Clarkson and Dean through the introduction of representational cultural sources, such as an extensive repository of trade cards, and more importantly an analysis of the objects themselves.[32] With greater documentary rigour and a far tighter chronological focus, Riello achieved the inclusive and unified framework that Waterer attempted some forty years prior – placing an object type not only within the context of its making, distribution and regulation, but also its representation.

Shoes are also an object type Ulinka Rublack has researched in the context of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italy. Rublack narrows in on the life of the artisan Hans Fugger and asks how he 'used shoes in his costume and leather wallpaper in his domestic display to reconstruct how he presented as well as experienced the properties of leather as matter within

[32] G. Riello, *A Foot in the Past: Consumers, Producers and Footwear in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (Oxford, 2006); D. M. Hafter, [Review] Riello, *A Foot in the Past, The American Historical Review* 112.5 (2007).

a precise political, socio-economic and cultural context'.[33] Rublack concludes by arguing that both Fugger's shoes and leather wallpaper granted him prestige through the display of a skilled working of material – particularly one that was so 'resistant'.[34] Furthermore, Rublack suggests that these objects 'have often been neglected' and that the efforts of historians to understand the contemporary practices of making and consuming objects are 'all the more important since many Renaissance artefacts gained their significance and attractiveness by drawing attention to the features of their matter and to the crafting skills involved in their creation'.[35] In closing, therefore, Rublack makes one of her primary concerns the consumer knowledge of objects and their making, and suggests that materials have some role to play in understanding these goods more deeply. Rublack's approach to Fugger's objects provides a good model, and this thesis shares Rublack's focus on a collection of objects held together by a shared material. Where it differs is in examining how the culture of the material itself – as drawn in part from production processes and the available knowledge of tanning – shaped the ways in which consumers interacted with these objects in a more direct fashion, rather than through observation and representation.

In contrast to Rublack, Matthew McCormack places shoes and boots within an eighteenth-century British context. McCormack comments on the gendered nature of these shoes – describing men's shoes as 'plain', 'sturdy' and 'functional', compared to women's which were 'decorative', 'flimsy' and 'impractical' – and cites Riello and Peter McNeil's assertion that shoes are instantly recognizable as men's or women's 'not because of functional dissimilarities or anatomical diversities between the sexes, but because shoes are one way by which we

[33] U. Rublack, 'Matter in the Material Renaissance', *Past and Present* 219 (May 2013), p. 47.
[34] Ibid, pp. 83-85.
[35] Ibid, pp. 42-43.

construct gender identity'.[36] Similarly to Rublack, McCormack acknowledges the sensory appeal of leather and the substantial variety this material could bring to even a narrow object category: from 'fundamentally outdoor' boots to the 'polite indoor wear' of leather pumps and buckled shoes.[37] McCormack argues that in Georgian Britain the boot was 'suffused with symbolism about gender and class, and came to be the focus of anxieties about political and military history as well as about bodily and moral health'.[38] Based on examining objects and representations, McCormack's article demonstrates that the material properties of leather enabled it to react with the body in distinct ways; close associations with skin led leather to complicate contemporary notions of bodily boundaries.

What is shared between Rublack and McCormack, building on the earlier work of Riello, is the use of objects to answer broader questions about display, prestige and taste on the one hand, set against gender, fashion and the body on the other. They both also highlight the methodological issues of this material – the limited detail provided by collection catalogues and predisposition to archaeological decay. However, although both Rublack and McCormack use these object studies to try and access a more 'everyday' level of experience, one may challenge how mundane the objects selected really were. The items of footwear Rublack and McCormack examine are a far cry from some rudimentary examples available in certain museum collections (See Figure 1.7). Furthermore, although both historians cite the sensory quality of this material as a central component of their consumption, there are material properties left unexplored, such as the distinctions between the inward-facing 'flesh-side' of tanned leather hides and the shiny, curried 'hair-side'.[39] By placing shoes at the centre of their

[36] M. McCormack, 'Boots, material culture and Georgian masculinities', *Social History* 42.4 (2017), pp. 461-462.
[37] Ibid p. 462.
[38] Ibid, p. 471.
[39] S. Greenhalgh, *A Forger's Tale: Confessions of the Bolton Forger,* (Third edn, London, 2015), pp. 354-357.

analyses both of these historians show one way in which leather was used in consumption, but by choosing a single object study this material focus is also necessarily limited. In so doing, these object studies do not single out the conscious choices and application of knowledge consumers made regarding materials; rather, they illustrate situation-specific applications and reactions to leather without examining how the consumer experience of a material was the result of interaction with multiple object types. Where this thesis builds on these established approaches is also, therefore, by using multiple object studies as a tool to draw abstractions about the consumer experience of leather.

Figure 1.7: A pair of eighteenth-century children's shoes. Museum of English Rural Life object number 52/345/1.

Source Selection: Objects

Having intimated above that the landscape of leather objects in eighteenth-century England was more multifaceted than comprising footwear alone, the twin purposes of this section are, first, to flesh out the numerous other object types consumers owned in this period, and secondly to identify the object types that will be focused in on as case studies in this thesis to address the relationship between consumers, objects and materials. The sources used in this thesis can be broadly summarised as objects from public collections, probate inventories, newspaper advertisements, printed texts both literary and technical, visual culture and ephemera.

The starting point for this investigation is probate inventories: the inventories taken by appraisers of the household goods of the recently deceased. Probate inventories, here, have been used to serve a dual purpose: first to contextualize leather ownership in the period from a wide and geographically-ranging sample of sources, and secondly – and relatedly – to use these findings to inform the object case studies which will form the chapters to follow. In the main body of this thesis, using objects which were described in probate inventories provides scope for treating objects both as individual sources, as well as statistics within aggregate analyses.

Understanding the historiographical tradition of probate inventories is also important. Though by no means exhaustive, the outline which follows demonstrates the versatility of this source type and its ability to be turned to a range of different historical questions which are relevant to this thesis: some quantitative, some descriptive, some comparative. Probate inventories are a sensible source to answer questions of consumption. For Sara Pennell, probate inventories are one source historians have used to forge a path between the quantitative and qualitative, finding an 'enumeration of what […] commercialization comprised'.[40] Jonathan Willis describes inventories as documents 'which sit at the intersection of […] the personal and the legal', Carole Shammas as 'the favoured source' for the study of consumption and 'personalty', and Mark Overton, Jane Whittle et al as a source which 'have an enduring fascination because of the unique window they open into the everyday life of people and households; they abound with descriptions that can be comic, tragic, poignant, and perplexing. But they are also

[40] S. Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 42.2 (June, 1999), p. 551.

inherently quantitative documents'.[41] John Beckett and Catherine Smith similarly emphasize the usefulness of probate inventories as evidencing some of the wider range of consumer goods available in the long eighteenth century, despite not capturing fixed furnishings such as staircases and fireplaces.[42]

Shammas, Weatherill and Overton, Whittle et al's research has been some of the most influential in this area. Each states the known methodological limitations of this source: their inconsistency, the difficulty of defining the 'lower bounds' and the 'misleading' nature of individual inventories set against an aggregate. For consumption specifically, these documents also do not provide information on when or how consumers acquired objects. Despite these limitations, they demonstrate that probate inventories have versatility by using them to achieve three different research outcomes.[43]

Published earliest, Shammas made a comparison between the 'pre-industrial consumer' in British and American contexts. In Britain, she complicates price and income as the most dominant determinants of demand and uses evidence of the increasing substitution of 'durables', such as brass and pewter, in favour of 'semi-durables', such as pottery and glass, as indicative of a long-term interest in decorating the domestic environment.[44] Shammas challenges the close associations between objects, consumers, and social 'rank' or 'class' by demonstrating the spread of new consumer commodities across a broad spectrum of people,

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[41] J. Willis, 'Ecclesiastical sources' in L. Sangha and J. Willis (eds) *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources,* p. 70; C. Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America,* (Oxford, 1990), p. 2; M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean and A. Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750,* (London, 2004), p. 13.
[42] J. Beckett and C. Smith, 'Urban renaissance and consumer revolution in Nottingham, 1688-1750', *Urban History* 27.1 (2000), pp. 40-41.
[43] L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760,* (London, 1996), pp. 192-193; Overton et al, *Production and Consumption,* p. 32.
[44] Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer,* pp. 295-298.

including the poor, and finding differences in the quantity of goods and features of dwelling-spaces, rather than the type of consumer goods people owned.[45] In similar vein, Weatherill argues that consumption and ownership of consumer goods was not limited to the social and economic elites; those in commercial or professional occupations were more likely to own new types of domestic good than the lower gentry.[46] Although Weatherill finds the traditional explanation of social emulation ultimately too simplistic, this concept holds some weight when focus is shifted to understanding the 'practical, financial and psychological' reasons for owning goods.[47] Weatherill emphasizes the 'expressive, social functions of consumer goods in the daily lives of the middle classes', demonstrating how probate inventories can be used to understand contemporary economic, cultural and social practices.[48] Finally, Overton, Whittle, Dean and Hann use probate inventories to make a direct regional comparison between two different early modern contexts: Kent and Cornwall. One of the most significant research findings of this comparison is the materially richer conditions in Kent, which were accompanied with far more detailed and descriptive inventories.[49] The outcome from this comparison was to identify 'differences in the patterns of ownership of goods between urban and rural residents, but the significance of the 'urban factor' appears to be muted when compared to the effects of status or wealth'.[50] Considering regional deviations, the authors find not a single and linear progression of capitalist development, but a series of individual and localised processes which shared a common outcome.[51]

[45] Ibid, p. 179, pp. 298-299.
[46] Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture,* pp. 191-193.
[47] Ibid, p. 200.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Overton et al, *Production and Consumption.*
[50] Ibid, p. 177.
[51] Ibid.

This thesis uses probate inventories in order to identify the broad family of available leather objects in the period, and more specifically which of these will be the primary focus of object studies. Within those object studies, these inventories further highlight the practical circumstances of use and languages used to describe objects. In response to this first aim, it is necessary to use a large sample of inventories and less important to concentrate on the language or structure of these sources. This is not to disregard such detail, only to insist on a primary focus as the frequency of different object types. In order to acquire a large sample of inventories this thesis uses edited collections of transcribed inventories. These sources do have some limitations. Different editions are subject to ranging transcription policies and conventions, and there is also an issue of chronology here, as has been demonstrated by the differences in the quantities of inventories available pre- and post-1760 in Weatherill's work.[52] Resulting from the survival rate of documents, it is difficult for historians to use inventories to characterise consumption within a precise geographic scope over an extensive time period. Furthermore, working with the sources in this form as opposed to the original manuscript sources ignores how inventories would have been experienced as material documents. However, as this investigation concentrated on the content of inventories their material form was not relevant, and a large sample also hopes to mitigate the impact of individual inconsistencies between different editions and cover as broad a chronological period as possible. This format also enables expedient searching and therefore are well-suited to this aim.

This thesis uses transcribed probate inventories selected to achieve a broad geographic coverage within the limitations of documents available. Figure 1.8 shows the geographic distribution of the sets of probate inventories used, and Table 1.1 summarizes the quantitative findings. The overall sample amounts to a little under 1,500 inventories drawn from the south-

[52] Weatherill, 'The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour', Table 10.5.

west, south, midlands and north east within the date range 1670 to 1800. The key findings are that the broad object categories to which leather goods belonged were furniture on the one hand, and smaller, more moveable objects on the other. The most common specific object recorded in inventories was leather-upholstered chairs. Another key finding is the alternating use of 'skin', 'hide' and 'leather' as descriptive terms for this material.

Figure 1.8: Geographic distribution of probate inventory collections used in this thesis.[53]

[53] Concentration of pins around Leicester reflects collection of smaller parish sets of inventories

Source	Number of inventories	Number and percentage of inventories including at least one leather object
Whitby	102	15 (14.7%)
Beeding and Bamber	59	3 (5.1%)
Rogate	84	3 (3.6%)
Belbroughton	19	3 (15.8%)
Bristol (city)	110	44 (40.0%)
Marlborough	201	22 (10.9%)
Clayworth	38	5 (13.2%)
Chetnole, Leigh and Yetminster	124	11 (8.9%)
Clifton and Westbury	246	16 (6.5%)
Water Eaton	22	0 (0%)
Clee	135	1 (<1%)
Smethwick	45	3 (6.6%)
Great Stretton	8	0 (0%)
Braunstone	34	2 (5.9%)
Kirkby Muxloe	41	5 (12.2%)
Glenfield	37	3 (8.1%)
Ratby	69	2 (2.9%)
Evington	75	4 (5.3%)
Total	1,449	142 (9.7%)

Table 1.1: Percentage of transcribed probate inventories including leather objects.[54]

[54] N. Vickers (ed.), *A Yorkshire Town of the Eighteenth Century; The Probate Inventories of Whitby, North Yorkshire 1700-1800,* (Studley, 1986); A. Noble, J. Pennington and J. Sleight, *Beeding and Bamber: Two Sussex Villages, A Study of the Probate Inventories, Wills and Accounts, 1613-1775* (Hove, 2007); L. Lloyd (ed.), *Property and Life in 17th Century Rogate and Rake,* (Rogate, 1997); J. S. Roper (ed.), *Belbroughton Worcestershire – A Selection of Wills and Probate Inventories 1539-1647* (Dudley, 1967-8); E. George and S. George (eds), *Bristol Probate Inventories, Part III; 1690-1804*, (Bristol, 2008); R. A. Machin (ed.), *Probate Inventories and Material Excerpts of Chetnole, Leigh and Yetminster*, (Bristol, 1976); J. S. Moore (ed.), *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories 1609-1761,* (Bristol, 1981); V. E. Offard (ed.), *The Probate Documents of Water Eaton 1592-1730,* (Kidlington, 1986); R. W. Ambler, B. Watkinson and L. Watkinson (eds), *Farmers and Fishermen, The Probate Inventories of the Ancient Parish of Clee, South Humberside,* (Hull, 1987); M. Bodfish (ed.), *Probate Inventories of Smethwick Residents 1647-1747,* (Smethwick, 1992); J. Wilshere (ed.), *Great Stretton History; Parish Registers, Probate Inventories,* (Leicester, 1984), J. Wilshere (ed.), *Braunstone Probate Inventories 1532-1778,* (Leicester, 1983); J. Wilshere (ed.), *Kirkby Muxloe Probate Inventories 1547-1783,* (Leicester, 1983); J. Wilshere (ed.), *Glenfield Probate Inventories 1542-1831,* (Leicester, 1983); J. Wilshere (ed.), *Ratby Probate Inventories 1621-1844,* (Leicester, 1984); J. Wilshere (ed.), *Evington Probate Inventories 1557-1819,* (Leicester, 1982); L. Williams and S. Thomson (eds), *Marlborough Probate Inventories 1591-1775,* Wiltshire Record Society 59 (2007); E.R. Perkins (ed.), *Village Life from Wills and Inventories, Clayworth Parish, 1670-1710* (Nottingham, 1979); P. Wyatt (ed.), *The Uffculme Wills and Inventories, c16th-c18th* (Exeter, 1997).

This survey shows that leather or leather goods appear in approximately one in ten probate inventories, but as a finding this 9.7% should be treated with some caution. This sample does not include a number of goods which would most likely have been made of leather, such as references to some saddles, because it only includes cases where objects were explicitly identified as leather. In reality, this proportion would be higher if such un-identified goods were accounted for. It is also worth noting that this figure includes one significant outlier: Bristol (city), where the percentage of inventories including leather goods is 40%. This percentage is substantially higher than the next highest-frequency set of inventories, Belbroughton, at 15.8%. If this anomaly is excluded then the overall sample would indicate 7.3% of inventories including at least one leather object.

Within the total sample, this 9.7% makes two face-value suggestions. First, material identifiers – the broader 'language of leather' which will be discussed in chapter 3 – were used as a tool of description or comparison. Across the Marlborough inventories, for instance, leather chairs feature in eight inventories. The descriptive term 'leather' is used in relation to chairs alongside other descriptors such as 'rush', 'turkey' or 'joyned' to indicate a separation on the basis of style or appearance in five cases.[55] 'Leather' chairs appear in isolation in three cases.[56] Other descriptors applied to chairs include the user – 'child's chair' – the size or styles. Secondly, the spaces in which leather goods were used in the home was very broad, and so too was the range of objects they were used alongside. The transcribed wills and inventories of Clayworth in Nottinghamshire, for instance, include 38 entries between 1670 and 1708, of which only five feature leather items.[57] Three of these are entries for leather chairs, which are located in the

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[55] Williams and Thomson (eds), *Marlborough Probate Inventories*, p. 156, p. 169, p. 198, p. 199, p. 261.
[56] Ibid, p. 168, p. 249, p. 254.
[57] E. R. Perkins (ed.), *Village Life from Wills and Inventories, Clayworth Parish, 1670-1710* (Nottingham, 1979).

‘Great’ parlour, the ‘New’ parlour and the ‘Best’ parlour in inventories from 1691, 1706 and 1708 respectively.[58] The inventory of Gervase Rayner, dated 3 March 1691 included eight leather chairs, which featured in the same room as an oval table, two little tables, two ‘other’ chairs, six carpets, six cushions and two boxes.[59] Francis Johnson, whose probate inventory is dated 27 March 1706, owned one square table, one little oval table, four new wooden chairs, six leather chairs and two covered stools, while Christopher Johnson – in an inventory dated 14 April 1708 – owned more simply ‘one table and 12 leather chairs’.[60] The remaining entries from Clayworth Parish reference leather working goods: eight pair of harnesses owned by Humphrey Derby, and a leather handheck in the barn of Rebeckah Webster. In both cases, the goods sit alongside other working goods such as carts, ploughs and collars.[61]

The second intention of using these sources was to identify objects which would form the basis of the main object studies of this thesis, which are outlined below. These findings will be summarised here, with necessarily detail from the inventories themselves provided in the appropriate chapters. There are 156 individual references to 22 different types of leather object across the 142 inventories identified through the printed collections. Leather chairs dominate this count, with 76 items including varying quantities of leather chairs. 29 inventories include references to raw materials, 11 to different types of leather drinking vessels, six to saddles and breeches, five to trunks, four to bags, three to shoes and two to gloves. There is one reference each to frogges, desks, pockets, shagreen handles, shagreen cases, mittens, straps, tables, buckets, harnesses, handhecks, stockings and bellows.

[58] Ibid, p xvii, p. xxxii, p. xxxviii.
[59] Ibid, p. xvii.
[60] Ibid, p. xxxviii.
[61] Ibid, p.xxi and p. xxii.

Of these objects, this thesis will include object studies for three distinct types: leather-upholstered chairs, saddles and leather drinking vessels. On frequency alone, leather-upholstered chairs are the most obvious choice for an object study as this object type accounts for almost half of all references to leather objects in this sample. The data from these probate inventories suggests that leather-upholstered chairs were a relatively accessible object type – given the range in values ascribed by contemporaries to the objects in this sample – and one which can also be found with a reasonable geographic coverage. These inventories also present a sample which is sufficient to draw statistical patterns of ownership, relating to the value contemporaries ascribed to these objects, the spaces in the home in which these objects were positioned to be consumed and their chronological distribution. In numerous cases these inventories are well suited to answering questions about the particularity or distinctiveness of leather as they situate leather chairs among references to upholstered chairs using a number of different materials.

In comparison to leather-upholstered chairs, references to other objects are relatively low in frequency. The selection criteria for additional object studies therefore cannot be based on frequency alone, therefore, and is important in terms of how this thesis positions itself in relation to the existing historiography. In choosing other objects this thesis seeks to move away from a focus on elite goods and uses criteria different from existing studies that tend to treat leather as a textile. As discussed above, shoes and boots are the leather objects which have received the most sustained academic attention from scholars, but there are also studies available of other leather items in this category: gloves and breeches.[62] On the one hand, this

[62] P. Stallybrass and A. Rosalind Jones, 'Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe', *Critical Enquiry* 28.1 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 114-132; K. Harvey, 'Men of Parts: Masculine Embodiment and the Male Leg in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 54.4 (October, 2015), pp. 797-821; E. Fudge, 'Renaissance Animal Things', in J.B. Landes, P.Y. Lee and P. Youngquist (eds), *Gorgeous Beasts: Animal Bodies in Historical Perspective*, (Philadelphia, 2012) pp. 41-56.

academic favour for items of dress culture has disproportionately skewed the lenses through which this material has been studied; leather, to this point, has primarily been viewed on a par with other textiles, as a material closely entangled with histories of the body, fashion and taste. On the other hand, and however inadvertently, this has resulted in studies of leather under the auspices of consumers occupying a higher social rank, or bearing greater social prestige – in part resulting from the better survival rates of these objects from comparatively elite consumers, and the relatively limited presence of more rudimentary objects in major museum collections. Viewing leather under a similar prism to textiles also delimits these studies from understanding the other, more robust, qualities which leather could hold through its many forms.

To develop a historical understanding of this material in a more rounded fashion, therefore, this thesis needs to move away both from equating leather with textiles and away from the practice of selecting exclusively elite goods by examining object types which a broader range of consumers interacted with in other ways. In addition, because this thesis wishes to address the meanings of leather through unpacking the material-consumer relationship, and because the material origin of leather as skin is a key component of its history, this thesis will also address leather objects which consumers identified as skin. The literature reviewed above, if only from the perspective of dress culture, reinforces that this 'skinly' nature complicated the contemporary consumption of leather goods. To measure how complex and to what extent consumer notions of skin had an impact on consumption would also require examining a 'skinly' object from categories outside of dress culture.

Based on these considerations, the other two major object types are saddles and leather drinking vessels. The sample of inventories demonstrates that saddles are particularly useful to this study because of the language used to describe them provided a direct link between the production and consumption stages of an object; the material origins of leather were reflected in the language used to describe the finished and consumable good. In addition, these objects bring humans and animals within the same framework of analysis and enable historians to explore how consumers used their knowledge and held-meaning of a material to navigate this relationship. While these inventories alone do not suggest that saddles were accessible across a broad social range – and, as will be explored in chapter 4, the artefactual record is relatively limited in this regard – there is demonstrable value in this object study in unpacking an object which has received limited historiographical attention and was the purview of consumers who rode horses both for work and play. Leather drinking vessels, similarly to leather-upholstered chairs, contained range in terms of the form, construction and appearance of objects within a given type or category. There is also archaeological data available to support studying these objects and an abundant artefactual record. This choice of object study responds to the criteria above because it, first, addresses objects which were the purview of consumers who occupied a range of social ranks, and second because it further allows historians to consider the material of leather in a broader range of applications: away from parity with textile towards objects which were tough and rigid.

Taken together, these three object studies maintain cohesion as they can be broadly described as moveable commodities which were stored in the home, even if the primary sites for the direct consumption of leather saddles were outside of domestic environs. As the chapters to follow will demonstrate, this sample of leather objects includes a range of different material manifestations of leather, and a corresponding range in the qualities of leather which were being exploited: from hard to soft, dull to ostentatious. This sample of leather objects also encompasses a range of subject matter. Leather saddles – similarly to leather-upholstered chairs

– can be used to address notions of comfort and display. Leather-upholstered chairs also speak to use and manipulation of the domestic space by consumers. Leather drinking vessels do not map neatly onto any of these areas, but instead provoke questions about the customizability of objects and the use of objects within a precise form of consumption: drinking.

In this thesis 74 individual objects have been analysed in detail, selected from public collections, and the reasons for selecting individual objects are outlined in the relevant object studies. Briefly, however, the list of institutions consulted includes: the Victoria & Albert Museum, the National Leather Collection, the Geffrye Museum of the Home, the Museum of London, the Museum of English Rural Life, The H.F. du Pont Winterthur Museum, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the National Trust.

Specifying these object types for very close study does necessarily exclude several other objects present in these inventories. By closely investigating selected objects, this thesis is able to analyse individual reactions to leather across both the life cycle of a material and the life cycle of an object: an approach which will be explained in the chapter to follow. In addition, and to provide a comparison, this thesis will at appropriate points draw on supplementary object types which demonstrate the relevance of its findings within the contexts of both eighteenth-century leather consumption and material culture more broadly. These supplementary objects will broaden the scope of individual chapters by providing glimpses of what the multifaceted contemporary material landscape comprised, and support their respective findings by demonstrating their validity across either a greater social and geographic range, or through a wider range of objects. In so doing, these supplementary object types also provide linkages between the range of objects identified both through the inventories in this introduction and the newspaper advertisements examined in chapter 3. These supplementary objects have been selected from the National Trust, as an available collection with a significant geographic and social scope, and the National Leather Collection, as the most specific collection relevant to the aims and focus of this thesis, and chosen to allow further examination of the issues being discussed in the respective chapter.

Source Selection: Additional Source Types

While their versatility to answer a range of questions about past behaviours and practices is a strength of objects, there are three significant challenges material culture historians face. First, there is often an unevenness in rates of artefactual survival. Second, there are challenges in determining the authenticity, audience or owners of specific objects – each key facets of an object biography approach, and which fall outside of what may be gained by examining the physical objects, as will be discussed in chapter 2. Third, even the closest analysis of historical objects cannot necessarily identify how contemporary consumers felt about or perceived these goods. Some of these limitations can be accounted for through a careful method, and one important response to these issues is to acknowledge them as a perennial problem of this mode of research. There will almost certainly be limits to the extent of significance historians may draw of artefactual data, and therefore a reasoned approach to these sources is necessary. The specific approach of this thesis will be identified in the chapter to follow. A second response to these issues is to place these objects in as rich a context as possible, based on additional visual and written sources which may place these goods with more certainty across the different dimensions of production, consumption and retail. Using such sources also responds to issues of artefactual survival and enriches a historical understanding of objects or materials by suggesting consumer perceptions through the language of sources. As will be discussed in each of the object study chapters, survival rates for the three selected object types vary considerably – from hundreds of contemporary leather chairs to only a small number of saddles. By situating these objects within a broader picture, painted by a number of source types, this mode of research is still able to be object-centred and can justly attempt to read meaning and significance from objects.[63]

The additional bodies of sources used to inform the study of objects in this thesis include newspaper advertisements, written texts in a range of styles, and visual representations. Newspaper advertisements are used across chapters 3 and 4, and are all drawn from the *Burney Collection Newspapers (BCN).* The specific publications and selection criteria will be discussed in the chapters themselves, but by way of a general overview this thesis uses these advertisements to access representations of leather objects within the specific context of retail and to consider the language used to describe them. In this way they are different from probate inventories, which primarily reflect consumption, and the language of which therefore is designed to identify rather than entice.

The advertisements used in this thesis were identified using keyword searching through an online repository – a technique of which Tim Hitchcock has been a firm critic within the *BCN* specifically, stating that the optical character recognition (OCR) used by the website is not accurate enough, and that digital images do not reflect the material realities of these sources and mislead researchers.[64] In response, Andrew Prescott stated that the digitized form of the *BCN* was never designed either as a fully searchable database, nor to be used as a comprehensive database of all eighteenth-century newspapers. Its coverage 'is based on a collection whose core consists of left-over papers which Burney managed to pick up from the tables of a coffee house run by his maiden aunts'.[65] There is therefore a more metropolitan bias

[63] G. Riello, 'Things that shape history: Material culture and historical narratives' in Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture,* pp. 28-29.
[64] T. Hitchcock, 'Confronting the Digital', *Cultural and Social History* 10.1 (2013), pp. 13-18.
[65] A. Prescott, 'I'd Rather be a Librarian', *Cultural and Social History* 11.3 (2014), p. 337.

to this sample which runs counter to the geographic distribution of sources within the sample of probate inventories. This may be reconciled within this thesis by considering that these two source types reflected two very different functions: consumption and retail, as above. While these two bodies of sources – which both have their respective issues of survival and access – do not share an origin, therefore, it is fair that they coexist in this thesis as reflecting two different aspects of studying a mutual subject matter.

There are genuine challenges to using this corpus, then, but it would be unfair not to acknowledge its advantages. Prescott's comments that the coverage of the Burney is based on one individual's private collection may be equally seen as a positive as it gives historians a more robust sense of the contexts in which these newspapers were disseminated and consumed. Furthermore, the limitations of OCR which Hitchcock cites do not really render using the *BCN* 'playing a form of research roulette'.[66] In the endnotes to this article Hitchcock states that the *BCN* is better than many other forms of digital corpora using OCR, but more importantly using search keyword searches through a digital format gives historians access to large volumes of relevant sources, and once these have been accessed they can be treated with care and caution the same as any other source type. Chapter 3 of this thesis draws on research from 4,758 newspaper advertisements, and this volume provides ample impetus for historical analysis even accounting for sources which may be missing on account of OCR.

This thesis also draws on texts and images which have been accessed from digital corpora, primarily literary and technical printed texts available through *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. These dovetail with newspaper advertisements as additional sources addressing consumer perceptions of this material and how it was represented. Of these sorts of texts,

[66] Hitchcock, 'Confronting the Digital', p. 18.

Hitchcock remarks that OCR-based searching is more successful, particularly because the texts in question avoid complicated formatting or tables.[67] When these sources do makes references to leather they sometimes do so with a great level of detail, while if these references are more fleeting there are nevertheless many aspects of the text which historians are able to analyse; not limited to author, intent and distribution, historians of text may also closely examine the linguistic devices employed by an author and read these within the context of the work in addition to broader social and cultural contexts.

One issue that arises in studying leather objects is the often mundane nature of these goods, and for that reason objects such as leather drinking vessels were rarely written about. Chapter 6 of this thesis grapples most closely with this problem and presents a material analysis as a suitable counter to absence, but some significance of these goods can also be gleaned from visual representations. For this thesis, this category of sources has been accessed primarily through the *Lewis Walpole Library* and the *British Museum Collections Online.* These corpora do not face the same issues with digital searching based on OCR; these images are more rigorously catalogued, and the data being searched is the digitally-transcribed text of the catalogue record or descriptions. Certainly, there are limitations here too, as the catalogue entries may omit some information. This thesis tries to account for this by using a range of different forms of evidence other than objects. An inclusive framework incorporating multiple source types ultimately means that a check is provided on the limitations of any single type.

Summary

This thesis is about consumer interactions with a specific material in the long eighteenth century. It asks, first, what did leather, both as a material in itself and as a constituent part of a

[67] Ibid, p. 13.

range of goods mean to consumers in this period? Second, it asks how important leather was to the consumption of goods which were made from it? The object types specified above will be assessed using a material culture approach that draws upon multiple source types. This thesis makes arguments which relate to specific leather objects within eighteenth-century English consumption: some newer and more fashionable goods which emerged in the expanding marketplace of the consumer revolution, others the pre-existing and more traditional objects which contemporary forms of knowledge were being turned towards. One more general finding of this thesis is that the multiplicity of meanings held within leather were also present in texts and representations, which in turn provoked specific reactions from consumers in how they used or behaved with leather goods. While this suggests on the one hand that the meaning consumers found in a specific material was relevant in this period because it influenced their purchasing choices, on the other hand evidence of the consumption of these goods suggests that this knowledge was retained and acted upon within a use setting. The findings and arguments of the remaining chapters are summarized below.

Chapter 2: Frameworks and Methodologies

The next chapter in this thesis sets out the key approaches and historical contexts for this work and states its methodological interventions in the field of material culture. Responding primarily to historians of the 'material turn', this chapter will discuss consumption studies, material culture and materiality, before concentrating most closely on the genre where this study of leather belongs: single material studies. Because this chapter defines what forms a material culture approach more broadly may take, as well as explaining the specific approach of this thesis, this chapter will also expand upon how the other supplementary sources specified above are used in relation to objects throughout this thesis.

Chapter 3: The Language of Leather

The third chapter of this thesis does not use objects, but draws on two bodies of sources to address both the linguistic contexts for leather objects and the structures imposed on knowledge about leather by authors from the perspectives of production and retail. The first section uses production treatises to outline the tanning process, dating from the late seventeenth century through to the early 1790s. Within these sources, the chapter isolates the three broad categories of innovation in tanning in the early modern period – botanical, technological and chemical – and suggests ways in which the language of tanning served a dual function to simultaneously communicate eighteenth-century concerns: investigative and introspective learning and the way in which objects were representative of regional and national identities. It also provides material definitions for the three terms 'hide', 'skin' and 'leather', showing how each had its own meaning that was revised across the different steps of the tanning process. Set in contrast to the language community of production, the chapter then compares the use of leather-related terminology in production to retail, explored through a sample of newspaper advertisements. This section highlights a neat binary between the two language communities of 'production' and 'retail'. Although on the one hand, advertisements indicate consumer awareness of the nature of production, on the other hand there is a neat division between the technical use of terms in relation to production, and the malleability of terms when used as part of consumer strategies to generate the conditions of desire in retail.

Chapter 4: Saddles

The fourth chapter builds on the first by narrowing in on the concept of 'skin' – particularly as it relates to an object most frequently identified with this term: saddles. It first explores the object type of saddles and describes some of the changes in their form and structure which occurred across the early modern period. Finding a surprisingly limited range of saddles from this period available in public collections, it turns to a wider textual analysis, building upon the newspapers used in chapter 1 into technical and literary printed texts. This chapter follows the life cycle of saddles in the eighteenth century from their production, design and sale through consumption. Through a material analysis of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century saddles and a treatment of farriery texts which discuss the process of breaking, saddling and mounting horses, in addition to literary contexts which demonstrate the horse-rider relationship, the chapter argues that a conceptualization of leather as skin was used by consumers to meaningfully engage in a relationship of synchronicity with their horses. The skin-like nature of these goods was materially evident and culturally important. This chapter uses objects from the V&A, National Leather Collection, and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Chapter 5: Chairs

The fifth chapter addresses leather-upholstered chairs, based on a sample of four sets of dining chairs drawn from the Geffrye Museum of the Home, the V&A, Rufford Old Hall in Lancashire (National Trust) and Bradley Manor in Devon (National Trust). Because chapter 3 includes evidence both of leather generally and leather-upholstered chairs specifically in the context of retail, or other forms of sale, this chapter draws primarily on these objects through the significant proportion of probate inventories. Working from the objects out, this chapter argues that the most important application of leather in these cases was to achieve visual embellishments. The importance of leather as expressed through the object study of chairs was to provide some essential physical properties, not to provoke any particular form of bodily tactile engagement. Instead, consumers responded to the optic potentials of the material. This did not distinguish the significance of leather from other forms of upholstery material – and it is as important to highlight where leather was similar to other materials as where it is different – other than the unique decorative forms of embellishment leather enabled.

Chapter 6: Drinking Vessels

The final chapter of the thesis is an object study of bottles, tankards, jugs and black jacks, drawing on the collections of the National Leather Collection. All of these broadly fall under the category of drinking vessels, and therefore link the questions of this thesis to the wider themes of dining and consuming comestibles. In contrast to chapter 4, arguing that awareness of the skin-culture of saddles enabled consumers to forge more meaningful relationships with animals, and chapter 5, arguing that materials bolstered the use of objects in visual strategies of household aesthetics, chapter 6 argues that awareness of materials enabled consumers to make meaningful and deliberate statements of ownership, and personalisation within an object type that has traditionally be seen as more rudimentary and basic. Indeed, one challenge that this chapter has faced is contending with the relative paucity of these objects in traditional representational sources, set against their abundance in the material record of object collections and museums. Paying close attention to these objects and how they were constructed further shows how material analysis of an aggregate material source base can make meaningful statements about an object despite the lack of surrounding evidence. One way that these drinking vessels have been read in this chapter, for example, has been as a set of physically corresponding pieces of evidence. Alone they reveal little about production, but *en masse* their physical form suggests a set standard to which producers conformed, despite previous arguments for a disparate and scattered industry.

Conclusions

These chapters draw on different fields – and this in part results from the pervasive nature of a material subject matter as discussed above. Chapter 3 draws upon discourses about industry, production and sale, chapter 4 to a particular human-animal relationship, chapter 5 to the history of furniture and chapter 6 to drink culture. Each of these chapters makes smaller contributions to these respective fields. Chapter 3, for example, finds a preoccupation on the part of those writing treatises about production with the national roots of different methods. Chapter 4 raises questions about the extent to which the horse-rider relationship was dictated by companionship, rather than subjugation, and chapter 5 suggests revisiting traditional, antiquarian forms of furniture history with a renewed scope. Chapter 6 suggests that drinks and the objects used to consume them cannot be easily socially classified.

Although this single-material study demonstrates how one material played some role in various settings, the broader purpose of this thesis is to consider the interactions between consumers, materials and objects in the long-eighteenth century, and this has an impact on how further studies of consumption and material culture should be framed. This thesis argues that materials and objects were mutually constitutive of one another. The cultural – and, indeed, material – associations of leather were important to the consumption of objects made from it, and the cultures and functions of objects in turn served to shape consumer expectations of their constituent materials.

This thesis argues that materials had meaning and that this meaning was created across the full life cycle of a material: from production to consumption, and subsequent consumption through a range of object types. Although examining the same material through different objects types might be expected to show what was shared and common in its multiple applications, this thesis finds that that was not the case for eighteenth-century leather objects in Britain. Accordingly, this thesis finds a reinforcing loop between object types and materials and argues that materials meant different things to consumers depending on the object type of which it was a part. This is important for consumption because it suggests that object types in the context of eighteenth-century consumption need to be consider in interaction with materials, and provokes questions about how contemporary material culture should be conceived. Equally, materials contained a range of potential meanings which were unearthed to different extents in the range of objects they were used to create. This reinforcing loop suggests that the objects possessed and experienced by consumers sat at the centre of a complex equation involving object types, materials, and cultural context.

Chapter 2 - Frameworks and Methodologies

The purpose of this chapter is to define the historical and analytical frameworks which contextualize this thesis, set out its specific approach and define its methodological contribution. This chapter will situate this thesis within three broad fields: eighteenth-century material culture, consumption, and single-material studies. Subsequently, this chapter will elaborate on the specific approach this thesis takes to the sources identified in chapter 1, including objects and the gamut of sources in which they found representation. This chapter will show how leather is an important addition to the limited but buoyant field of single-material studies, identify the value of object studies within broader single-material studies, and demonstrate how a 'material' approach – or, what might be called the culture of materials – responds to acknowledged problems in broader consumption history, such as issues of scale and materiality.

Material Culture

'Material culture' is a broad-stroke term which characterizes the use of objects by historians and others to ask questions about cultures, attitudes and behaviour in a range of historical periods. As such a distinctively 'material' culture is one part of what 'culture' more broadly comprises. This section summarizes the relevant dominant trends in material culture research and discusses the different methodologies historians have used, developed and refined in order to outline the approach to objects, and the other sources used to contextualize them, which will be adopted in this thesis. The purpose is to contextualize this thesis methodologically, as well as to inform the analysis of sources – the objects themselves, alongside other source types – in the chapters that follow.

A number of historians, archaeologists and ethnographers have identified material culture as an ‘approach’, and the earliest of these form part of what has become commonly identified as a ‘material turn’ in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1991, Thomas Schlereth praised the ‘eclectic enterprise of those who see artefacts as significant cultural data’, while his contemporary Jules David Prown argued that material culture is a ‘means rather than an end’ and a ‘study […] based upon the obvious fact that the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presence of a human intelligence operating at the time of fabrication’.[68] Recently, Adrienne D. Hood has corresponded to this view, arguing that material culture is ‘an interdisciplinary mode of enquiry’ based on the premise that ‘a systematic and detailed consideration of the chosen thing(s) leads to a series of questions that would not arise in any other way’.[69]

Most recently, Karen Harvey has coalesced a range of different descriptions of material culture as an approach; starting with Bernard Herman’s distinction between studies which are ‘object-centred’ and ‘object-driven’, Harvey moves to Henry Glassie’s emphasis on the ‘wordless experience’ and William David Kingery’s insistence that objects possess a grammar which means they need to be read like poetry and myths, rather than straightforwardly as texts.[70] Harvey makes two key points about material culture studies: first, that a ‘basic’ definition of material culture as objects ‘belies […] the role that materiality more broadly has played in the past’ and secondly that material culture as a method enables historians to balance ‘the physical facts of things’ with the contexts in which they are consumed.[71] As a distinctive ‘method’,

[68] T. Schlereth, ‘Material Culture or Material Life? Discipline or Field? Theory or Method?’ in G.L. Pocius (ed.), *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture,* (St. John’s, Newfoundland, 1991), p. 231; J. David Prown, ‘Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method’, *Winterthur Portfolio* 17.1 (Spring, 1982), p. 1.
[69] A. D. Hood, ‘Material Culture: the object’ in S. Barber and C. M. Peniston-Bird (eds) *History Beyond the Text,* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 177-178.
[70] K. Harvey, ‘Introduction: historians, material culture and materiality’ in K. Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture*, (2nd edition, Oxford, 2018), pp. 2-5.
[71] Ibid, p. 1 and 15.

therefore, material culture uses objects to investigate broader histories about the people and communities who produced, used and consumed them.

The 'material turn' of the 1980s and 1990s – in which objects became legitimate, academic historical data – relied on rationales and techniques which first gained traction in ethnography and anthropology; these were methods used at first to examine differences between the material experiences of cultures present, which in turn found historical applications.[72] One contemporary of the 'material turn', Thomas Schlereth, summarised in 1991 what he saw as three key approaches to understanding the meaning of objects: Edward McClung Fleming's model (1974) followed the steps of identification, evaluation, cultural analysis and interpretation, Jules David Prown's (1982) stages of description, deduction and speculation, and Robert Elliott's (1986) material, construction, function, provenance and value.[73] These models effectively provide guides to examining objects, itemizing the steps historians may take or the different dimensions of objects which may be examined.

Prown's model needs expanding upon to be correctly understood because these terms – 'description', 'deduction' and 'speculation' – have specific meanings in this context. 'Description', here, considers the object a form of 'internal evidence' and asks the researcher 'what can be observed in the object itself', while 'deduction' requires the researcher to use synchronic forms of sensory and intellectual engagement, as well as emotional response, to think more deeply about the relationship between the object at hand and actors in the past.[74] 'Speculation' must be educated. It asks the researcher to generate hypotheses about the object

[72] G.L. Pocius, 'Introduction' in G.L. Pocius (ed.) *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture*, (Newfoundland, 1991)
[73] Schlereth, 'Material Culture or Material Life', p. 237.
[74] Ibid, pp. 9-10; Prown, 'Mind in Matter', pp. 7-9.

based on its 'internal evidence', and then turn to 'external evidence' – other contemporary sources – to validate them.[75] Prown therefore places significant emphasis on the power of description, and this has endured into more modern practice. Tara Hamling has recently used the example of a wooden bowl to define one method: description, contextualization, interpretation – though also stating that 'it is more likely that contextualization and interpretation are embedded within and throughout the describing process'.[76]

An enhanced level of description applied to objects was one technique of born of the 'material turn', and to some extent of traditional archaeology, to which historians have continued to be attentive. The same can be said of sociological models of object analysis, particularly the 'life cycle' approach to objects which originated in the 1980s in essays by Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff.[77] This thesis relies to some extent on Appadurai and Kopytoff's approaches because these models – when taken together – are applicable to a range of object types and provide strategies for accommodating the inconsistency of 'external evidence'. This approach is particularly relevant, therefore, when working with smaller or more mundane objects that do not leave as significant a trace in historical records.

To summarise Appadurai's position, the 'social life of things' considers the process through which objects transition from 'commodity candidacy' to 'commodity situation', where the latter is defined as 'the situation in which [an object's] exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature'.[78] Appadurai also argues that within this

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[75] Prown, 'Mind in Matter', p. 10.
[76] T. Hamling, 'Visual and material sources', in L. Sangha and J. Willis (eds), *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources,* (Oxford, 2016), p. 139.
[77] A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value'; I. Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process' in A. Appadurai (ed.) *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, (Cambridge, 1986).
[78] Appadurai, 'Introduction', p. 13.

'situation' the value which commodities accrue through exchange is governed by 'politics'.[79] 'Politics', here, is broadly defined, and relates to a swathe of human behaviours when participating in commodity exchange: gifting, reputation, value and performance.[80] What this 'life cycle' approach achieves therefore is a framework which unifies the different states of an object and the transitions between them. Appadurai's 'social life of things' concept is one important foundation for the methodology of this thesis. First, because this thesis addresses the significance of a material both as an isolated entity and as constituent to objects, a life cycle approach is useful in bringing coherence to two distinct histories: leather itself which exists both as a commodity and as a material to be processed and used, and the objects it would become. More practically, a life cycle approach can impose order on object case studies by sorting 'external evidence' into categories which reflect discrete stages of object consumption. The chapters that follow – if not in a linear fashion – therefore consider objects at the stages of production, retail and consumption, and through the exchanges which occurred between each stage which enabled objects to move between different contexts.

Secondly, Appadurai's approach to 'things' provokes questions about how to define the human participants in this 'social life' – those complicit in 'exchanges' and 'politics' as Appadurai defines them. In one classical act of definition, Appadurai's contemporary Raymond Williams identified in the eighteenth century 'the new predominance of an organized market, [in which] the acts of making and using goods and services were newly defined in the increasingly abstract pairings of producer and consumer'.[81] Appadurai is less specific about who the humans are within this process, other than as the enactors of exchanges and behaviours. This is not necessarily a weakness of the 'social life of things', which as an approach demonstrates the

[79] Ibid, p. 3.
[80] Ibid, p. 20.
[81] R. Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society,* (London, 1976), p. 78.

complexity and activity of objects. However, as this thesis is specifically about materials rather than 'things', the questions asked here represent a departure from Appadurai's model and an opportunity to refine terms. Materials, in comparison to objects, are consumed through a broader range of acts. Those consuming finished objects, as per Appadurai's analysis, were also consuming materials. However, there is an imprecise overlap in the consumers of a material between those consuming finished goods and those consuming the material in other ways: as a raw material used either to make, repair or maintain objects, and as a cultural phenomenon. This second category would include producers, sellers and distributors, therefore refusing the straightforward dichotomy between producers and consumers set out by Williams.

Resulting from the comparable breadth of settings in which materials may have been consumed, 'consumption' is interpreted broadly in this thesis and accordingly 'consumer' is used to refer to all those involved in acts of leather consumption, or those performing 'consuming acts'.[82] By not providing too stringent a definition of 'consumer', this thesis maintains the centrality of the consumer-material relationship in the analysis of objects and permits range in the objects and external evidence consulted. To prevent eliding the differences between types of consumers, the scope of different sources will be discussed at relative points throughout the chapters to follow.

Kopytoff, in comparison to Appadurai, used the term 'cultural biography' to describe the ability of objects to function as 'commodities' which had 'use' and 'exchange' value, and to be seen as such by some individuals and not others. This thesis does not use Kopytoff's precise definition of 'commodity', but it does recognise that the cultural meaning of an object or set of

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[82] S. Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 42.2, (June, 1999).

objects was dependent on particular contexts or spaces. Appadurai regards this a 'processual' view, and the key point of difference between the two essays is Kopytoff's insistence that the commodity phase of objects is 'also a cognitive and cultural process'.[83] The importance of Kopytoff's attention to culture is to recognise that the commodity phase of an object is as dependent on its position within a cultural framework as much as a set of economic relations. The key message of both essays for cultural historians, however, has been to consider the malleable nature of objects. 'The flow of commodities', as Appadurai sought to argue, 'in any given situation is a shifting compromise between socially regulated paths and competitively inspired diversions'.[84] Objects had the capacity to shift between different states of value and cultural meaning as they were mobile and moved between different contexts.

The most recent intervention in this area has been from Karin Dannehl, who also usefully characterizes the two models and differences between them. Dannehl uses the example of eighteenth-century metalware cooking pots to investigate the methodological opportunities offered to historians by adopting a hybrid approach between biographies and life cycles.[85] For Dannehl, the object biography approach – 'the notion of a story that traces an evolutionary development [and] takes the shape of a story in an organized and structured fashion' – is characterized by identifying the exceptional qualities of particular objects.[86] By contrast, life cycles impose standardized models of birth, growth, maturity, decline and demise on a range of objects and identify what is generic or uniform between them.[87] Dannehl identifies a shared quality between the two concepts – each acknowledge the organic nature, or 'idiosyncratic

[83] Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things', p. 64; Appadurai, 'Introduction', p. 17.
[84] Appadurai, 'Introduction', p. 17.
[85] K. Dannehl, 'Object biographies: From production to consumption' in K. Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture*, (2nd edn, London, 2018), pp. 181-182.
[86] Ibid, p. 172.
[87] Ibid, pp. 171-172.

trajectories', of objects and their ability to embrace shifts in context.[88] Such shifts were 'at least in part the result of human beings' changing relationship with objects over time'.[89] Dannehl ultimately argues that taking the two concepts in hand enables each to compensate for the inherent absences left by the other. Life cycles offer structure to the exceptional biographies of particular objects, while biographies offer specificities to otherwise brushstroke cycles.[90] This thesis positions object studies between the 'exceptional' and the 'mundane' in the same way as does Dannehl.

This thesis recognises both generic 'life cycle' structures which different object types fell into and the particularities of specific objects which resulted from their individual biographies. This thesis also uses representations of objects in a range of source types – particularly drawing on retail advertisements and literature – to understand how individual consumption acts related to more generic expectations of object types. This is one example of an occasion in which both a life-cycle and object biography approach have been integrated with a material culture method; this thesis directly examines leather objects both through specific examples of these object types drawn from museum collections and external evidence that substantiates the life cycle of which these objects were a part.

One final major preoccupation for contemporaries of the material turn, and one further potential framework for this study of leather and leather objects is 'materiality', recently augmented by a wave of 'new materialists'.[91] Within this field, the central message of a material culture

[88] Ibid, p. 181.
[89] Ibid, p. 173.
[90] Ibid, p. 182.
[91] Harvey, 'Introduction: Historians, Material Culture and Materiality', p. 9, R.A. Joyce, 'History and Materiality', in R. Scott and S. Kosslyn (eds) *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioural Sciences,* (New York, 2015) p. 1, C. Mukerji, 'The Material Turn', in Scott and Kosslyn (eds), *Emerging Trends,* p. 2.

approach – that objects are historically valuable in accessing the lived experiences of people – are built upon by more theoretical discussions of how the full gamut of material things are, in the round, best defined and posited in relation to humans, their actions, and their environments: challenges levelled at subject-centred autonomy and the 'status of things'.[92] As will be outlined below, elements of this field and the approach of this thesis do dovetail: first, this thesis shares one central tenet of a materiality approach in understanding objects and matter as a primary form of evidence for research; second, this thesis recognizes a relationship between humans, objects and environments; and thirdly, this thesis recognizes that the significance of a given materiality is contingent both on the individuals observing it as well as the context in which it was experienced.

Two scholars keenly associated with this approach are Tim Ingold and Daniel Miller, although this is by no means a small field. For Ingold, a close focus on the properties and qualities of materials is a necessary step in challenging an unhelpful distinction drawn by traditional anthropologists between mind and matter, society and culture.[93] Ingold's argument can be summarised as a more symmetrical view which sees humans, objects and environments as engaged – through their constituent materials – in a constant series of relationships and exchanges.[94] As part of this argument, Ingold draws on Bruno Latour and Alfred Gell to 'envisage a field of materiality in which humans and things are enmeshed in ways that deny the anthropocentric emphasis on the agency of humans and the division between the social and

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[92] F. Trentmann, 'Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices, and Politics', *Journal of British Studies* 48.2 (April, 2009), p. 284, p. 300, and p. 307.
[93] T. Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', in *Archaeological Dialogues* 14.1 (2007), pp. 12-14
[94] See also B. Olsen and C. Witmore, 'Archaeology, symmetry and the ontology of things. A response to critics', *Archaeological Dialogues* 22.2 (December, 2015) pp. 187-188; T.C Lindstrøm, 'Agency 'in itself': A discussion of inanimate, animals and human agency', *Archaeological Dialogues* 22.2 (December, 2015) p. 227; T.F. Sørensen, 'Hammers and nails. A response to Lindstrøm and to Olsen and Witmore', *Archaeological Dialogues* 23.1 (June, 2016) p. 122; A. Ribeiro, 'Against object agency. A counterreaction to Sørensen's 'Hammers and nails'' *Archaeological Dialogues* 23.2 (December, 2016) p. 230.

material world'.[95] Frank Trentmann has developed this view, suggesting that through human action objects or 'things' weave 'their way into material culture and human selfhood through practices that are more than simply the result of subjective decisions or intended meanings'.[96] For Miller, materiality is an important and all-encompassing phenomenon – and one which should be given due attention in social research in a range of disciplines because that very materiality operates in subjective ways, and has important implications for a shared understanding of what the lived experience comprises.[97] Miller presents materiality as an important tool in understanding variety within such a broad category of human experience, how human behaviours correspond to material contexts and how these behaviours may be facilitated or shaped by them.

Ingold and Miller make several more fundamental points concerning this 'materiality'. As Ingold argues, the properties and qualities of materials are an important part of their history – if not constitutive of it – and should be understood as such, rather than simply as blunt physical descriptions: 'to describe the properties of materials is to tell the stories of what happens to them as they flow, mix and mutate'.[98] As will become clear in descriptions of the objects used in this thesis, there is a natural overlap here, as it will be argued that the leather used in these objects did more than make them physically. Moreover, this thesis also recognizes that how objects were perceived – as one not insignificant dimension of materiality – relies to no small extent on their context. What Miller describes as the 'humility of objects', for example, suggests that objects have pre-determined contexts, and by extension therefore that this context is essential in an object being understood.[99] Should a context change, it is logical that so too

95 Harvey, 'Introduction: Historians, Material Culture and Materiality', pp. 6-7.
96 Trentmann, 'Materiality and the Future of History', p. 290.
97 D. Miller, 'Materiality: An Introduction' in D. Miller (ed.), *Materiality,* (Durham, NC, 2005)
98 Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', p. 14.
99 Miller, 'Materiality: An Introduction', pp. 5-6.

should an observer's understanding of the object. Lastly, and related to the above point, these scholars suggest that the functions of objects can change over time and across different contexts – including outside of their original or intended function. This is one aspect of materiality which dovetails with an idea already established within the life cycle approach.

While these points demonstrate the advantages offered to research by working closely with materiality, this basic point does not advance the position already established by historians and archaeologists prior. Furthermore, there are significant weaknesses with these approaches, and for the reasons outlined below this thesis does not use the terms of 'materiality' in the same way. First, one staple critique of Miller's materiality approach, as made by Sophie Chevalier, Rosemary Joyce and Ingold, is that it is vague and relies on an imprecise use of terms.[100] To borrow Chevalier's phrase, it is not clear what 'materiality' is actually being used to mean. Miller defines materiality fairly broadly and seems to use the term to mean any non-living entities which make up the lived environment – though, admittedly, highlighting the slippage between physical and virtual entities in the context of a 'digital turn'. Ingold, meanwhile, borrows from Chris Gosden and is more specific in differentiating between two aspects of materiality: 'artefact' and 'landscape'.[101] This much is problematic because even in Gosden's more specific iteration of what materiality comprises, materiality scholars are led to blur the differences between the numerous aspects of material life; the differences between human experiences of such diverse elements as landscapes, the built environment, commodities, tools and raw materials are obscured. One methodological contribution this thesis makes, which challenges Gosden's classifications as used by Ingold, is that researchers need to use more specific typologies of objects as the focus for historical research.

[100] S. Chevalier, 'What Does "Materiality" Really Mean? (Miller's *Materiality*), *Current Anthropology* 49.1 (February, 2008), pp. 157-158; Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', p. 2; Joyce, 'History and Materiality' p. 4.
[101] Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', p. 3.

Secondly, materiality scholars may be criticised for building this framework more on philosophical principles than on direct engagement with primary data.[102] This is one feature of work in this field which sets a materiality approach apart from traditional historical material culture and social historical approaches, which borrow from archaeological and curatorial techniques in directly handling and assessing objects. Indeed, Glenn Adamson's relatively recent contribution has particularly emphasized the need for historians to return to the tools and terms of decorative art such as ornament, style, and connoisseurship.[103] Accordingly, there is an issue of anachronism because it is not clear on what basis 'materiality' as here defined would be valid or relevant in historical contexts. This thesis, by comparison, is particularly attentive to establishing through discourse and representation the precise contexts in which the materiality with which it engages was experienced. To take Ingold's suggestion that the mind-matter distinction between humans, environments and objects needs to be eroded specifically, it is not clear on what evidence this statement is made which would suggest that this could be a fair representation of how eighteenth-century consumers understood themselves, the objects they consumed, and the environs in which they consumed them.

Thirdly, to some extent these approaches over-privilege objects and undervalue humans, though this may appear a counter-intuitive critique of the existing literature in a thesis which aims to build its conclusions from a careful handling of the objects themselves. Borrowing from Gell, Latour and the field of symmetrical archaeology, the most extreme advocates of 'materiality' suggest that objects can impede as well as facilitate human actions, and these

[102] Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', p. 2.
[103] G. Adamson, 'Design History and the Decorative Arts', in P.N. Miller (ed.), *Cultural Histories of the Material World,* (Ann Arbor, 2013), pp. 34-37; P.N. Miller, 'Introduction: The Culture of the Hand', in Miller, *Cultural Histories of the Material World,* p. 7.

scholars use the concept of 'affordances' to suggest that objects present new and unexpected abilities to humans who use them that are implicit within the object itself and exist outside of the intentions of their craftsmen.[104] While this may fairly reflect that the functions and uses of objects may change over time, this presentation ignores both human initiative and the possibility that different uses of objects may reflect a purely human response to changing need. The example of leather drinking vessels explored in chapter 6, for example, references how objects designed for drinks consumption found alternative uses as storage containers once broken and not fit to drink from. To boil this reassignment of function down to the concept of 'affordances' is successful in keeping materials in the frame, but does not credit the innovation on the part of consumers in identifying a recycling opportunity.[105]

Lastly, a 'materiality' approach as defined by these scholars does not seem either wholly comfortable with integrating objects or materials into the research process, or very forward in explaining how this process should work; this is a problem that is exacerbated by inconsistency within debates over when, or when not, things might be afforded full or partial agency.[106] Ingold advances the importance of materials to social theory – and in a similar vein this thesis asserts the importance of a material approach to historical research – but is not clear how or on what basis to study these materials if not in the context of objects. Studying materials through objects is, indeed, something Ingold appears to be uneasy with when reflecting upon Christopher Tilley's work on stone.[107] Ingold remarks that Tilley 'devotes a great deal of attention to the properties of stone *as material.* He shows how its ''stoniness' […] is not a constant but endlessly variable in relation to light or shade, wetness or dryness and the position,

[104] Joyce, 'History and Materiality', p. 2.
[105] See A. Fennetaux, A. Junqua and S. Vasset (eds) *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (London, 2015).
[106] Trentmann, 'Materiality and the Future of History', p. 288.
[107] Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', p.14.

posture or movement of the observer'.[108] Suggesting that in Tilley's assessment of stone the material is lost to the broader materiality of which it is a part, Ingold is clear that materials are more than the materiality. However, this assessment is ultimately not very practical about how to achieve an understanding of materials on their own terms.

This thesis provides a solution to that same issue. With a historical target in mind, this thesis uses a material culture approach to leather objects in order to address the meaning of leather in this period, and by extension consider ways in which consumers interacted with materials and derived meaning from objects more broadly. In order to address the physical properties of the material in a way that builds upon the established life-cycle and biography approaches discussed above, this thesis aims to unify the production and consumption stage of materials by considering tanning, the making of objects and the consumption of goods. In so doing, the analysis of tanning and the object case studies to follow address both the physical and cultural properties of leather. One context is more closely linked to the physical properties of leather, and how these properties were manipulated by tanners, while the other addresses what David Pye would consider the 'qualities' of leather as appreciated by consumers through object consumption.[109] One central methodological contribution which this thesis will make which is that studying materials through objects is essential to appreciate certain meanings which are contained within those materials, as the object context and associated acts of consumption was where meaning was played out.

[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid, p. 13.

Consumption

One key application of a material culture approach has been towards understanding historical practices of consumption. This thesis addresses the consumption of leather objects in England in the long eighteenth century, and therefore an additional context or framework for this study is a period which has traditionally been described by historians as experiencing a 'consumer revolution', characterized by considerable change in the relationship between people and objects. Accordingly, by placing this investigation of leather in this period this thesis can investigate the material from a number of different contexts; making, shopping and consuming to name but three. In perhaps the classical – but by no means uncontested – apotheosis of change, Neil McKendrick described how 'objects which for centuries had been the privileged possessions of the rich came, within the space of a few generations, to be within the reach of a larger part of society than ever before, and, for the first time, to be within the legitimate aspirations of almost all of it'.[110] McKendrick goes on to emphasize increasing avenues through which consumers across the country could access information about new and fashionable goods, and the increasing availability of commercial outlets in which they could purchase them.[111] These changes, McKendrick argues, also 'encompassed major political, intellectual and social adjustments as well as the more obvious economic realignments', facilitating what Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger termed 'the impetus to domestic economic development'.[112]

This 'consumer revolution' is episodic in a much more *longue durée* history of consumption. In 1999 Sara Pennell pointed to the resultant explosion of consumption studies following McKendrick et al – many of which moved in broader and more 'chameleon' directions than

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[110] N. McKendrick, 'Introduction: The Birth of a Consumer Society, The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England' in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J.H. Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England,* (Bloomington, 1982), p. 1.
[111] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[112] M. Berg and E. Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', in M. Berg and E. Eger (eds) *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods,* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 12.

their antecedents. Pennell made two historiographical points: first the need for historians to differentiate between more general 'consumption' practices and individual 'consuming' acts, and secondly the need to forge research that sits between quantitative and qualitative approaches. [113] Accordingly, Pennell described consumption as both an 'economic phenomenon' and a 'socio-cultural event', and latterly as a 'historical phenomenon involved in the creation and sustenance of cultures of (early) modernity'.[114] More recently Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery have described 'consumption' as 'one of the key metanarratives of historical enquiry' and 'the dominant explanatory framework for social, cultural, and economic transformation'.[115] Ultimately, a broad definition of consumption would include the routes through which materials and objects were made accessible to consumers, and the behaviours through which consumers made use of, or otherwise assimilated such objects within their day-to-day experiences. Such a definition is necessarily as broad as the behaviour it describes, encompassing aggregate studies of mass consumption of commodities on the one hand, set against the more intimate and individual use of objects on the other.[116] Because this thesis uses objects in order to address questions relating to the meaning and significance of materials, the branch of consumption it relates to can be expressed as the acquisition, possession and use of objects by people.

As Pennell suggested in 1999, but is as true twenty years later, consumption studies have moved in a number of ways. The section to follow will summarise some different approaches previously taken to eighteenth-century consumption, and then devote specific attention to

[113] S. Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 42.2 (June, 1999), pp. 550-552.
[114] S. Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should the small things still be forgotten? Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale', in Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture,* p. 224.
[115] Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism', p. 552, J. Stobart and M. Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, (Oxford, 2016), p. 7.
[116] Pennell, 'Mundane materiality', p. 224.

single material studies. Two significant directions in which historiographical attention has taken consumption studies are; first, to explore the idea of change at a range of scales, and second, to consider the specificity of consumption practices. On the one hand, change within the period can be considered more practical: the layout and volume of retail advertisements, increasing disposable income held by a range of consumers and the rising dominance of polite shopping.[117] On this last point, Helen Berry and Stobart have unpicked the amorphous 'flow of goods' to identify some of the changing 'social interactions (in addition to the economic means and processes) which were required to procure them', themselves constituting new 'repeated and routinized practices' showing that 'how and where goods were acquired can be just as important as what was being bought'.[118] On the other hand, these changes can be connected to intellectual aspects of consumption: the increasing presence of consumer knowledge of objects, the skill involved in buying and consuming goods, standards in luxury and taste.[119] It is here that Kate Smith and Serena Dyer have inflected histories of shopping by identifying 'material literacy': the 'application of haptic skills – understood as perception based on touch and grasp – by shoppers' to navigate the shop, interact and assess the objects laid out for sale both to inform their own understandings of new forms of material culture, confront issues of design and quality and perform politeness.[120]

[117] H. Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002), p. 377; K. Smith, 'In Her Hands: Materializing Distinction in Georgian Britain', *Cultural and Social History* 11.4 (2014); K. Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship: The Haptic Skills of Shoppers in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History* 25.1 (2012); S. Dyer, 'Shopping and the Senses: Retail, Browsing and Consumption in 18th-Century England', *History Compass* 12.9 (2014), p. 698;
[118] Berry, 'Polite Consumption', pp. 376-377; J. Stobart, *Sugar and Spice: Growers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650-1830,* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 3-11.
[119] K. Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands: Perceiving Production in England, 1700-1830,* (Manchester, 2014); J. Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London', *Past & Present* 168.1 (2000); G. Riello, 'Asian Knowledge and the development of Calico Printing in Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of Global History* 5.1 (2010); N. Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660-1720,* (Woodbridge, 2006); M. Berg and E. Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods,* (Basingstoke, 2003); G. Riello, *A Foot in the Past: Consumers, Producers and Footwear in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (Oxford, 2006).
[120] Smith, 'Sensing Design and Workmanship', p. 3, pp. 7-8; S. Dyer, 'Barbara Johnson's Album: Material Literacy and Consumer Practice, 1764-1823', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42.3 (2019), p. 273.

One dominant narrative of change has been the concurrent increasing availability and widening range of objects. For historians such as Ian Mitchell, 'objects not only provide important clues to how societies and individuals understand themselves but also help shape their behaviour […] The period […] saw a very considerable increase in the number and variety of objects available, particularly to consumers of at least middling wealth and status'.[121]

Meanwhile, Clive Edwards remarked that 'changing lifestyles that were based […] partly on the greater acquisition of possessions […] became a major feature of the century' and Cary Carson that objects became almost unavoidable tools used by consumers to assign measures of esteem to other individuals.[122] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace argued that 'a greater variety of commodities was now seen in an enhanced setting, as modern strategies for display and advertising took hold' and Berg that the eighteenth century was a 'defining moment for consumerism in the West', as new British products emerged and were associated with enlightenment, economic improvement, identity and global consumption.[123]

Although Lorna Weatherill has demonstrated through probate inventories that some object types – such as tables and books – continued to be consumed to similar extents between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the existing historiography of consumption generally

'Material literacy' continues to grow as a subfield, see also C. Wigston-Smith and S. Dyer (eds), *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers,* (Forthcoming, London, 2020).

[121] I. Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing, 1700 to 1850: Narratives of Consumption,* (Farnham, 2014), p. 8.

[122] C. Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings,* (Farnham, 2005), pp. 77-78; C. Carson, 'The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?', in C. Carson, R. Hoffman, and P. J. Albert, *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century,* (Charlottesville, 1994), p. 656.

[123] E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century,* (New York, 1997), p. 6; M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain,* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 6-9.

privileges change over continuity.[124] This thesis does not deny the importance of new and emerging commodities in the eighteenth century. Indeed, Weatherill also demonstrates the influx of new goods into homes, such as clocks, pictures and window curtains. However, a lot of leather objects display very little transformation.[125] The object studies in this thesis demonstrate how changes within consumption practices operated on a scale of moderate to dramatic. Pre-existing and traditional object types, such as the leather goods examined in this thesis, experienced either continuity or comparably moderate change, while novel and innovative objects which resulted from more marked change were not the whole story. This is not to suggest that leather objects were stagnant either, as their appearance and form changed within the boundaries of traditional object types. This focus on more traditional object types within the broader history of consumption is useful, however, because it demonstrates the ways in which significant meaning was derived from pre-existing object types amidst increasing change, and reflects the realities of object ownership for consumers. Even with increased availability of objects, newly-acquired possessions needed to be assimilated alongside what was already owned.

Historians of consumption have also focused on objects to make statements of difference or particularity: how differences in consumption practices responded to historical categories of analysis such as gender, rank and space. For Amanda Vickery, 'a genuine effort to explore women's relationship with the world of goods must move beyond the moment of purchase – a mere snapshot in the life of a commodity'.[126] While historians subsequently have expanded

[124] L. Weatherill, 'The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods,* (London, 1994), pp. 206-227.
[125] Ibid.
[126] A. Vickery, *The Gentlemen's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England,* (New Haven, 1998), p. 183. See also A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England,* (New Haven, 2009); J. Styles and A. Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and north America, 1700-1830,* (New Haven, 2007).

upon this moment of purchase, how women and men experienced consumption differently has been explored in a number of studies.[127] Historians such as Ariane Fennetaux and Harvey have used the consumption of particular objects in the eighteenth century to understand gender-specific concerns and behaviours. For Fennetaux, 'if pockets were indispensable accessories of the domesticated woman, their appearance was also emblematic of women's increasing mobility and emancipation from the confines of the domestic interior'.[128] Meanwhile, Harvey uses a study of punch pots and their use in a domestic context in the eighteenth century to identify how the consumption of objects was important in 'transforming both male traditions of homosociability and the tenor of domesticity'.[129]

Studies of the consumption of specific objects such as these represent one level of scale, but another is represented by studies devoted to gender with both wider geographic and chronological scope. For Weatherill, studying the consumption patterns of women in the period 1660-1740, patterns of ownership and attitudes to material goods were a metric through which differences between men and women in the home can be understood, even if these differences were not well documented.[130] Following the work of Weatherill, Vickery, Kowaleski-Wallace and Beverly Lemire among others, Margot Finn used the diaries of four shopkeepers, drawn from Sussex, Norfolk, Somerset and East Yorkshire, to demonstrate that masculine

[127] H. Greig, J. Hamlett and L. Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600,* (Basingstoke, 2015).
[128] A. Fennetaux, 'Women's pockets and the construction of privacy in the long eighteenth century', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 20.3 (2008), p. 333; A. Fennetaux, 'Sentimental Economic: Recycling Textiles in Eighteenth-Century Britain' in A. Fennetaux, A. Junqua and S. Vasset (eds), *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (London, 2015).
[129] K. Harvey, 'Barbarity in a Teacup? Punch, Domesticity and Gender in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Design history* 21.3, (Autumn, 2008), p. 204. See also K. Harvey, 'Ritual encounters: punch parties and masculinity in the eighteenth century', *Past and Present* 214 (2012), pp. 165-203; K. Harvey, 'Craftsmen in Common: Skills, Objects and Masculinity in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in Greig, Hamlett and Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain,* pp. 68-89.
[130] L. Weatherill, 'A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behavior in England, 1660-1740', *Journal of British Studies* 25.2 (April, 1986), pp. 154-156; H. Berry, 'Women, consumption and taste' in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds) *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850* (London, 2005).

consumption – here situated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – was as characterised by a desire for acquisition as feminine consumption.[131]

Histories of consumption have also been used to differentiate between rank-based or regional identities, and demarcate the specific lived-experiences of particular spaces. Historians such as Stobart and Rothery have demonstrated what may be learned of elite material culture through the country house, and this intersects with sustained focus on objects taken to characterise 'luxury' consumption; this was a category of goods which varied over time and were relative to the consumers in question, but which was the taken to denote fashion or desire.[132] Berg and Eger frame the value of studying luxury forms of consumption as practices which had an impact on many different aspects of a consumer society: as stimulating innovation in production, marketing and commercial institutions, as creating indigenous European goods from Asian exports, as coinciding with new forms of civility both at an upper and more middling level and as functioning in a range of spaces such as coffee houses, shops, pleasure gardens, assemblies and theatres.[133] Set in contrast, John Styles has affirmed the significance of changes in consumption practice to those occupying lower social ranks, as well as the middling and higher sort, and this has been mirrored both in Pennell's concentration on the unique material culture of kitchens as 'backstage' spaces, and Anthony Buxton's use of various source types to address the material living conditions of the non-elite home in a case study of Thame, Oxfordshire.[134]

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[131] M. Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution', *Social History* 25.2 (2000), pp. 134-136; B. Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800,* (Oxford, 1991); B. Lemire, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke, 1997).
[132] J. Stobart, 'Luxury and Country House Sales in England, c.1760-1830', in A. Fennetaux, A. Junqua and S. Vasset (eds), *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (New York, 2015), p. 25; Stobart and Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House,* p. 72; L. Fontaine, 'The Circulation of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris: Social Redistribution and an Alternative Currency', in Berg and Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century,* p. 89.
[133] Berg and Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of Luxury Debates', p. 7.
[134] J. Styles, 'Custom or Consumption? Plebeian Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England', in Berg and Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century,* p. 103; J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-*

There are a number of studies of the consumption of objects that define given spaces, but one further application of consumption has been to augment a historical understanding of geographically-defined identities, such as in the work of Berry that posits 'a challenge to stereotypes regarding the contribution made by particular regions and communities to national life'.[135] Here, Berry's attention to fine glassware produced and consumed in the north-east refuses the characterization of this region as insignificant in wider histories of eighteenth-century material culture.[136]

Single Material Studies

As indicative both of culture more broadly and of transformations in consumption practice, therefore, the existing historiography reflects the important historical role objects have to play. For this thesis attention to objects is also central, but asks questions of them from the perspective of their constituent materials: a site where consumption and material culture overlap. For that reason, the field with which this thesis most directly engages is the genre of single-material studies. In some ways, the work summarised below answers the call made by Ingold from the perspective of materiality to focus closely on materials. However, there is an important difference here as a single-material studies approach moves away from 'materiality' as used by anthropological, sociological and geographical scholars by addressing only one specific aspect of the material 'landscape'. The 'materiality' considered by single-materials scholars is really about understanding the physical qualities of an object which were derived

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Century England, (New Haven, 2008); S. Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1600-1850,* (London, 2016), especially chapter 5; Pennell, 'Mundane Materiality', pp. 221-224; A. Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England,* (Suffolk, 2015).

135 H. Berry, 'Regional identity and material culture', in Harvey, *History and Material Culture,* p. 201; H. Berry and J. Gregory 'Introduction' in H. Berry and J. Gregory (eds), *Creating and Consuming Culture in North-East England, 1660-1830,* (Aldershot, 2004). See also H. Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London,* (Oxford, 2013); H. Greig, '"All together and all distinct": public sociability and social exclusivity in London's pleasure gardens c.1740-1800', *Journal of British Studies* 51.1 (2012); H. Greig and G. Riello, 'Eighteenth-Century Interiors: Redesigning the Georgian', *Journal of Design History* 20.4 (2007); M. Finn and K. Smith (eds) *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857,* (London, 2018);

136 Harvey, 'Introduction: Historians, Material Culture and Materiality', p. 12.

from the material from which an object was made. Furthermore, a historical single-material studies approach is essentially based on the physical facets of things, and therefore does not face the same issues as materiality scholars in establishing precise definitions of 'materiality'.

Although the model of a single-material study is not a new one, there are relatively few materials that have received attention from academic historians and relatively few recent academic publications. Most recently, Zara Anishanslin has situated the development of eighteenth-century transatlantic communities of taste through the life cycle of silk; Anishanslin seeks to unify production and consumption, and as such begins with silkworms, before addressing the manufacture and design of silk as a textile, its consumption and, finally, its representation.[137] Prior, Luca Mola's *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (2000) covered the manufacture of this material in depth and demonstrated the potential scope for a single-material study in terms of the social breadth of individuals connected across production, trade and consumption.[138] The other most recent studies which take a material as their primary focus include Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi's work on cotton and Alice Dolan's PhD thesis on linen.[139] Beyond textiles, Sarah Richards discusses eighteenth-century ceramics on a similar material basis, although primarily concerned with the consumption and meaning-making of the objects as detached from their manufacture.[140]

The work of these historians suggests that a single-material studies approach is a useful framework for the issues at hand in this thesis: the meaning of materials to consumers, and the

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[137] Z. Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World*, (New Haven, 2016), p. 1, pp. 17-19.
[138] L. Mola, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice*, (Baltimore, 2000).
[139] G. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World*, (Cambridge, 2013); G. Riello and P. Parthasarathi (eds), *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, (Oxford, 2009); A. Dolan, 'The Fabric of Life: Linen and Life Cycle in England, 1678-1810', (PhD Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2015).
[140] S. Richards, *Eighteenth-century ceramics: Products for a civilised society*, (Manchester, 1999).

significance of materials within object consumption. These historians acknowledge the importance of materials and illustrate the ways in which the fortunes of individual materials had an impact upon the experience of consumers. Furthermore, single-material studies are particularly effective in tying together aspects of production with consumption by providing a common thread that runs between them. This has historiographical value in showing how production was relevant to choices made by consumers, but also has practical advantages in giving coherence to these studies.

Richards' study of ceramics is a useful starting point. Richards notes how the specific qualities of individual materials – here ceramic – created unique possibilities and challenges for those who produced them, and actively makes a distinction between the material 'value' and 'qualities' of an object set against their culture.[141] Despite this, Richards also argues that it was the visual appearance of objects which created a sense of shared material culture among eighteenth-century consumers.[142] This is important because even though Richards establishes the importance of the materials used to make goods, when considering consumption these same materials are foregrounded by both the form and appearance of the objects; the appearance, and not the material, is the most constitutive element of the material culture of ceramics. Under Richards' analysis, material culture resulted from objects, rather than being – at least in part – constitutive of them. One way this thesis will build on this idea is by demonstrating that material culture was also drawn from specific materials.

In comparison to Richards, Anishanslin presents a more inclusive view of material culture: one in which objects are central, but were connected to and existed alongside a range of documents,

[141] Ibid. pp. 56-69.
[142] Ibid. p. 177.

representations and other sources which relate to the ways in which consumers used objects to express their identity in a 'material and visual world'.[143] Anishanslin's approach to material culture implores historians to think broadly about connections and networks across different spaces, chronologies and traditional conceptual boundaries – production through to consumption.[144] Dolan, by the same token, suggests that through the ubiquity of certain materials – here, linen – single-material studies can speak to many aspects of life, but more importantly argues that this kind of research can usefully combine multiple approaches taken to historical periods.[145]

Lastly, historians of single-material studies generally suggest that a focus on particular materials serves to add depth to established periods of study. The added value differs on a case-by-case basis, however. For Harvey Green (2006) attention to materials generates new perspectives on established historical periods. Green uses a simplified life-cycle approach to characterize the key features of wood; having established the basic physical qualities of the material itself, Green moves through harvesting, working, its manufactures, decoration and finally undertakes object studies.[146] Green demonstrates that a single-material study is beneficial because materials are constituent to a range of different object types and are therefore present in a range of contexts, and because materials add depth to such historical behemoths.

A case study of leather is an important addition to single-material studies. Firstly, focusing on leather shows what was shared – or not – between different consumers who consumed different objects made of the same material. While this could equally be said of any material, it is particularly worth highlighting here given the significant range in the types of material, and

[143] Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk,* pp. 314-315.
[144] Ibid. p. 21.
[145] Dolan, 'The Fabric of Life', p. 20 and p. 43.
[146] H. Green, *Wood: Craft, Culture, History,* (New York, 2006), p. xxix.

therefore types of object, which ‘leather’ as a broad material category could comprise. Secondly, and as the historians above have highlighted, one significant eighteenth-century change in consumption was a development in consumer knowledge of the origins of goods. As an organic, leather is one example of a material which enabled consumers to draw links between objects and environments. Leather, horn, silk and feather each drew on animal products or by-products, but leather manufacture also relied significantly on other environmental agents – primarily wood bark – in its manufacture and as essential to the finished material. As such, a single-material study using the case of leather promises to address some far-reaching debates in new and valuable ways.

Conclusions: Research Questions and Approach

Leather is the central focus of this research project and has been chosen as a material with socially-ranging applications, versatility of product and accessibility. In addition, and as Ulinka Rublack and Matthew McCormack have noted, leather provides useful avenues into investigating human-object relationships as a material which was particularly sensory and associated with popular notions of skin. In so doing, histories of leather when analysed under this guise necessarily incorporate consumer sensitivities to the animal and environmental sources which lay at the very heart of their leather objects. This thesis asks the following questions. First, what did leather, both as a material in itself and as a constituent part of a range of goods mean to consumers in this period? Secondly, how important was leather to the consumption of goods which were made from it? This thesis is, in short, specifically interested in the relationship between materials and object types, and how the interactions between the two were perceived by consumers.

Similarly to J.W. Waterer's publications, this thesis is structured around tanning and leather objects, but it aims to provide a richer cultural context and place consumers firmly in the frame. This thesis also follows in the trend of single-material studies. While this thesis shares a concerted focus on a single material, however, its approach more specifically is to analyse leather as both a cultural and physical point of contact between consumers and objects and assess the meaning of leather within the individual contexts of specific objects. The objects themselves and their 'internal evidence' are one significant body of sources mobilized to answer these research questions, and therefore a rationale for how they will be approached is necessary. The reasons for choosing objects as a primary source base correspond to the arguments of material culture scholars such as Hood – the objects offer a unique way to understand how consumer behaviours were materially manifested – but this thesis also uses a range of 'external evidence' in order to discuss how these objects were explained, written about, what processes they were at the centre of and what expectations were held of them.

Broadly, this thesis adopts a 'close reading' approach to objects, which may be aligned with Clifford Geertz's 'thick description'. Geertz proposed an interpretative form of description targeted towards understanding culture at a range of scales.[147] For the purposes of this thesis, individual objects fit within Geertz's framework as a form of culture operating at a 'micro' scale: individual goods which have their own specific biographies. By using an enhanced form of description which would parallel Geertz's 'close reading' – as well as borrow to some extent from Prown et al, above – the objects which are examined in this thesis will not be treated as necessarily coherent wholes. Each individual object is a unique composition of different parts, and each of these components, from large sections of leather to individual nails, can be as revealing of how an object was made, consumed and physically interacted with. Examining

[147] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973), pp. 20-21.

leather-upholstered chairs, for example, means assessing a unique assemblage of leather upholstery, chair padding, wooden frames, metal nails, studs, and any other materials used as decoration. While the object can be examined in its ‘complete’ state, relying on understanding how these elements correspond to one another in the name of form and function, using connoisseurial skill – as suggested by Adamson – in addition to lesser-utilized conservation-based approaches to individual components within an object can be as revealing of its consumption. This technique will be pushed to its maximum extent in the analysis of the ‘Old Rufford’ chairs in chapter 5.

In comparison to the close reading being applied to individual objects – as representative of a more ‘micro’ form of culture – a more ‘macro’ form of culture is read from leather as a material entity and to object types, rather than specific objects. To access this more inclusive and accessible form of material culture, this thesis draws on the gamut of ‘external evidence’ outlined in the previous chapter: newspaper advertisements, printed discourse both fictional and technical, ephemeral print, and a range of images including elite portraiture and cheap wood cut alike. Recourse to these forms of external evidence is useful in establishing culture at a ‘macro’ scale because they illustrate the different applications, expectations and held meanings of leather across a broader geographic, cultural and social spectrum. These source types also function across a range of different contexts: consumption within a range of social environs, production and sale. However, because these different source types reflect rich textual repositories of evidence, they are also able to be closely read; the some four thousand newspaper advertisements featuring leather-related terminology identified in this thesis can be assessed both through keyword-searching and counting the occurrence of different terms, as well as highlighting the linguistic techniques employed by individual examples.

One of the methodological outputs of this examination of leather that has not been explicitly drawn out from previous single-material studies, therefore, is in its ability to unite material culture operating at a range of scales within a single framework of analysis. Working outwards from specific object studies, material descriptions of surviving artefacts will be placed in the context of multiple forms of external evidence. Relating the raw evidence of an object to external representations and references prompts renewed questions and recontextualization of the internal evidence of objects. In practice, therefore, 'external' and 'internal' forms of evidence in object-based research must inform one another, and central to the experience of objects for consumers was the varied range of sources in which they were represented. Using both forms of evidence lends itself to navigating issues of scale in material culture research. Representations of leather in external evidence generally related to the 'macro' scale: leather as an abstract, a generic material descriptor for either objects or aggregate materials. Meanwhile, the internal evidence of artefacts relates specifically to what it was of this general idea of leather consumers were able to experience. By studying materials through specific objects, as well as through their generic representations as object types or materials on their own merit, this thesis can understand how consumers used objects to relate to knowledge in the public domain. Objects were, in short, where the meaning of leather as an idea was realised in a tangible way.

Chapter 3 - The Language of Leather

Introduction

One of the central concerns of this thesis is understanding what leather meant. By way of response, this chapter is concerned with the kinds of language which were used to describe leather objects in the long eighteenth century; it uses two bodies of sources to ask how leather was written about, what consumers knew – or could know – about leather, what qualities of the material were most significant to consumers, and what meanings leather held when being described. The chapter will examine how the production of leather was discussed and then compare this to perhaps the most readily available and frequent source type that referred to leather objects, with the aim of tracking what it was about production that entered the sphere of retail and consumption. In so doing, this chapter addresses one point of engagement between consumers and objects made of leather – a linguistic or intellectual interaction – and therefore supports the central research questions of this thesis in investigating what a material meant, and how the material used to make an object mediated its consumption.

The first of the two bodies of sources, production manuals, illustrate the material composition of different types of leather and document the structures imposed either by tanners or those observing tanning to organise information. The second, newspaper advertisements, document the different goods which were being advertised as chiefly or in part composed of leather and how these were described to either a retail or auction marketplace. Newspaper advertisements also included advertisements placed by owners seeking the return of stolen or lost goods; this subset of a wider source genre is valuable because it illustrates the language that owners used to describe their goods in their own terms, as opposed to retail sources which are evidence of language used to communicate to consumers. In both cases, these sources represent ideas about leather which coexisted alongside direct consumer engagement with the material. By identifying the overlaps between these two source types this chapter will demonstrate instances where language from the realm of production entered the sphere of retail and seek to show how such language use represented consumer sensitivities to the origin of materials. In addition to examining these textual sources from the period, this chapter will highlight surviving examples of contemporary objects from the period: bookbindings, trunks, and carry cases. This is to demonstrate the physical and material properties of objects that descriptors in advertisements pertained to. Other objects which featured in these advertisements – including saddles, furniture, footwear, and breeches – will receive more sustained attention in the subsequent chapters of this thesis within the scope of a discussion designed to address the significance of their materials and form.

This chapter makes the following arguments. First, that the use of leather-related terms across two different source types with different authorships and intentions demonstrates the mutability of this language and shows that specific technical terminology could be loaded with multiple meanings. Secondly, that when treated individually production treatises suggest that there was a consumer audience for texts about production and newspaper advertisements suggest that consumers were expected to understand at least some technical vocabulary when used to differentiate between the quality of different goods. In turn, these arguments indicate at least some degree of consumer sensitivity to the production origins of leather goods in the eighteenth-century marketplace. Thirdly, and finally, both uses of descriptive language suggest that this terminology had cultural significance; at least one way in which people invested leather objects with meaning was through the language used to describe them.

This chapter is split evenly between sections discussing production manuals and newspaper advertisements. In the former it analyses the language used both by tanners themselves and by those observing tanning to show that tanning was described with reference to two broader cultural issues: innovation and national identity. Within the genre of newspaper advertisements it identifies a range of leather objects which were sold to consumers in a retail or auction spaces, and demonstrates that the descriptive terms related to leather were important descriptors in creating the conditions of desire. This chapter will discuss each set of sources in turn, placing terms relating to the production of leather in wider and a more broadly accessible cultural context: namely, retail.

Though neither of these source types provides evidence of the direct use of terms by consumers, production manuals represent an instructive use of descriptive terminology which was made available to consumers and conceivably accessed by them, while newspaper advertisements demonstrate the use of terms expected to provoke a reaction in consumers. Although the authors of each source clearly used terms to different ends, there is evidence of overlap. Shared language between the production texts made available to consumers and the retailer sources designed to sell to them suggests that knowledge of the origin of objects – and specifically of materials – was important. In particular this suggests that the production of leather was one element of what was perceived to make leather objects attractive.

Historiographical context

This chapter contributes to a few key areas of material culture historiography. First, this chapter deals with the production of materials Although the 'social life of things' model only begins once objects have been commoditised and therefore does deal with this dimension of material culture, other historians have noted how the production stage of the material was dutifully recorded and structured by its practitioners: those who possessed what Lisa Jardine would label 'technological inventiveness', and whose actions Harold Cook, Pamela Smith and Amy Meyers would describe as 'connecting head and hand'.[1] For Lesley Miller, such texts – here of silk design – in the eighteenth-century were 'not 'literary' literature because its prose is inelegant and too technical [and] not good technical literature because it is neither precise nor systematic'.[2]

One way in which these processes of material production were documented was through increasing literary interest in making and eighteenth-century 'industrial tourism' as explored by Kate Smith.[3] For Smith this 'industrial tourism' had a dual significance: first as a force which 'actively shaped learning, making it more formalized and codified' and secondly – and relatedly – as a cradle of micro-developments in widely held understandings of production and craft.[4] 'By situating their engagement with industry as 'spectacle', tourists primarily understood production in terms of wonder. Yet close readings of their travelogues reveal that, alongside experiencing wonder, tourists also comprehended and learned about the processes they witnessed in action.'[5] For leather, as this chapter will demonstrate, two such processes were expansion and mechanization, wherein English and Irish responsibilities towards their markets necessitated greater scrutiny of exported goods and bolstered the significance of quality.[6]

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[1] L. Jardine, *Ingenious Pursuits: Building the Scientific Revolution,* (London, 1999), p. 6; H. Cook, P. Smith and A. Meyers, 'Introduction: Making and Knowing' in P. Smith, Amy Meyers and Harold Cook (eds) *Ways of Making and Knowing: The material culture of empirical knowledge,* (Ann Arbor, 2014), p. 6.
[2] L.E. Miller, 'Representing Silk Design', *Journal of Design History,* 17.1 (2004), p. 46.
[3] K. Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands: Perceiving Production in England, 1700-1830,* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 42-45.
[4] Smith, *Material Goods, Moving Hands,* p. 42.
[5] Ibid.
[6] N. McKendrick, 'The consumer revolution of eighteenth century England' in N. McKendrick et al (eds), *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth century England* (London, 1983), pp. 25-6; P.

The example of leather tanning also demonstrates how 'innovation' was conceptually intertwined with national and regional identities. 'Innovation', argue Karel Davids and Bert de Munck, 'is a versatile concept', one which has shifted historiographically from the discoveries of ingenious heroes 'to one that includes the less visible innovations in the sphere of artisans embodied and often tacit know-how'.[7] Writing in a similar vein, Sarah Alford has explored the uneasy relationship that existed between more 'traditional' artisans and the progress of mechanization in the eighteenth century – ultimately arguing that craftspeople engaged in a 'multilayered dialogue with mechanization', employed their energies to embrace it and improve their products.[8] Viccy Coltman has also argued for innovation existing within the more 'tacit' and 'everyday' activities of artisans and craftspeople, choosing instead to focus on the contemporaneously used term 'improvement', while Peter Betjemann has resisted a significant distinction between innovation and tradition and argued – borrowing Peter Dormer's definition – that craft was 'the skilful achievement of vision'; a knowledge and discipline itself.[9] Despite exploring, therefore, the tensions that existed between traditional artisanship and various forms of 'innovation', these authors acknowledge that traditional methods of craft and manufacture could coexist with improved material conditions that improved quality or increased yield. This chapter situates leather in a similar position whilst also demonstrating how this innovation related to the consumption of objects.

Minard, 'The Micro-Economics of Quality and Social Construction of the Market: Disputes Among the London Leather Trades in the Eighteenth Century', Historical Social Research 36.4 (138) (2011), pp. 150-1; H. Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002), pp. 314-5.

[7] K. Davids and B. de Munck, 'Introduction' in K. Davids and B. de Munck, *Innovation and Creativity in Late Medieval and Early Modern European Cities,* (Oxford, 2014), p .13.

[8] S. Alford, 'Ellen Gates Starr and Frank Lloyd Wright at Hull House: 'The Machine as the 'Will of Life', *Journal of Design History* 30.3 (March, 2017), p. 295.

[9] V. Coltman, 'Sir William Hamilton's Vase Publications (1766-1776): A Case Study in the Reproduction and Dissemination of Antiquity', *Journal of Design History* 14.1 (2001), p. 14; P. Betjemann, 'Craft and the Limits of Skill: Handicrafts Revivalism and the Problem of Technique', *Journal of Design History* 21.2 (2008), pp. 183-184.

One finding of this chapter is that one important cultural association of tanning was national or regional identity, in part enabled by the environmental nature of tanning; this was a production process which drew substantially on raw, local, natural products. In comparison to the literature which explores contemporary notions of innovation, this section of this chapter corresponds to a narrower established literature. Most recently, Geneviève Zubrzycki has termed the role of objects in either conforming to or shaping national identities as a historical 'lacuna' and structured the link between individuals, objects and national identity as comprising the following: 'the relationship between materiality […] and nationalizing institutions', 'the varied processes through which everyday, banal objects […] shape a national ethos' and how 'cultural practices [using objects] can become sites for sensing, enacting, and even embodying the nation'.[10] Zubrzycki's arguments follow on from the earlier comments of Gerald Pocius that 'material culture […] can become synonymous with identity […] for individuals on many levels', that 'ideas of nationhood were materialized through public objects' and that 'artifacts considered unique to a region […] can become central to that region's identity'.[11]

What is shared between Pocius and Zubrzycki is the insistence that behaviour provides the link between objects and identities on a range of scales, but both the object itself and the identity must pre-exist and be consciously linked by individuals. From a sociological perspective, Tim Edensor has argued that 'the material worlds of objects seem to provide evidence of the common-sense obviousness of the everyday' and that 'by their ubiquitous presence, things provide material proof of shared ways of living and common habits'.[12] Edensor's argument

[10] G. Zubrzycki, 'Introduction. Matter and Meaning: A Cultural Sociology of Nationalism' in G. Zubryzcki (ed.) *National Matters: Materiality, Culture, and Nationalism,* (Palo Alto, 2017), pp. 1-20.
[11] G. Pocius, 'Editorial: Objects and identity', *Material Culture Review* 60 (Autumn, 2004). See also F. Kaplan, *Museums and the making of 'ourselves': the role of objects in national identity,* (London, 1994).
[12] T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life,* (Oxford, 2002) p. 103

may relate more to an organic and inadvertent form of national identity by shared practice, but it still relies on behaviour, and still relies on the pre-existence of both objects and national identity. By comparison, the single-material study of leather demonstrates that national or regional identities were also relevant to the production of materials. The distinction here is that national identity both pre-existed the availability of materials, and was used to lend cultural meaning to this practice through the nature of the tanning process. The production process, in short, complicates how formulaic the association between object and national identity could be.

This chapter also deals to a considerable extent with newspaper advertisements. This chapter suggests ways in which these advertisements are representative of language about leather targeted towards consumers, but there are two major historiographical preoccupations here: the variety within this category of sources and the considerable change over time in their frequency. The blanket category of 'advertisements' captures a range of different formats. Retail advertisements were typically headed by the manufacturer's name and location before listing the range of products on offer and indicating range in terms of quality, material and cost. The chief objective was to create the 'conditions for buying'.[13] Retail advertisements provide information on three dimensions of material culture: what goods collectively were being released into the market, which qualities of the material or good advertisers were seeking to exploit and who the goods were targeted towards. Auctions, by comparison, took consumers to coffeehouses, pubs or homes of the deceased, rather than shops. Although accompanied by auction catalogues which provided a full listing of goods, advertisements for auction sales in newspapers provided an outline of the types of goods available, the time, date and location of

[13] M. Harris, 'Timely Notices: The Uses of Advertising and its Relationship to News During the Late Seventeenth Century' in J. Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain,* (London, 1999), p. 142.

the sale. The language used gave consumers an accurate understanding of the good, and its place within an associative family of other goods for sale. In a time when auctions were an occasion and not an institution, these advertisements also needed to attract consumers to the pub or coffeehouse hosting the auction.[14] To this end, they also needed to attract and excite.

The increasing availability of newspapers and the changing role of advertisements has received considerable attention from historians. For R.B. Walker, this development took place between 1650 and 1750 and could be understood in three ways: the more qualitative analysis of words evoking senses of intrigue and excitement, a part of the history of journalism or a source for more traditional social and economic histories which enrich an understanding of the fabric of everyday life.[15] Ultimately Walker concludes that the period 1650-1750 was one in which advertising and journalism began a deep-rooted and inseparable relationship, but seeks to defend this position through a quantitative analysis of the *London Gazette, Post Boy* and *Flying Post.*[16] This work demonstrates that although the number of issues of each remained consistent between 1695 and 1700 – Walker's crucible for substantial change – the number of advertisements in each across a range of categories of goods increases significantly. In a similar vein E.L. Furdell highlights the so-called 'Augustan Age' of 1680-1730; a period in which popular readership of periodicals mushroomed in response to the lively and 'vigorous' content of political gazettes, and both London's burgeoning reputation as a commercial metropolis and new print technologies respectively necessitated and facilitated such quantities of advertisements.[17] Meanwhile David Margocsy has identified the period as one in which a range

[14] B. Cowan, 'Art and Connoisseurship in the Auction Market of Later Seventeenth Century London', in N. De Marchi and H. van Miegroet (eds), *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe 1450-1800,* (Turnhout, 2006), p. 263.
[15] R.B. Walker, 'Advertising in London Newspapers, 1650-1750', *Business History* 15.2 (1973), p. 112.
[16] Walker, 'Advertising in London Newspapers', p. 117, p. 30.
[17] E.L. Furdell, 'Grub Street Commerce: Advertisements and Politics in the Early Modern British Press', *The Historian* 63.1 (2001), pp. 35-39.

of ‘rhetorics of advertising’ developed to enable manufacturers to reach a yet unrivalled base of potential clientele.[18]

There are two ways historians have previously narrowed down this wealth of material: by time-period or by publication. Within eighteenth century datasets even relatively narrow scopes of time contain an abundance of material. This chapter will narrow the overall source base both by publication and then allotted samples – this not only creates a far more manageable dataset but also allows a direct comparison of language and advertisements in the same publication over time. In so doing of the language of leather and the structure of advertisements themselves can be addressed consistently within one publication.

Sampling and Methodology

To select the production treatises used in the first section of this chapter a keyword search method was used, as described in the introduction. The keywords ‘leather’ and ‘tanning’ were used in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* to narrow down the total number of texts to 54. From this total, those selected were those which either based their description on first-hand observation of tanning, or those which cited tanners who had aided the writing of texts, which narrowed this sample to six. One is based on close collaboration with a tanners’ yard in Belfast, for example, while another reported on samples of pieces tanned using a new method which were reviewed by assembled experts in the field. These considerations were to ensure that the language being assessed was representative of production, and therefore to address how overlaps between two spheres of language use demonstrate consumer use of material-related knowledge within consumption.

[18] D. Margocsy, ‘Advertising cadavers in the republic of letters: anatomical publication in the early modern Netherlands’, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 42.2 (June, 2009), p. 192; C. Campbell, ‘Consumption and the Rhetorics of Need and Want’, *Journal of Design History* 11.3 (1998).

Newspaper advertisements are the source base for the second section of this chapter, and given their huge volume and availability require a more precise selection criteria. Britain's first daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant,* was not published until 1702. It was one of a huge range of publications available to consumers. One way of narrowing this base is by considering only those which include 'Advertiser' as part of their title: those which some historians have argued as using a more 'formalised' system of advertising.[19] This narrows down hundreds of publications to just 41, as shown by Appendix 1. Only 17 of these sources have a median year which falls within the date range of the production sources, suggesting that the language used in each shared a broadly similar chronological context. From this set of 17 publications, four have a reasonable print run, a significant set of comparable adverts in the Burney and median years relatively distributed across the period. These are the *Champion or Evening Advertiser,* the *Daily Advertiser,* the *London Daily Advertiser* and the *Public Advertiser.* Of these, the *Public Advertiser* offers the richest volume of issues. This section is based on 4,758 advertisements drawn from these publications, as shown in Table 3.1. The top-line data presented here demonstrates that both 'skin' and 'leather' were important identifiers within early modern advertising, and 'hide' was a comparatively infrequently used term.

[19] C. Ferdinand, 'Constructing the Frameworks of Desire: How Newspapers Sold Books in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in Raymond, *News, Newspapers and Society,* pp. 159-165, 168; Margocsy, 'Advertising Cadavers', pp. 192-193; T. Stern, '"On each Wall and Corner Poast": Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London', *English Literary Renaissance* (2006), pp. 76-77.

BCN Title	Featuring 'leather'	Featuring 'skin'	Featuring 'hide'	Total
Public Advertiser 1752-1757	456	409	29	894
Public Advertiser 1770-1775	1052	833	43	1928
Champion or Evening Advertiser	2	53	0	55
Daily Advertiser 1752-1757	23	7	4	34
Daily Advertiser 1770-1775	974	450	48	1472
London Daily Advertiser	163	183	29	375
Total	2670	1935	153	4758

Table 3.1: Number of advertisements used, by publication.

Production

The story of leather starts with a cow – though really any animal would prove to suffice. Once the skin had been butchered from the carcass the hide was soaked to loosen the remaining hair, a task typically performed by skilled craftsmen in specialized sites; tanners and pits. Afterwards, the hides were laid out and a small rounded blade used to scrape away the remaining hair as well as any adipose tissue and sinews. In so doing just the remaining thinnest part of the hide, the 'corium', remained.[20] In order for this semi-processed hide to be converted to a leather it required infusing with naturally occurring resins, most easily accessible in oak bark. For this infusion to take place oak bark was gathered in its peak season – when it is naturally releasing the most resin – and dried in a kiln before being ground to a powder which

[20] H. Osborne, (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 538-539.

was combined with water to create an 'ooze'.[21] At first, hides were simply thrown in with the ooze, but they were subsequently moved through pits of different concentrations in which hides were laid flat and layered, separated by further layers of the dried and ground oak bark. After transitioning between these pits for a period of up to eighteen months the hides were trimmed, soaked for a final time in clean water and dried. At this stage hides could be accurately described as 'leather' and were in a fit state to be curried by use of tallow, oils and dyes, for a range of applications.[22]

This description shows the complexity of a making process which was evident in published sources. The albeit somewhat schematic outline above draws out the most commonly referenced stages of production from a range of sources from the early modern period – creating a neat, linear progression between different states of material matter. The basic stages of butchery, soaking, scraping, the making of and subsequent infusion of hides through the ooze and drying were consistently present and, though subject to refinement, were evidently key steps across different tanning processes. Understanding this production process is important in part as it contextualizes how tanning was represented to consumers, but also because it demonstrates that materials were more than commodities and only the final stage of an established process. The transformative and reconceptualising stage that existed between raw hide and tanned leather should be as much a part of the 'social life of things' as the transformation from leather to leather object.

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[21] C. Howard, 'Brief Directions how to Tan Leather according to the New Invention', *Transactions of the Royal Society*, (London, 1674), pp. 94-5; D. Macbride, 'An Improved Method of Tanning Leather', *Transactions of the Royal Academy* 68, (Dublin, 1773), pp. 118-120; J.W. Waterer, *Leather Craftsmanship*, (London, 1968), p.20.
[22] Osborne, *Oxford Companion*, p. 539.

Having explored the basic historical processes by which leather was manufactured in the eighteenth century, it is useful to consider the qualities of the product and discuss differences between different animal leathers as this knowledge informs the analysis of objects. These qualities are also significant because they fundamentally underpin two of the most salient features of this material which provoke responses from consumers: its comfort and its functionality. Much of the research in this area has been undertaken by scholars following a conservation-based approach (formally termed Conservation Based Research and Analysis, or CoBRA). One comment made above is that the basic soaking-scraping-steeping-washing method may be used for a variety of different animal skins, but one output from CoBRA into a range of different historic leathers has been to demonstrate the broad similarities in their internal structures. While eighteenth-century texts such as *An essay concerning the infinite wisdom of God, manifest in the contrivance and structure of the skin of human bodies* would suggest that there was contemporary knowledge about the internal structures of skin, the texts discussed in this chapter do not suggest that tanners were acting upon this knowledge.[23] However, these were structures which eighteenth-century tanning nevertheless relied on from a material perspective. At their most base level, animal skins are composed of a meshwork of overlapping collagen fibrils. Where these fibrils intersect or overlap there are physical connections drawn between them by naturally occurring hydrogen bonds. In its live state, skin is flexible because these hydrogen bonds allow the collagen fibrils to move and roll over one another as do the woven strands of a textile. When the animal dies the naturally-produced hydrogen in these bonds ceases to occur and the skin becomes rigid as the collagen fibrils are unable to move. Tanning works because alternative materials – such as oak bark resin – are inserted in place of these hydrogen bonds, enabling the material to be pliable once more.[24]

[23] A Lover of Physick and Surgery, *An essay concerning the infinite wisdom of God, manifested in the contrivance and structure of the skin of human bodies,* (London, 1724), Wellcome Library, 61758/P.
[24] T. Covington, *Tanning Chemistry: The Science of Leather,* (Cambridge, 2009) pp. xx-xxii; R. Reed, *Ancient Skins Parchments and Leathers,* (London, 1972) pp. 14-19.

Key points of difference between different animal skins include the grain pattern formed by folds and creases in the skin, follicle pattern on the outer-facing 'hair-side' of the hide, thickness and fibre-density visible on the inward-facing 'flesh-side'. Identifying the animal skins used to make different leather objects in this period is interesting, because it speaks to the look, feel and texture intended by the maker of the object in its original condition. Assessing these factors when comparing objects is challenging, however, because in some cases the physical properties of different skins are reasonably similar. The main types of leather which are used in the objects consulted in this thesis are cow, calf and goat, which reflect some of the most commonly-used types of leather in the eighteenth century. Tanned cow hide is among the thickest and strongest of the leathers used in the objects assessed in this thesis. While its thickness is one characteristic feature, cow leather also has a visibly grainy surface with a dense and even distribution of hair follicles in between the grain. Because of the depth of the grain, cow leather often appears to have an uneven, creased surface. Calf skin embodies these same basic characteristics in a smaller scale. The follicles and grain follow a similar pattern, but the grain being less pronounced and the follicles being more closely together calf skin has a visibly smoother and softer texture. Nevertheless, calf skin has a distinct appearance from three further small animal skins which were used in the eighteenth century: goat, sheep and pig. Goat skin, often referred to as chamois and often used for morocco leather, has a less grainy surface and a more ordered distribution of hair follicles, which are linear and found in groups of three. Sheep skin, sometimes referred to as basil leather, has a similar grain to goat but a larger number of follicles organised in a more continuous linear pattern. Furthermore these skins can be differentiated from one another by their thickness when tanned. Of the three, calf is generally the thickest, followed by goat, and sheep skin is generally the thinnest. Lastly, deer and pig skin, which were both used in the eighteenth century, have a broadly similar grain pattern: a creased surface of similar depth to cow hide, but a grain pattern that more frequently overlaps. These materials may be differentiated from one another, however, as pig skin has relatively few follicles and deer skin has a far more ordered and even distribution. Pig skin is also generally a thinner material.[25]

Figure 3.1: Close images of different animal leathers. Clockwise from top left: cow, calf, goat, sheep, deer, pig. Images © Laura Kapplan, shared by Bruno Pouliot.

This section will analyse the language of six printed texts which discuss tanning practices applied to a number of different types of skins. Organised chronologically, the texts in question are Charles Howard's *Brief Directions how to Tan Leather according to the New Invention* of

[25] American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, "*Assessing the skin: characterizing the animal source, processing method, and deterioration of museum and library objects", organized by Bruno Pouliot*, (Washington DC, 2007), The Winterthur Library call number TS967 A51a 2007; B. Pouliot, *Papers, circa 1980- circa 1986,* The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Col. 951. See also, G. Garbett and I. Skelton, *The Wreck of the Metta Catharina*, (Truro, 1987) p. 18.

1674, published in the Transactions of the Royal Society, a 1680 pamphlet response to Howard by the Leaden Hall tanners, William Maple's *A Complete and Effectual Method of Tanning Without Bark* of 1729, Noël-Antoine Pluche's *Spectacle de la Nature*, translated from French to English and published in London in 1753, David Macbride's *An Improved Method of Tanning Leather* of 1773 and Charles Vallancey's *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather*, also of 1773. These texts – primarily longer books, but also including one pamphlet and one smaller treatise – were all available as published editions in England and Ireland. Most of these texts were also written by English or Irish authors, with the exception of Pluche's, as above, and Vallancey's, which contained an original preface and introduction with the main body translated from Jérôme le Français de Lalande's *Art du Tanneur* – itself part of a series titled *Déscriptions des Arts et Métiers* and published by the French Academy in 1764. Nevertheless, and as Karen Newman and Jane Tylus argue, translation was no mean feat, and the linguistic packaging of these texts for an English audience will be investigated here.[26]

The use of translated texts means that this source base does not pertain exclusively to the British experience, and there is a natural issue of translation to consider between the French base text and the English translation. Nevertheless, these texts were published in the English market and do speak to how language functioned within this context. This is also a relatively low number of texts infrequently distributed across a wide chronology, and the content hinges on the perspective and expertise of the respective authors. Although these six texts cover a relatively broad time period, they do offer a great level of detail into the tanning process and each is based on a process of observation in itself. With the exception of the pamphlet published by the Leadenhall Tanners, none of these individual books are snapshots of a single moment in time; each text comments reasonably widely on tanning both geographically and chronologically.

[26] K. Newman and J. Tylus (eds), *Early Modern Cultures of Translation*, (University Park Pennsylvania, 2015).

This offers a useful counter to the frequency of these texts. This body of sources is cohesive in terms of its subject matter, and can be narrowed down to at least three presumed audiences: active tanners reading widely into their own industry, consumers interested in technical or industrial literature, consumers interested in the political or social significance authors of these texts ascribed to technological changes.

In a more basic sense, this analysis of texts highlights technical terminology, not least in the distinction in usage between 'skin', 'hide' and 'leather', and illustrates some of the physical or material processes which tanning comprised. Most of these texts are also indicative of some degree of change over time in terms of how tanning was improved. But more importantly, these texts capture some of the ways in which leather was talked about: chiefly as the object of innovation and as associated with national identities. For leather, the language used by production sources had dual significances; this language was technical, but also loaded with cultural and societal meaning.

Innovation

By the eighteenth century the strength of traditional trade guilds was waning and London's major leather companies – the Leathersellers, Glovers, Cordwainers, Girdlers, Saddlers, Skinners and Curriers – were struggling to exercise control over leather goods manufactured and sold.[27] At the same time, improvement in manufacture was a significant part of the subject matter of the printed texts discussed in this section, and the descriptive language used often framed this improvement in terms of 'innovation'. This was therefore a factor in how leather was spoken about, what it 'meant' to consumers and the context in which it was presented. One of the most important functions served by these texts *en masse* was to document changes made

[27] C. Willcocks, *Cordwainers: Shoemakers of the City of London,* (London, 2008), p. 7, pp. 71-73.

to practice of tanning, moving from more traditional techniques to newer ones which can be grouped under the broader headings of biological-botanical, chemical and technological advances.

The key association of innovation was presented with a variety of motivations. For Howard and Maple, in 1674 and 1729 respectively, the concern was to make clear that their techniques offered a definite advance and advantage – either new, more cost-effective methods or those producing leather of a greater quality – without speaking ill of that which had come before. Pluche's text of 1753 situated tanning within a longer-term context and is also more neutral in tone. Observing 'the insufficiency of the skins of animals for our purposes', Pluche states that 'human industry has improved the service of the skins by several sorts of dressing, which render some of them more beautiful, and others proof against wet; or make them more supple'.[28] Pluche concludes that:

> the invention of cloaths did not banish the use of skins[…] what velvet can compare in fineness and lustre with certain sables and ermine[?] […] What cloth can in firmness come near the skins of larger animals? And therefore they serve for coverings that should be impenetrable, with some degree of suppleness, and able to resist the strongest friction; without ever being supplanted by any invention.[29]

For other authors this innovation was framed more competitively. Macbride, for instance, adopted a much more reproachful position of existing methods and tanners who pursued them

[28] N.A. Pluche, *Spectacle de la Nature: or Nature Display'd, being Discourses on such particulars of Natural History as were thought most proper to Excite the Curiosity and Form the Minds of Youth*, Vol. VI, (London, 1753), pp. 223-224. (Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham QH41 Volume 6)
[29] Ibid.

in 1773, disparaging the 'prejudices amongst tradesmen of all sorts against trying new practices, and such the reluctance with which they quit their ancient ways of working'.[30] Macbride then comments somewhat dryly on his subsequent text, which is 'sufficiently clear for enabling any intelligent tanner to avail himself of my improvements'.[31] For Vallancey, also in 1773, the need to innovate was made clear by Britain's inadequacies in comparison to the French. In France, his preface notes, philosophy 'illumined the dark paths of the mechanic arts' and induced intellectuals 'to investigate the processes of her manufactures[…] to remove the obstacles and absurdities to which [tanners] felt obstinately chained and fettered.'[32] Meanwhile in Britain, tanners continued to pursue 'the method practiced by our fore-fathers a thousand years ago' and were 'sunk in lethargy'.[33] These two writers did not only describe improvements as innovative, therefore, but they also described traditional – and by extension, 'uninnovative' – practice as inadequate.

By far the richest field of experimentation was the biological-botanical, through which early modern producers expanded drastically the stock of raw materials used in tanning and in so doing demonstrated that the traditional oak-bark tanning method was a manufacturing process open to revision and not one that enjoyed a privileged position. On the one hand, the ability to define the necessary materials of tanning surely defines with whom the core of expertise rested, and these descriptions expose a tension between innovation and tradition under the auspices of tanning. On the other, however, the use of specific biological and botanical descriptors served to reinforce that leather was understood as an organic product.

[30] Macbride, *An Improved Method*, p. 112.
[31] Ibid.
[32] C. Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather,* (Dublin, 1774), Preface, p. iv.
[33] Ibid.

Although the organic or environmental connotation of tanning was important to the meaning of leather in this context, the precise ingredients were subject to revision. While traditional sources, contemporary historiography and archaeological literature point towards oak bark as the composite tannin of the ooze, Howard was a proponent of relatively modest, yet significant, innovation by suggesting that any part of the oak will serve as a tannin: the bigger pieces shaved and smaller pieces bruised and cut before the drying process.[34] Howard also suggested that if oak was scarce both thorns and birch could be used.[35] By comparison, and finding bark scarce in Ireland, Maple considered its qualities and questioned why materials with the same properties had been neglected and not applied to the same purposes. From this position, Maple arrived at two alternative materials: cinquefoil and tormentil root. His experiments producing a leather of poor colour, cinquefoil was swiftly discarded. Tormentil, however, was shown to produce leather of a sufficient colour, bloom, substance, solidity and weight – produced in far less time than the same process with oak bark. Six samples were produced by Thomas Cooley and Patrick Shale, subsequently examined by assembled experts and their quality affirmed.[36] These experts were 'delighted to receive news of a method of tanning without the use of any barks […] by vegetables of our natural produce and easy culture'.[37]

Through his work of translation Vallancey reported the large number of tanning materials used across Europe – too many to mention individually – arising from Lalande's conversations with the tanners Desbilletes, de Buffon, Glesditsch and Klein, including a small index complete with Latin name, common name, which part to use and when to pick.[38] Here, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather* reflected taxonomic representations of knowledge employed by

[34] Howard, 'Brief Instructions how to Tan Leather', p. 93.
[35] Ibid.
[36] W. Maple, *A Compleat and Effectual Method of Tanning Without Bark,* (Dublin, 1729), pp. 15-16.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather,* p. 28.

producers; through investigation and experimentation the objects of natural philosophy became systematized for the purpose design, trade and industry.[39] For instance, an example under 'Vine branches' reads: 'Prunus Sylvestris (Wild thorny Plumb) the bark and fruit before ripe'.[40] But the text does not shy away from including the more unusual forms of tannin. Of a manufactory in Montpelier, the book remarks that 'they use another preparing liquor made of oranges and lemons though ever so rotten, or either separately, grinding rind, pulp, and core together'.[41] *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather* also describes more general conditions of plants which will serve for tanning – abstracting from the specific examples explored thus far:

> plants which are common in most marshy soft soils, such as are in general refused by animals as food, and which nature seems to intend purely as ornamental[…] are fit for this purpose, as do not contain terrestrial, resinous, and gummy particles, but have oily and vaporous particles.[42]

By the time of publication, therefore, a wide range of materials were available with which to tan hides. The works explored thus far indicate the unstable foundations upon which traditional oak bark tanning rested, but more importantly this information was presented both simplistically – by common name and appearance – as well as with more detailed information. This use of language suggests that this information needed to be broadly accessible, and therefore that was a presumed broad audience for information about tanning; the expected readership of Vallancey's text would comprise a range of levels of expertise. By comparison, Maple's experiments with Cooley and Shale demonstrate the receptiveness of tanners to such

[39] Jennifer Ferng, 'Stones of use': Cobalt, Spar and the Utility of Architectural Materials, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40.3 (September, 2017).
[40] Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather*, p. 32.
[41] Ibid, p. 28.
[42] Ibid, p. 31.

innovations; this process of change by the introduction of new materials to a traditional process did not only occur on paper.

That these biological-botanical developments necessitated technological improvements is not surprising, and is easily evidenced by Howard's unique contribution to the tanning industry. In response to his own assertion that any part of an oak, or indeed birch or thorn will suffice, Howard proposes an 'engine' in order to handle raw, more brute wood rather than bark. Howard's invention is effectively a workbench, four feet long, and equipped with a space for a small anvil, a metal bracket under which to clamp and hold wood and a mounted knife with guiding struts. The knife is on a hinge, and a cavity under the knife opens to a hole in the underside of the bench through which chopped and shaved wood can fall through into a receptacle, or straight onto the floor. The anvil is used to bruise coppice wood against, and Howard has designed a dented hammer to aid this. Howard's 'engine' is equipped with height-adjustable legs, and the user with different sizes of hammer (Figure 3.2). Further, a detailed drawing of the engine, complete with dimensions and construction materials, would enable any interested parties to replicate the device as required.

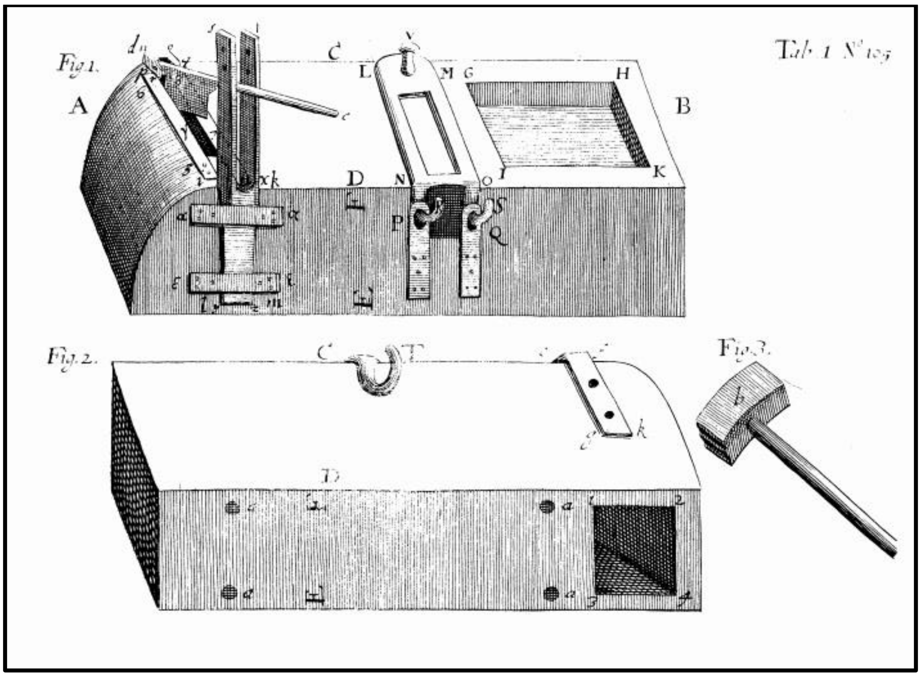

Figure 3.2: Howard's 'engine', *Transactions of the Royal Society,* (London, 1674) p. 97.

A response to Howard's 'engine' came six years later, when eight named tanners of Leaden Hall published a one-sided pamphlet to endorse their use of Howard's invention. These tanners commented that 'we are very confident and well assured by experience, and the benefit we find ourselves, that the said now invention will not only be of general concern and great advantage to all tanners, and the whole Kingdom'.[43] In this pamphlet the Leaden Hall tanners draw both on their authority as professionals as well as their experience to validate Howard's 'engine'. This validation also came from the language used. First, it was duly labelled an 'invention' and therefore credited as something new or innovative, but secondly the tanners' pamphlet corresponds to other examples in this source base in relating innovation in a single industry or practice to the betterment of the entire nation: 'the whole Kingdom'.[44] Accordingly, the language used to describe very specific improvements in the practice of tanning was important, because the it in turn reinforced the significance of this industry to wider society.

[43] T. Norris, T. Randall, J. Clifford, R. Page, W. Woodruffe, R. Hyde, J. Reynolds and W. Crane, *Brief Directions how to Tanne Leather according to a new Invention made out by severall of the principal Tanners, using Leaden-Hall Market,* (London, 1680)
[44] Ibid.

A final way in which innovation was engaged with in these texts can be broadly described as 'chemical'. Macbride is central here. Macbride was an Irish physician whose primary research was into scurvy in 'modern institutional populations', and of whom '[t]he object and method of his researches were characteristic of Enlightenment medicine'.[45] With no experience of tanning or prior involvement with the industry, Macbride would initially appear an unusual character to be contributing towards tanning innovation, but he justified his intervention by stating that 'the principles on which my method is established are derived from chemistry, and therefore it will not appear strange, that these improvements should have been made by a person of the medical profession'.[46] Macbride's text is structured similarly to Howard's, outlining his justification for this innovation before moving on to a detailed outline of its basic formula and how tanners may readily apply it. Macbride argues that tanning can be both expedited as well as yield greater profit using lime water in the composition of the ooze, in contrast to plain or 'common' water. The use of lime water would extract tannins from the bark more effectively. In so doing, tanners could use less bark, and therefore practise more economically. Macbride similarly provides a chemical advance for the 'raising' of larger hides – so named as 'the leather is considerably swelled, in consequence of the conflict between the acid and alcali' – recommending a dilute vitriol instead of the traditional fermented rye.[47]

Read together, these texts demonstrate that across the long eighteenth century an essentially traditional and dormant craft was transformed through expert innovations from three distinct

[45] John G. McEvoy, 'Macbride, David (1726–1778)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17360, accessed 9 May 2016].
[46] Macbride, 'A Improved Method', p. 118.
[47] Macbride, 'An Improved Method', pp. 116-120.

approaches.[48] Indeed, chemical deposits in pit excavations at Northampton would suggest both that these were innovations well heeded, and also that oak-bark tanning survived alongside more innovative techniques.[49] These approaches – here broadly identified as 'biological-botanical', 'technological' and 'chemical' – corresponded to the physical nature of the tanning process which, as a relatively complex undertaking, was itself comprised of a number of individual processes. The initial processing of raw material facilitated technological improvements, the creation of a tanning 'ooze' enabled biological improvements and the soaking of the hides in tanning fluid enabled chemical advances. By categorizing innovation under these three broad headings, this analysis of changes to tanning also enriches a historical understanding of the social life of a material. Here, the production stage of a material, which itself prefaces both the consumption of a material and the 'birth' of objects made from it, can be understood as one significant and early stage in the meaning-making power of objects.

Turning to the language used by these sources – which can be broadly grouped under the genre of works about production, set in contrast to retail and consumption – demonstrates that specific technical information had wider meaning. First, the descriptions of these improvements suggest that the authors of these texts were concerned primarily with ensuring the success of English and Irish production, particularly as some authors directly related their observations of innovative tanning techniques and practices back to ideas around national economy. Secondly, the language of these sources represents an attempt to make production processes public, even if through a relatively limited body of sources. The contemporary meaning of leather, therefore, should be understood in the context of tanning, and this is echoed in contemporary retail sources explored in this chapter and the next. In the broader context of increasing consumption

[48] L Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England', *The Agricultural History Review* 14.1 (1966); J.W. Waterer, *Leather in Life, Art and Industry,* (London, 1946), p. 1.
[49] M. Shaw, 'Early Post-Mediaeval: Tanning in Northampton, England', *Archaeology*, 40.2 (March, 1987), pp. 46-47.

these sources therefore suggest that the meaning ascribed to materials – and therefore to objects made using them – was linked to some extent to public knowledge of production.

National and regional identities

This first point above, relating to the success of English and Irish production, found broader purchase in these texts as one aspect of their focus on regional and national identities: a second broad theme which emerged from the language of these sources. Here, the language of texts created a framework enabling readers to geographically locate specific processes or techniques and articulate outward-looking investigation and comparison. Although these national and regional associations of particular tanning methods served first an obvious descriptive function in tying such practices to a geographic location, closer reading of these descriptions suggests that secondly – as with the thematic bracket of innovation – the descriptions of tanning were also loaded with political or cultural meaning.

These texts suggest that national labelling was a significant concern for eighteenth-century authors on leather. Maple's 1729 text provides a wide-ranging postscript including many materials which were effectual for tanning and directly linked to a tangible place of origin, such as leaves of sumac in Macedonia, cods of acacia in Egypt and Arabia and bark of the pitch tree in Phrygia and Lefbos.[50] By the time of Vallancey's translation approximately 45 years later the range and precision of terms of cultural difference had expanded further still. *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather* revealed the diversity of this investigation, including passages focusing on the techniques of the following nations or specific places: England, France, Walachia, Transilvania, Liege, Denmark, Paris, Cyprus, the Levant and Nicosia.[51]

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[50] Maple, *A Compleat and Effectual Method,* Postscript.
[51] Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather,* see contents, pp. 6-7.

One clear function of this use of different national labels is to enable the reader to make comparisons between different industrial practices, more broadly indicative of cultural learning: investigation and introspection.[52] National practices were, in some cases, clearly rooted in the botanical and faunal sources of tannins and skins respectively. On botanicals, Pluche described the traditional oak-bark tanning method, the 'distinctive work of the Hungarian leather dresser' which involved the use of suet or tallow, the use of 'redon' in Gascony, St. Germain and Polish Russia, and the use of sumac in Morocco.[53] Pluche also links national difference to the availability of certain types of skin:

> It is true that the Northern Parts of Europe and America furnish us with Furs of great Softness and Lustre*. The Countries, which send us the most valuable, are Siberia on the Confines of Tartary and Muscovy, Nova Zembla, Spitsberg, Groenland, Terra de Labrador, or New Britain, and Canada. The Ostiacks and Samoids, who inhabit the northern Parts of Siberia near the Sea, venture on the Ice into uninhabited Countries, in order to hunt Rene-Deer, Elks, and Foxes.[54]

There is some issue of definition here. Certain kinds of leather with national labels attached – such as 'Russia leather', of which Pluche remarks 'the Polish Russians make a great mystery', and 'Morocco leather' – are distinguishable by the precise method of their manufacture, rather than where that process was located in the eighteenth century.[55] Indeed, Vallancey's translated work demonstrates for the case of Russia leather that the unique qualities of the finished

[52] D. Outram, 'Europe's mirror? The Enlightenment and the exotic', in D. Outram (ed.) *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 63-79.
[53] Ibid. pp. 229-230.
[54] Pluche, *Spectacle de la Nature*, p. 225.
[55] Ibid. p. 229.

product were not about the location or materials of work, rather the more transferable actions and tools of the craftspeople.[56] 'Morocco' leather faces similar issues of definition: while the use of sumac in Morocco did naturally dye leathers red during the tanning process, some eighteenth century objects were described using 'Morocco' simply to mean red in colour, without any obvious connection to Morocco itself. Nevertheless, these examples from Pluche's *Spectacle de la Nature* do illustrate that certain national terms were being used not only to distinguish between different places of production, but also between the different types of indigenous material requisite to their making. This use of national terms culturally and spatially defined techniques while simultaneously placing tanning within a genre of comparison and investigation.

Vallancey's translated work consolidates the association between technique and national identity or space through detailed outlines of English and Danish tanning. The outline of English tanning describes the straightforward transfer of hides between up to five or six different pits as they steep in ooze. Materially, the method is advantageous as it extends to the greatest possible extent the amount of time hides are exposed to 'the most penetrating and styptic parts of the bark in the state of solution'.[57] The industrial advantages of English tanning are also clear as 'one man may the easier manage a great number of pits, containing each twenty, thirty, or forty hides, more or less'.[58] Therefore, the English method of tanning was of high yield for minimum labour intensity. The same could be said of Danish tanning practices, but here the text comments on the expeditious manner of production which resulted from the different construction of the pits and the more highly concentrated solution hides were steeped in.[59] While both techniques had their advantages, therefore, there was a clear expression of

[56] Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather*, pp. 195-197.
[57] Ibid. pp. 42-44.
[58] Ibid. p. 43.
[59] Ibid. pp. 110-112.

material difference that was primarily communicated to readers in terms of cultural origin. *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather* builds on this national labelling further through a comparison of French and English practice: first by equating two English baskets of bark to 'eighteen Parisian bushels', and secondly commenting off-hand that, of the length of time involved in tanning, 'it is thought in France that the English tanners employ more time.'[60]

This discussion suggests, therefore, that descriptions of tanning relied to some extent on national identities in communicating different practices, but this does not capture the way in which such terms were used to represent the significance of leather tanning industries to their respective home nations. For Howard, the invention of his new 'engine' responded to broader national ecological problems:

> so may this invention save the felling of timber when the sap is up, which, when 'tis done, causes the outside of the trees to rot and grow worm-eaten; whereas if the trees had been felled in winter, when the sap was down, they would have been almost all heart and not subject to worms.[61]

Tanning was therefore not only connected to the skin of the animal but evidently also to the ecological materials employed in the tanning process. The printer's postscript to Maple's text, above, associates specific tannins with specific national or regional origins, while Vallancey similarly outlines a very wide selection of materials with attention to where they are most easily accessible and readily employed. Tanning communicated national identities based not only on

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[60] Ibid. p. 42.
[61] Howard, 'Brief Directions', p. 93.

the uniqueness of the tanning method but, as these texts reflect, because the process manipulated a number of materials literally rooted in national space.

Prefaces by Maple and Vallancey also, however, integrated this national-industrial subject matter with a more ideological rationale for their texts, showing how technical and specific knowledge could operate as a microcosm of wider thought. Maple begins with basic assumptions of intrinsic value: first that the riches of every country arise from its natural produce and, principally, the labour and art employed in improving the same; second, that the quantity of native commodities should be in proportion to the number of people usefully employed.[62] Maple then considers the state of Irish trade in relation to these principles, finding that the nation's chief exports are 'but little removed from the state nature has given them, and have little or no labour or art employed about them'.[63] Addressing this problem appears to motivate Maple's intervention in the discourses surrounding this industry. Vallancey, similarly, whose work was commissioned to enable Irish tanners to compete against the advances of Europe, states that he was persuaded his 'time [could not] be employed in a more national object'. Vallancey also remarks that 'the generosity of that patriotic society in printing and dispersing this work […] will be amply rewarded by the encrease of the exports of tanned leather, the natural commodity of this country, to its utmost bounds'.[64] Though impressed by the innovation of lime water, Vallancey is also displeased with his contemporary, Macbride, for not having made his formula available on a national scale earlier: '[the Doctor] has hitherto thought proper to communicate his secret to one company, who carry on the business at Belfast, the publick are hitherto deprived of the benefit which might arise from it'.[65]

[62] Maple, *A Compleat and Effectual Method,* Preface.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather,* p. xii.
[65] Ibid, p. xiv.

Thinking about the meaning of leather at a production stage as represented in these texts, therefore, demonstrates how descriptive language was used to geographically locate specific methods but also to create a comparison between discretely 'native' and 'foreign' practices. Meanwhile, the broader concept of national identity, if not necessarily through national terms, was shown to have a very close interrelation with leather production through discussions about the raw, organic materials at the root of production. In all sources, there is a close relationship between practice, nation and its producers.

Selling Leather Objects

Having explored the language used to describe and represent production processes, this section follows the life cycle of leather by turning to retail. There are two major aims here. The first is to examine the use of 'leather' in advertisements, to demonstrate that material terms were key identifiers for objects in eighteenth-century advertisements. The second is to place these examples in the context of other material terms related to the manufacture of leather – principally 'skin' and 'hide' – to examine questions about broader meanings of leather and whether ideas from descriptions of tanning entered sources representative of retail. One of the newspapers used in this section is *The Public Advertiser*, and a brief history of this publication serves to highlight the advantages of newspaper advertisements as a source type. By 1772 Henry Woodfall was editor of the paper, and in 1778 it was passed to his son, Henry Sampson Woodfall. Hannah Barker describes *The Public Advertiser* as a 'successful paper' under Woodfall's command, citing reports of sales between 3,000 and 4,500 copies a day in 1779.[66] For their relative longevity, volume and range newspaper advertisements are a useful repository of language.

[66] Hannah Barker, 'Woodfall, Henry Sampson (1739–1805)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29913, accessed 13 June 2016].

Compared to works about production which suggest the associations of leather tanning when turned to a potentially varied audience, these advertisements document a specific part of the material life cycle and demonstrate how language could be used to target leather goods towards consumers. This section will examine how this source compared to and intersected with the language used by tanners. In order to address points of interaction, it will specifically analyse advertisements using the three key terms – 'leather', 'skin' and 'hide' – which directly correspond to the material at different stages of the tanning process, across different categories of advertisement. It will also address descriptive terms applied to goods. In so doing it suggests that there was an awareness of production from the perspective of consumers and that specific contexts created conditions for the use of each term.

'Leather' Goods in Advertisements

The three most common 'leather' object types included in advertisements were book-bindings, shoes and a range of carry cases. Broadly-characterized, retail advertisements contextualized objects described as 'leather' relative to their aesthetic and visual appeal, the reputation of their manufacturers, and their function. The advertisements below do illustrate the relevance of these basic consumer currencies, but closer reading of the descriptive language attached to these goods allows broader suggestions about the meaning of leather and consumer awareness of tanning. The main finding of this section is that the descriptive language used, generally, focussed on the qualities of leather that were particularly suited to the object in question.

Leather book-bindings appeared in advertisements for retail across both the 1752-1757 and 1770-1775 datasets for the *Public Advertiser*. These advertisements demonstrate the importance of leather both as a material signifier and an indicator of visual style and appeal.

The first example, dated 1753, is for the 'Museum Florentinum', a '[…]compleat sett[…] neatly bound in Russia Leather, gilt on the Leaves, with gold Borders, and other Ornaments'.[67] In the second dataset for the *Public Advertiser* the first entry for a leather-bound book is 'The Polite Pocket-Book' or 'Daily Journal for the Year 1771', which was advertised for sale in Morocco leather in November 1770.[68] Such advertisements are common throughout both sets, ending with 'The Modern Fine Gentleman: A Novel' published and bound in red leather and decorated with cuts of Aesop's Fables, advertised by Mr Jackson of Fleet Street in the *Public Advertiser* in January 1775.[69] Similar descriptions from the *London Daily Advertiser* reaffirm this finding: 'The Laboratory: Or, School of Arts' was advertised for sale in January 1756 bound in calf leather,[70] and various volumes for sale in Morocco leather by the booksellers J. Whiston and B. White in January 1759.[71] Between the above highlighted beginning and end examples of each set for the *Public Advertiser* and *London Daily Advertiser* respectively, the basic contents of these advertisements did not change.

The classic study of bookbindings is Edith Diehl's.[72] Similarly to Waterer, Diehl's interest in this subject matter stemmed from her professional occupation as a bookbinder first. Accordingly, Diehl's text shares a number of similar aims with Waterer's key publications: tracing the *longue durée* development of bookbinding techniques, and identifying material differences in products of different cultural origins. Diehl's text surveys a large number of surviving material examples of bookbindings from a wide geographic and chronological scope, and this brief foray into a supplementary object type which aims to contextualize these

[67] *Public Advertiser* (London, England), 4 October 1753; Issue 5908. 'Russia' leather in this context regards the appearance resulting from a particular making process. This is discussed in full in chapter 3.
[68] *Public Advertiser*, 9 November 1770; Issue 11236.
[69] *Public Advertiser*, 7 January 1775, Issue 14125.
[70] *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, (London, England) 30 January 1756, Issue 4484.
[71] *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, 15 January 1759, Issue 5394.
[72] E. Diehl, *Bookbinding: Its Background and Technique*, (London, 1946).

advertisements cannot represent this range. However, it is worth highlighting surviving examples from the period to demonstrate the materiality which these advertisements represented.

One example which survives in excellent condition is a 1713 volume comprising a Prayer Book, Bible and Psalter, held by Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire (Figure 3.3).[73] This object demonstrates contemporary techniques which correspond to the advertisement for the *Museum Florentinum*, above. This book is completely bound in a goatskin leather which has been dyed red. After binding, the leather covers and spine have been elaborately decorated using a gilt tooling method. There are numerous patterns marked upon the surface of this book to complete the overall design: geometric cuts provide outlines upon the covers and spine of the book, into which are cut floral patterns, stars, roses, thistles and dots. The overall effect is of a densely populated surface reflecting both complexity of design and workmanship. Furthermore, the richness of these patterns has resulted in a large amount of the overall surface being gilt, and this underlines the material value of the object too. So too do these advertisements, which make clear that the materials of bindings had an important impact on the economic value with which they were ascribed. In comparison to Anglesey Abbey's Old Testament, therefore, historians may also consider a 1776 Family Bible, held at Sunnycroft in Shropshire (Figure 3.4).[74] Although similar in dimensions, this book is considerably less decorated than the example at Anglesey Abbey. While there is some gilt work used on the spine of this Family Bible, there is only a simple cut border on the front cover. Examining these two material examples of objects described in newspaper advertisements goes some way to understand the differences in the

[73] National Trust object number 3151101.
[74] National Trust object number 3230680.

value ascribed to them at the point of sale by visibly demonstrating the differing extents of materials and labour that went into them.

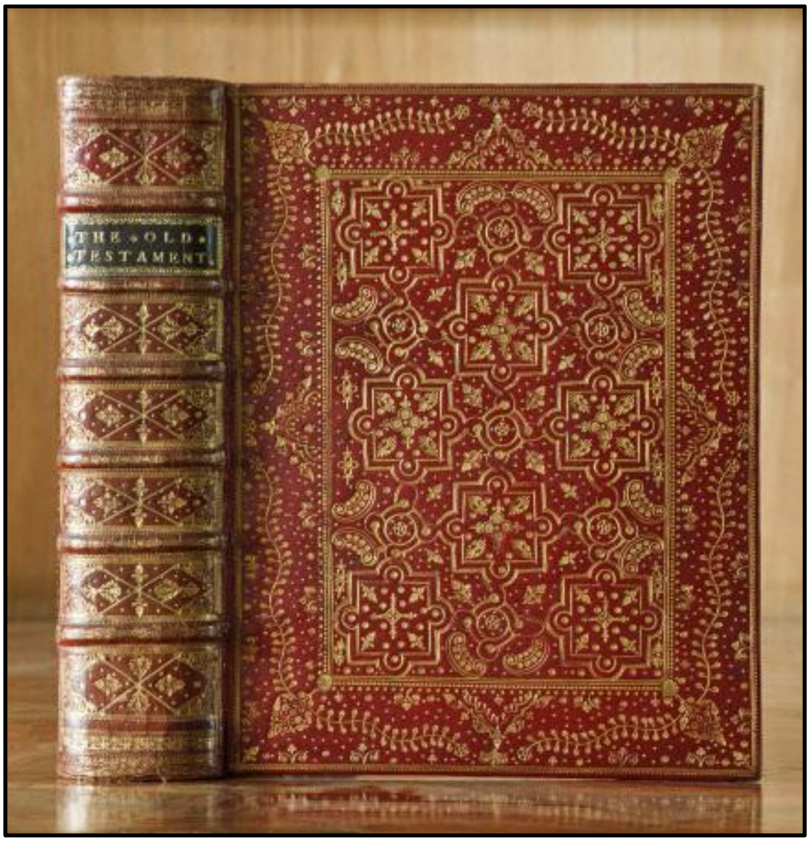

Figure 3.3: National Trust object 3151101. Image © National Trust Images / John Hammond.

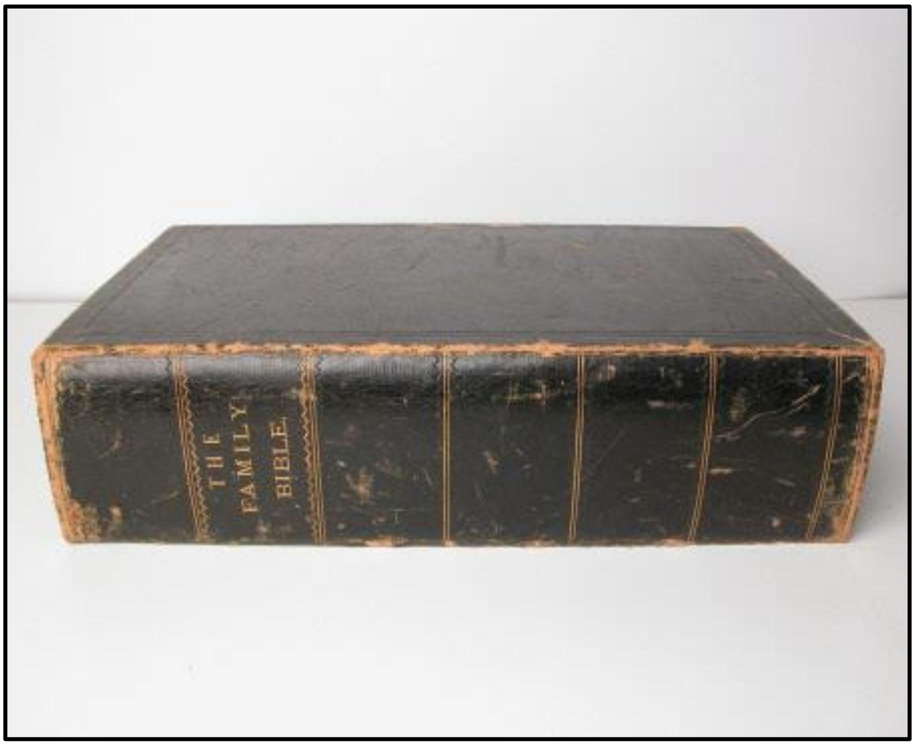

Figure 3.4: National Trust object 3230680. Image © National Trust / Rebecca Farr.

Taken together, these advertisements and the objects which correspond to the material range they indicate demonstrate that leather was a staple choice of material for book-bindings. Indeed, across the years 1752-1757 and 1770-1775 the terms 'leather', 'skin' and 'calf' collectively appeared within a ten-word proximity of 'bound' – a term not used in relation to other leather objects – a total of 553 times in the *Public Advertiser*. In these examples and others, material terms are used in an almost purely aesthetic sense. 'Morocco', 'Russia' and 'calf' are connected to bindings in a similar fashion to 'cuts', 'red' and 'gilt' as part of generating a sense of value or appeal.[75] That material terms appeared in close proximity to the detail of aesthetic craftsmanship undertaken by bookbinders suggests that both were important to consumers in the mid-eighteenth-century.

[75] A full discussion of Russia leather follows in chapter 3 of this thesis.

‘Leather’ was also a key identifier for carry cases. In April 1753, the *Public Advertiser* printed an advert for Thomas Griffith, who made and sold:

> all sorts of strong travelling trunks, Leather Portmanteaus, Vallees for Bedding, Cantees, Magazines for Powder, Fire Buckets, and Drinking Leather Jacks, Cudgel Hilt, and Ink Bottles, […] and Wig Bores, strong Cases for Plate, China, and Glasses, and all sorts of Leather Work, at the lowest Prices.[76]

There was evidently a range of qualities which contributed to making ‘leather’ goods attractive. For the booksellers above, the decoration and quality of binding was of central importance. Meanwhile, Griffith gives primacy to highlighting the strength and durability of the material, accompanied by ensuring his consumers were aware of the extensive range of objects available and the competitive price of his goods. In Griffith’s advertisement the types of leather objects included are varied, but similarly to the advertisements described above this advert for carrying cases uses leather as an identifier tied closely to its relevant important qualities: strength and durability. Surviving artefactual evidence of travelling trunks such as these will be explored later in this chapter.

Similar uses of ‘leather’ can be observed in advertisements for footwear. Two manufacturers had repeated print-runs of their advertisements in the *Public Advertiser* starting in July and December 1753 respectively:

> SMART’s Country Shoe Warehouse[…] SELLS all Sorts of SHOES and BOOTS[…] at the lowest Prices[…] Ditto Strong Leather Shore, at 2 s. 6 d. Silk, Velvet and Leather

[76] *Public Advertiser*, 17 April 1753.

> Clogs, Boys and Girls Shoes and Pumps of all Size. All Sorts of Shoes and Boots for Exportation.[77]

and,

> JOHN KNIGHT[… who] continues to sell ALL Sorts of Mens, Womens and Childrens Shoes, &c with all Sorts of Boots, and sells Retail, MENS: Best Campaign Shoes and Double Channel Pumps[…] Single Channel and Strong Yorkshire Shoes for the Winter[…] WOMENS: Rich Silk Shoes[…] Strong neat Leather Shoes.[78]

For these advertisers, both selling shoes, similar values are exploited to make goods seem more attractive: the qualities of the materials, the skill of the craftsmen and the range of objects available. The only noticeable difference between these adverts it is in how the range of attractive features are ordered. Smart places the inexpensive nature of his goods as the first and most obvious factor, only succeeded for primacy by his basic output and location of his shop. Knight, by comparison, does not reference the price of his goods but places greater emphasis on their functionality: 'strong' and 'neat' leather shoes. Knight also places significance on the specificity of his products; a number of different shoes for different audiences and functions. Griffith, above, is more attentive to the material properties of leather; its strength and its flexibility to be turned towards a range of functions. Here, its imperviousness to water, its protective, secure qualities and its strength are the central qualities Griffith exploits in order to advertise his goods. The cheapness of his goods is appended onto the end of the advertisement in a somewhat haphazard fashion, only after the advertisement has indicated Griffith's

[77] *Public Advertiser*, 25 July 1753, Issue 5847.
[78] *Public Advertiser*, 21 December 1753, Issue 5695.

flexibility and skill as a craftsman; his ability to perform ‘all sorts of Leather Work’. As a supplementary object type used to contextualize saddles, material examples of the kinds of footwear that were being sold through contemporary advertise will be examined in chapter 4 of this thesis.

What binds these advertisements is that no manufacturer uses any more specific term than ‘leather’. Although, therefore, these objects can be understood within the framework of the consumption of leather goods and the general associations of this material, they do not necessarily link goods consumption to tanning. Instead, these advertisements highlight the qualities of leather exploited to make goods attractive responded directly to the object type in question and its desired function. Meaning – or at least association – was therefore dependent on the context provided by the object in which the material was being used. In the cases of Griffith, Knight and Smart the simple use of ‘leather’ adeptly captures their intention to communicate its material properties. Meanwhile, the structure of this advertisement suggests some of the decisions which advertisers had to make when placing their goods in this space to undergo public scrutiny. These examples also show a range of different identifiers – from material to stylistic and function – were used within individual adverts, but that typically only one or two key terms were applied to individual goods.

Straightforward retail was one mode through which consumers could access these objects. In comparison, the evidence of house sales document instances where consumers were able to access good through a second-hand market. This category includes a high concentration of household furniture: very frequently leather chairs akin to those objects examined in chapter 5. There are a number of available examples illustrating range within this category too. On 25 September 1753, the *Public Advertiser* listed the auction of a house of goods at the Golden

Eagle in Bloomsbury, including 12 walnut-tree chairs with Spanish – here to indicate gilden – leather seats and backs, alongside two 'fine' mahogany tables.[79] On 22 January 1754, the paper advertised a sale for the 'household goods of a gentleman', consisting of clean goose feather beds, several sets of chairs with leather bottoms, easy chairs and mahogany tables, and in July that same year the goods of Michael Arnold were advertised for auction.[80] Arnold's goods also included chairs with leather bottoms, mahogany tables, several sorts of beds, French chairs, several jacks and 'sundry sorts of kitchen furniture'. Mr Ashley's goods, for sale in July 1755 included neat household furniture and a 'great variety of leather and other curious fans and mounts', and those sold by Mr Whitcomb, auctioneer, in March 1770 included mahogany bureaus, sundry leather jack chairs and drinking tables, a 'smoak jack' and kitchen furniture.[81] One may draw similar findings from auction sales of household goods is mirrored in the *Daily Advertiser.* On 20 January 1752 Mr Lear at the Great House on Leadenhall Street sold a range of goods including chairs with leather and matted seats, and two weeks later at an auction in Red Lion Court Walnut-tree chairs with leather and matted bottoms were on the bill.[82] On 6 December 1773 W. Wynn conducted an auction on the Exeter Exchange which included some 'good leather jack chairs for a public house'.[83] 'Fine Russia leather chairs', meanwhile, were sold by Mr Halford at auction on 13 October 1774.[84]

The use of 'leather', or other material terms, in this category of advertisements suggests that the material itself was one of the most distinguishing features of an object – and this is important as it suggests materials were a more prominent identifier than the object's intended location in the home or style, say. Accordingly, this demonstrates one instance in which

[79] *Public Advertiser*, 25 September 1753, Issue 5900.
[80] *Public Advertiser*, 22 January 1754, Issue 6002; 1 July 1754, Issue 6137.
[81] *Public Advertiser*, 2 July 1755, Issue 6461.
[82] *Daily Advertiser*, 20 January 1752, Issue 6562; 4 February 1752, Issue 6576.
[83] *Daily Advertiser*, 6 December 1773, Issue 13403.
[84] *Daily Advertiser*, 13 October 1774, Issue 13670.

materials were significant in the consumption of these objects, and were a key part of the meaning consumers derived from goods, particularly in this ‘hypothetical’ stage of ownership in which a good was being expected or imagined, rather than possessed.

There was, however, potential for an inconsistent use of material terms alongside other identifiers, as demonstrated by a 1754 auction in Bloomsbury Square: the sale of the valuable effects of a ‘Person of Distinction’. Listed among these objects were mahogany and walnut-tree, easy and arm chairs, breakfast, dining, card and other tables, India and Japan cabinets, India and Leather screens. This example and those above place leather goods alongside a mix of household furnishings. ‘Leather’, either as a singular and uncomplicated term, in terms of its specific use within the product ‘at the bottoms’, or in terms of its decoration, such as ‘Spanish leather’, was clearly readily applied and easily identifiable. Similarly, tables and bureaus described simply in terms of ‘mahogany’ communicated in their simple naming enough of the product for consumers to understand its value to them and make a decision whether or not to attend the auction. Other examples, however, did not name materials at all but described the goods in terms of function, style or location in the home; ‘French’, ‘easy’, ‘arm’, ‘card’, ‘dining’, ‘kitchen’ or ‘breakfast’. In short, in advertisements for auctions simple and short identifiers of each good were used, before moving onto the next, and there was an evident relationship between the utility and fashion of a thing which determined how it was advertised. This suggests that the descriptor used was the most accessible, appropriate or attractive term to communicate a specific good to its potential purchaser and in so doing highlights examples where leather was perceived to be particularly important to consumers. Similarly, the sample datasets also include advertisements for auctions including leather screens, dressers and one for a leather harpsichord.[85] As with chairs, a number of identifiers would be appropriate for these objects.

A final category of advertisements – those for lost, found and stolen objects – can be also be used to identify types of leather object and access the descriptive meaning of 'leather'. Where this category of advertisements builds on what can be known from those for retail or auction is that they also suggest that these descriptive terms were as used by the consumers themselves as the individuals attempting to sell to them. As such this particular source may be seen as something of a hybrid between the retail and consumption stages this thesis addresses. These adverts, posted by individuals to seek the return of goods, can be divided into those for lost leather goods, and those for objects which are accompanied by leather accessories. Among the lost or stolen items described as 'leather' in the *Public Advertiser* include lost leather pocket books, pocket cases, letter books, cloak bags and collars on lost dogs.[86] This is similar for the *Daily Advertiser*. In some cases, these objects are embellished with descriptors to ease identification or suggest greater value – a lost Russia leather dog's collar, or stolen red Morocco leather pocket book.[87] In 1771 the *Public Advertiser* reported stolen items ranging from a 'neat' leather saddle to a Morocco leather belt, mounted with silver, and in 1773 a stolen pair of Basil leather slippers, a specific term indicating product awareness and value.[88]

One of the object categories that is presented often throughout newspaper advertisements of this nature are letter cases, bags, wallets, and other forms of carry case used to transport and protect goods in equal measure. When objects such as those discussed above were represented in newspaper advertisements they were often presented as secondary to their contents.

[85] *Daily Advertiser*, 5 March 1772, Issue 12854.
[86] *Public Advertiser*, 21 July 1755, Issue 6477; 22 December 1755, Issue 6592.
[87] *Public Advertiser*, 28 July 1755, Issue 6483; 13 October 1755, Issue 6548.
[88] *Public Advertiser*, 4 March 1771, Issue 11316; 2 April 1771, Issue 11339; 9 December 1773, Issue 12055.

Consumers seeking the return of lost objects such as letter cases therefore might specify, for instance, that it was the contents that were of more value than the case itself, or that no financial reward was being offered because the contents were of no value other than to the owner. This presentation of letter cases, as well as other forms of carry case, as incidental to the ownership of that which they carried paints a picture of such cases as rudimentary or low-value objects. Examining surviving examples of carry cases, however, suggests that there was significant material range within this object category. Accordingly, the more cultural presentation of cases as lesser-valuable objects may be contrasted with evidence drawn from the objects themselves – objects with a material and functional value. On the one hand, this range was physically materialized. At the smallest end of the scale more elite consumers may expect to use pocket wallets to carry money and papers, while a greater range in material quality can be observed within objects that were physically larger: cases, trunks and coffers.

Figure 3.5: Samuel Pepys pocket wallet, National Leather Collection object number 1319.65. Image © the National Leather Collection.

One treasured object held by the National Leather Collection is the pocket wallet owned by Samuel Pepys, the MP and diarist (Figure 3.5).[89] Using a brown tanned goatskin for both its external body and interior lining, the choice of materials used to make this pocket wallet would provide both protection for its contents as well as a surface texture that was soft to the touch for its consumer. The identity of the consumer in this case is made immediately visible by embroidery with silver thread across both the proper front and back of the object. The pocket wallet is simple in construction: a rectangular piece of leather has been folded back upon itself and stitched at the short ends to create a rectangular pocket, closed by a flapped lid. The flapped lid overlaps the front of the object, and when lifted to access the pocket reveals embroidery

[89] National Leather Collection, object number 1319.65.

naming the owner of the pocket wallet: Sam[l] Pepys Esq. The lettering and accompanying decorative flowers cover most of the proper front of this object, while the back features large lettering reading 'Constantinople Anno 1687'. With this embroidery made in silver thread – now dulled – the wallet would have had a shiny, richly decorated appearance.

Figure 3.6: Reverse of National Leather Collection object number 1311.65. Image © the National Leather Collection.

Pairing this pocket wallet with another object in the collections – a similar pocket wallet with embroidery which reads 'Constantinopoli 1702' – suggests both that there was a sustained pattern for pocket wallets made in this fashion, and that there an either material or cultural connection between this object type and the English experience of 'other' spaces (Figure 3.6).[90]

[90] National Leather Collection, object number 1311.65.

Indeed, their explicit reference to Constantinople neatly maps onto the function of these objects as mobile and portable, connected to transit, but they may have also been gifts or keepsake items. These pocket wallets are without an accompanying paper trail, and so their precise meaning and function to their consumers is difficult to ascertain. They are a useful addition to the broader aim of this chapter in understanding the language of leather, however, as they illustrate the disparities between language and materiality across the social life of things. In the case of these pocket wallets, similarly to other marked objects in the period, there was a clear personal and material value. Were these objects similarly described upon the moment of purchase or receipt it would be difficult to imagine them being described as so incidental, but at the moment of loss it was clearly their contents which were more valuable to the consumer. This example therefore also highlights the benefit of a methodology based on multiple source types to assess objects in order to achieve an understanding of their significance across the full social life of things.

Items similarly characterised by mobility, and which were described in similar ways to wallets in lost and found advertisements, were storage chests or cases. These objects varied considerably both in scale– from small cases custom-designed to transport and protect equally small objects, to large chests and coffers which could transport a range of goods – as well as in their material quality. In terms of coffers and chests, some more rudimentary objects are available in contemporary collections. One coffer, held by Dunham Massey in Cheshire, measures approximately three feet in width and two feet and uses two different types of leather: a tanned and hardy cow hide is used to plate the exterior of the wooden boards used to make the box and lid, while a softer sheepskin lines the interior surfaces (Figure 3.7).[91] The combination of different types of leather speaks to the function of this object; while wood

[91] National Trust object number 930599.

provided the structure, a tougher leather protected the exterior of the coffer and the sheepskin lining would protect its contents. Minimal decoration is provided by lines of brass studs along the sides and lid of the coffer, with the date '1735' marked with studs in the top centre. Meanwhile, Derbyshire's Hardwick Hall holds three examples of eighteenth-century travelling trunks. Similarly to the trunk at Dunham Massey, these 1720s objects use leather and brass studs on the exterior surfaces (Figure 3.8).[92] By contrast, however, the interior is lined with paper and silk, and there are additional metal plates used to reinforce the lock and edges of the chest – as well as provide some more elaborate decoration. Posited alongside the pocket wallets above, these examples of chests demonstrate some shared uses of leather. Both object types simultaneously exploit the protective and decorative qualities of this material, but they also use additional materials to enrich this decoration. That these four examples are all marked objects – in some way commemorating their owners or specific dates – places them in a similar framework to the drinking vessels that will be discussed in chapter 6. This also reflects the function of these cases and wallets in being personal, possessed goods. In turn, this marking reflects the personal significance of the objects these cases were used to transport.

[92] National Trust object numbers 1127726, 1127784 and 1127788.

Figure 3.7: National Trust object number 930599. Image © National Trust / Robert Thrift.

Figure 3.8: National Trust object number 1127784. Image © National Trust / Robert Thrift.

Three key suggestions arise from assessing these sources. First, these advertisements illustrate a number of objects owned in the period and identified as leather, especially those which were movable goods, worn, or carried on one's person: items of clothing and a range of protective cases, boxes and trunks. Using this additional source type therefore builds on what historians may understand of leather consumption in this period by working solely from more straightforward evidence of possession, such as inventories. Secondly, because these advertisements were posted to facilitate the return of an object, they illustrate a language which could be mobilized by consumers – even if it was not the consumers writing and posting such advertisements – and which was expected to be understood by them. Thirdly, and relating to both of these points, the language applied to the lost good is indicative of value, either in a purely financial sense or reflecting the emotional value ascribed to the good by its owner. In those where the lost object was accompanied by a leather accessory, the relative detail applied in the balance between the two suggests how important the leather accessory was as part of the recognisable identity of the good. Vague and fleeting references to the accessory suggest it was an unimportant part of the good, while more detail suggests greater value both to the good and the user.[93]

On the whole, advertisements for 'leather' objects – across different advertisement formats – generated frameworks of value on a case-by-case basis; the strength of leather shoes, the artistry of leather book bindings. On the one hand this suggests that descriptions of objects were tied to the function they were required to perform, as was the value of the object being described. These sources also demonstrate, however, that the value of leather in part resulted from its ability to meet the functional needs of a range of objects, and that the material complexity of leather in terms of its qualities, production and origins naturally leant itself to a range of different descriptive terms.

[93] *Public Advertiser*, 24 November 1753, Issue 5932.

Leather, Skin, Hide

All the categories of advertisements above, while suggesting that 'leather' was a useful term for consumers to understood goods, do not suggest that uses of 'leather' as a descriptor were any more or less unique than the same use of other materials. The picture was not straightforward: leather aided identifying objects and was used descriptively, but in the case of this material consumers had a wider repository of descriptive terms to draw upon – including 'skin', 'hide', and specific types of leather such as 'Russia' or 'Morocco' – and this shaped the language of leather objects. Advertisements in which 'skin' and 'leather' co-exist, however, also suggest that these terms were understood to be materially related, and this can evidenced by a discussion of advertisements for a related suite of objects: saddles, breeches and shoes. Saddles will form the primary material focus in chapter 4 of this thesis, with relevant comparisons made to breeches and shoes.

One key finding from these sources is that objects labelled as 'skin' in this context typically held greater cultural value. For instance, in August 1770 shoe-maker Thomas Smith referenced 'skin' as part of his framing of products – therefore setting him apart from his contemporaries Griffith, Smart and Knight, above. Smith sold:

> the best Calf-skin Boots at 15 s. per Pair; Mens Shoes and Pumps, 4 s. 9 d. Mens best Sort and bound Tops, 5 s. Superfine lasting Shoes and Pumps, 3 s. 6 d. Ditto Callimancoes, 3 s. 4 d. Womens neat Leather Pumps, 3 s. Womens strong Leather Shoes, 2 s. 9 d.[94]

[94] *Public Advertiser*, 31 August 1770, Issue 11122.

Evidently, the physical properties of leather were being exploited in Smith's advertisement similarly to Griffith, Smart and Knight: its enduring nature, strength and neatness. The products are clearly separated by different corresponding prices. But the advertiser also draws a linguistic separation between different products: 'strong' shoes, 'neat' pumps, 'mens' and 'womens'. Most importantly for the question of materials at hand, Smith also distinguishes 'Calf-skin' as distinct from the 'leather' of his other products, despite both 'leather' also being a fair material descriptor for tanned calf skin. To these 'calf-skin boots' are attached a greater price-tag, and this immediately suggests that this product is of a higher quality or targeted towards wealthier consumers. Indeed, the calf-skin boots cost three-times as much as the shoes and pumps. On the basis of an advertisement, the consumer has no other key indicator with which to identify these boots as justifying the clear additional investment other than the material it is advertised to be composed of – there is a notable absence of other descriptive language.

Smith's calf-skin boots were not a lone example. A further separation between 'skin' and 'leather' was made in an advertisement for breeches manufactured by Thomas Bird, first printed in December 1752, which indicates different animal skins occupied different prices. Bird advertised that he made:

> all Sorts of very good Buck and Doe Breeches in the neatest Manner, from 15 s. to 25 s. Pair; also superfine black Ram-Skin Breeches, at 10 s. 6 d. small and 12 s. large Sizes; and all other Sortments of Leather.[95]

[95] *Public Advertiser*, 21 December 1752.

Here, Bird makes the same separation between different materials and their associated price as does Smith. However, while Smith gives greater value to 'calf-skin' in comparison to 'leather' Bird makes an even more specific separation between different animal skins, in so doing escalating the association between 'skin' and value, and placing a greater descriptive emphasis on the origin of materials. Bird's breeches composed of deerskin are advertised at a greater value to those of ram-skin, while his other goods are labelled in a somewhat carte blanche manner as simply 'leather'. This advertisement therefore suggests not only that goods identified' as skin were associated with greater value than those simply of 'leather', but that the animal the skin originated from was a key shaper in the nature of its value. In the context of Bird's advertisement, deerskin enjoys a more valuable position than ram – and, again, it was only the basic information of the animal which enabled the consumer to rationalize the difference in price between the goods.

The case of saddles in retail advertisements is the definitive case of this descriptive technique, usefully pulling together 'leather', 'skin' and 'hide' as occupying different spaces of value. These objects will be explored in far greater detail in chapter 4. On 9 April 1755, the opening of The London Saddle Warehouse, situated on the East side of Southampton Street, was announced through an advertisement in the *Public Advertiser* with some excitement.[96] On 7 May it opened its doors. The first advert for the Warehouse listed an extensive range of goods, including: 'hogskin hunting-saddles', 'doe-skin seats', 'Russia Leather skirts', 'Morocco skirts', 'plain hide-leather hunting-saddles', 'ladies hunting side-saddles, hog-skin or doe-skin seats quilted', the same with 'leopard-skin skirts fringed' and 'round-seated side-saddles with shammy leather seats' among others. [97] A week later the Warehouse reprinted their advert, this

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[96] *Public Advertiser*, 9 April 1755.
[97] *Public Advertiser*, 7 May 1755

time extending their range to include ‘swan-skin and cheque saddle-cloths’ and ‘horse cloths’ ‘in proportion to the prices above’.[98]

A similar range was exhibited in the *London Daily Advertiser* for the goods of William Wyatt.[99] Wyatt employed a range of strategies to make his goods attractive, but materials were central to this. Wyatt, selling from his shop in Chancery Lane also listed an extensive range: ‘the very best Hunting Saddles, with welted Hogskin Seats’, ‘Bare’ saddles at 25s, ‘Ladies Hunting Side Saddles, with quilted Doe Skin Seats, and made in the newest Taste’ at 36s and ‘Common’ at 28s. Wyatt also employed a strategy to reassure consumers of his credentials. Wyatt starts by detailing his experiences as a foreman to Mr Pennyman of Holborn and, having introduced his products, states ‘and if it can be made appear they are not full as good as what is made […]at any shop in the Kingdom, the money shall be returned after a Month’s wear, which plainly demonstrates no intended Deceit’.

Returning to the advert for the London Saddle Warehouse, the products available are presented in a rather unsystematic advertisement, organised neither by price nor by cultural prestige. Nevertheless, with some filtering the goods can be placed in order of their price, shown below (Table 3.2).

[98] *Public Advertiser*, 16 May 1755
[99] *London Daily Advertiser*, 12 May 1759

Product	Advertised price		
	l.	s.	d.
Ladies saddles in hog or doe skin with leopard skirts	5	5	
Hogskin saddle with Morocco skirt (high and low price)	3	3	
		50[100]	
Shammy leather seats	2	5	
Hogskin saddle with buck-skin seats and Russia skirts	2	2	
Ladies saddles in hog or doe skin		30[101]	
Hogskin saddle with quilted doe-skin		21[102]	
Hogskin saddle with doe skin		19	
Best plain hide hunting-saddle		16	6
Common hide saddle		14	

Table 3.2: Advertisement for the London Saddle Warehouse, *Public Advertiser,* 9 April 1755, with goods ordered by price.

Organized in this format, it is clearer, if not surprising, that the most expensive good for sale by the London Saddle Warehouse was a ladies' saddle skirted with leopard skin. Meanwhile the cheapest good at fourteen shillings only was a 'common', and unspecified, hide saddle. Considering both Wyatt's saddles and those for sale by the London Saddle Warehouse, there was some ordering of products on the basis of making: quilted and skirted saddles were more expensive than their more simply manufactured counterparts, if not by a significant margin, and the same hogskin saddle with a doe-skin seat was two shillings cheaper unquilted. At the same time, saddles featuring the more specifically named types of leather – 'Russia' and 'Morocco' – both feature within the higher bracket of prices, at least two or three pounds each. The London Saddle Warehouse, in a way similar to the above discussed advertisements of bookbinders, clearly included a range of craft techniques alongside material descriptors to differentiate the values of each example. In short, multiple descriptors were used to make goods

[100] Converts to 2-10-0.
[101] Converts to 1-10-0.
[102] Converts to 1-1-0.

appear attractive, but within advertisements for saddles, even comparing objects which used the same techniques or styles, the most obvious separator was first the choice of 'skin', 'leather' or hide', and secondly the animal of the skin used.

Very briefly, advertisements seeking the return of lost or stolen goods also used 'skin' in addition to these more crudely described lost or stolen 'leather goods', though to a lesser extent. In 1752, this included 'lost sometime out of a dwelling house, a woman's sable muff, lined with a silver-grey rabbit skin'.[103] The *Public Advertiser* also reported a lost bear-skin cap, a lost silver watch with a seal-skin case, lost doe-skin breeches, a lost dog skin case and on three separate occasions a stolen fish-skin tea chest.[104] Similarly to advertisements for lost or stolen goods, these sources suggest a consumer understanding of the material range of different leathers – the unique physical qualities of softer and lighter tanned animal skins – and also demonstrate that the language of 'skin', as described above, was used by consumers. These advertisements also suggest that 'skin' was an important part of how certain objects were 'branded' or conceptualized. The absence of 'leather tea chests' in these advertisements, for example, presents distinctively 'fish-skin tea chests' as an object type in itself.

To summarise the differences between these categories of advertisements in their treatment of the language of leather, then, highlights how and why the language directed towards consumers intersected with the language used to describe production. First, in retail – as demonstrated by shoes, breeches and saddles respectively – 'skin' was used to confer prestige to an object. The specificity of the material and ability of advertisers to relate an object to its animal-origins was 'value-creating', and so these objects were presented as more valuable than those described as

[103] *Public Advertiser*, 11 December 1752, Issue 5653.
[104] *Public Advertiser*, 1 December 1753, Issue 5958; 23 April 1755, Issue 3682; 13 December 1755, Issue 6593; 13 August 1770, Issue 11117; 24 March 1770, Issue 11028; 20 July 1770, Issue 11103; 20 October 1770, Issue 11225.

being made of 'leather' or 'hide'. In advertisements seeking the return of stolen goods, 'skin' was used rarely. The use of skin in these sources is significant, however, as it demonstrates that this semantic label was as relevant for the consumers describing their own goods once they were lost or stolen as it was for the producers advertising the goods to the marketplace.

Conclusions

Although materially these specific terms – 'hide', 'skin' and 'leather – represent an intersection between the tanning and sale of leather objects, and although advertisements and works about production used the same terms relating to leather as a material, the meaning of these terms was not always consistent. While retail language used material terms to demonstrate the value of an object in comparison to a range of others, production language related these terms to technical definitions and therefore demonstrate different ways in which the same material could be talked or written about. In comparison to retail descriptions, which generally relied on functional, material, or visual descriptors, production sources related leather – as a product of the tanning process – to the conceptual categories of innovation and national identity. Different bodies of sources, therefore, which dealt with two separate dimensions of the same subject matter and were designed to different ends, albeit sharing a mutual terminology, suggest that the meaning of a material to consumers drew on multiple factors.

On production, this chapter identified six sources throughout the long eighteenth century and understood the direct involvement of their authors with tanners to indicate these are useful repositories of language about tanning. The roles of innovation and nation respectively characterise the most common descriptive strategies employed in these texts, and analysing the structure of these texts has shown that production sources were capable of operating at different levels of knowledge; from the casual reader to the experienced professional. Where these sources use more technical language, these is a clear distinction between ‘skin’, ‘hide’ and ‘leather’ as these were loaded terms with recognizable meanings. With only a handful of exceptions ‘leather’ consistently indicated the state of the material at the end of the tanning process, as ready to be curried or dyed. ‘Skin’, while demarcating the raw material, clearly developed to have a more specific technical meaning as knowledge of how this substance operated under manipulation was enhanced. The use of descriptive strategies in these texts also demonstrates that materials were able to advance and be tethered to different meanings even at a raw, production stage. In the case of leather, these meanings were closely related to the physical nature of the tanning process.

This evidence of selling reaffirms that the material, and more specifically animal origins, of goods was a significant factor exploited by the structure of advertisements to create conditions of desire. Across a number of retail advertisements, ‘leather’, ‘skin’ and ‘hide’ were used to different means in order to construct values of goods – creating conditions of desire for a range of audiences. This section explored leather as described and represented through a defined sample of advertisements. It has broken this overall sample down into three sections which reflect the most common formulations of advertisements: retail, auctions and lost or stolen. In each of these cases it has identified a range of descriptors being used in accordance with the objects for sale, the authors or intended audiences of the texts and the function of that particular format. In terms of the development of this thesis it has also identified a range of leather goods described in terms of skin, and these objects will be materially examined throughout this thesis.

For the three leather-related terms this chapter investigates – ‘leather’, ‘skin’ and ‘hide’ – it has been argued that ‘leather’ was utilized largely as a vague, blanket term which was easily identifiable and appropriate for a range of objects. It was also ‘leather’ which was the carrier, if infrequently, for more specific terms of making such as ‘Russia’, ‘Morocco’ and ‘Basil’. ‘Skin’ acknowledged the material origins of leather in the butchered carcass of an animal and could be used alongside specific animal terms – anything from calf to swan to leopard – to indicate both economic value and cultural meaningfulness of goods. ‘Hide’ was used rarely in the genre of advertisements, but where it was used it indicated a rudimentary or unsophisticated material, and accordingly a less valuable good. This was reinforced on those occasions when ‘hide’ was appended with ‘plain’ or ‘common’ by retailers. Although some advertisements placed goods within a context of cultural origin or making, this functioned alongside bands of value corresponding to the range of different material craftsmen worked with, as evidenced by the different scales of value applied to goods by pricing structures. In some cases, the material itself was the only identifier of difference.

The outcomes of this comparison between the language communities of production and sale – both of which addressed the consumption of the material – are as follows. First, nation, while clearly significant for tanners when discussing different manufacturing techniques was less evidently useful in newspaper advertisements, where only really ‘Morocco’ and ‘Russia’ are used. ‘Hide’, meanwhile, was primarily a term for tanners which reflected the brute, raw material before the tanning stage. It does not appear to have been used by tanners to describe an output, and in terms of consumers was a very rare term to appear in newspaper advertisements. Where ‘hide’ did appear in adverts for retail it was to describe something basic, rudimentary and unsophisticated: ‘plain’ or ‘common’ in comparison to the more typical descriptors of ‘strong’ and ‘neat’. For both sources of production and sources documenting the sale of leather objects, ‘skin’ was a very important term. It dictated the manufacturing processes of tanners; for consumers, the attention paid to skin, and the animal it originated from, suggests that it was the material and not cultural origins of goods which richly informed customers' desires and piqued their sensibilities.

When read together, these sources suggest that for one of the most well used, widely produced and commonly sold materials of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the origins of the material in its production was the most significant meaning of leather in shaping the language of consumer desire – but it was not the only meaning the material held, especially given the onus placed on national identity in texts about production. In turn, this suggests that materials were important to the consumption of objects in so much as consumers were aware of what their goods were made of and this had an impact on their decision to buy and consume them. The following chapter will, in part, address one example of an object where such knowledge not only shaped the decision to purchase, but also the nature of ownership itself.

Chapter 4 - Saddles

Introduction

Figure 0.1: (left) A. van Calraet, *A Horse with a Saddle Beside it*, c. 1680, (oil on oak, 34.2 x 44.4 cm), National Gallery, London, (right) A. van Calraet, *The Start*, c.1680-1722 (oil on panel, 32 x 47 cm) National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh.

Abraham van Calraet, a Dutch painter working primarily in the seventeenth century regularly depicted horses among other livestock, animals and people. Take the two images above (Figure 4.1). On the left, van Calraet painted a desolate image. The windswept horse stands isolated and physically separate from a saddle which lays discarded to the left of the scene. This perhaps reinforces a dichotomy between living subject and inanimate object, but also emphasizes the almost lonely nature of the horse who – without a saddle – is also without utility, purpose or companionship. A second image presents a somewhat sunnier scene but also illustrates a very different representation of this object type. While the dogs on the left-hand side are in the shade, the saddled horses stand in the light, alongside and ridden by humans: more dignified, more civilized and more domesticated. These images are interesting as they paint two images of a single leather object, but comparing the two suggests that this object could play a transformative role in the horse-rider relationship.

This chapter will argue that saddles were materially complex and facilitated riding, but because of their close conceptual association with skin these objects also performed symbolic work in mediating the relationship between horse and rider. It was important that this relationship was performed through an object which was frequently described as 'skin' as this association culturally linked the object and its consumption to bodily boundaries, and in the relationship between horse and rider, such boundaries became blurred. Furthermore, this chapter argues that studying saddles demonstrates consumer awareness of the origins of their goods – particularly as physical and intellectual preoccupations with 'skin' defined the consumer experience of these objects at every stage. Responding to the overall questions of this thesis, 'skin' was one of the significant meanings of leather that was played out through this object type, and it had an impact on both the cultural and material consumption of these goods. At points, the object focus of this chapter moves away from an exclusive focus on saddles – considering carriages and sedan chairs as objects similarly characterized by motion, and breeches and boots as objects which the newspaper advertisements used in chapter 3 sometimes also identified as being made of 'skin'. This comparison demonstrates contemporary variety in the use of leather, but also demonstrates that some of the protective qualities of leather exploited by saddles had purchase elsewhere – in object types represented in very different ways. Furthermore, associations between sedan chairs, carriages and trunks, and notions of privacy suggest that similarly to the cultural meanings held of saddles, the protection offered by these other leather goods was material, physical and sentimental.

Horses have sometimes been seen as fulfilling a purely functional purpose: citing Gordon Childe, Redcliffe Salaman stated 'that once man learnt to harness animal power, it was natural to transfer the pack from man's (or generally woman's) shoulders to some dumb beast'.[1] This chapter challenges this straightforward interpretation, and through a wider examination of their context, in part relying on the limited available surviving material sources, suggests that the relationship between horse and rider – animal and human – was defined by companionship and care. This chapter therefore in part identifies a role for objects to be a source for disrupting the historiographical position which sees the domestication of livestock as distancing animals from human emotion.[2] However, because to access the meaning and significance of leather within this object type this chapter closely considers the behaviour of riding, the consumers to which this chapter pertains are predominantly, but not entirely, male. While this limits how broadly the findings of this chapter can be applied, it does not diminish the overall argument of this thesis in showing how the meanings of materials were contingent on their use in particular applications and contexts. Furthermore, comparisons to the supplementary object types identified above are important both because they demonstrate other applications of leather in this period, and suggest that the findings of this chapter are relevant to wider social and geographic audiences.

This chapter isolates saddles within the material experience of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century consumers and examines this object type through three sets of primary data: documents of saddle design and production, saddles and saddle-furniture, and other primary sources connected to saddle consumption. Working from these sources this chapter uses saddles to explore how consumer awareness of skin was an active component of the way in which such objects were consumed. Here, the case of saddles suggests that 'skin' as a cultural phenomenon

[1] R.A. Salaman, *Dictionary of Leather-Working Tools, c.1700-1950 and the Tools of Allied Trades,* (London, 1986), p. 221.
[2] K. Raber, 'From Sheep to Meat, From Pets to People', in M. Senior (ed.) *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment,* (Oxford, 2007) pp. 73-74

was significant in the buying and use of an object which was characterised as much by continuity as by change.

This chapter starts from the position that saddles were understood as particularly 'skin-like' through the description retailers, appraisers and consumers applied to them. It seeks to unpick this linguistic descriptor when used in the context of saddle consumption to understand how 'skin-like' these objects were and what unique possibilities for consumption were offered up by the materiality of leather. It explores how the application of 'skin' as a descriptor changed the contemporary interpretation of the same material according to an object's function. It will start by introducing the available body of saddles in public collections and broadly characterize change over time within this object type. Subsequently, it will examine these objects within a range of contexts and discuss where – or where not – both leather and skin were relevant, exploring production, sale and consumption. Within consumption this chapter will concentrate on bodies of sources which were both textual and material to assess the relationship which saddles were a part of, the objects they functioned alongside and how consumers were instructed to use them. This section will use literary texts, material evidence of saddle furniture and specialist farriery texts.

Ultimately this chapter provides an example of a material shaping consumer expectations and experiences of an object type. In the case of saddles specifically, the materiality of leather was central, but the association with skin made a real impact upon behaviours and relationships.

Historiographical context

The existing historiography discussing saddles is relatively limited. Earlier research – including contributions by John Waterer – is largely confined to the political history of the Worshipful

Company of Saddlers, and Lauren Gilmour's later more object-centred work does not extend beyond the mid-seventeenth century.[3] Although there are no major object studies of saddles in an eighteenth-century British context to which this chapter can link, the issues and questions posed above links this chapter, first and primarily, to the existing available literature on riding and other riding objects, and secondly to existing cultural frameworks within which to discuss skin.

For Monica Mattfeld, the act of riding was significant in eighteenth-century narratives of masculinity and embodiment; she argues that riding represented 'militaristic chivalry' and constructed and performed masculine identity.[4] Beyond this, Mattfeld argues that honour and 'military might' could only be performed through a 'visibly constitutive being, consisting of both man and horse' and that 'embodiment and performance of the self as man was indivisible from the material presence of an animal'.[5] A corresponding 'centauric being' brought to life the relation between horse and rider and made visible the human animal as a hybrid.[6] In this, Mattfeld cites the 1771 *The history and art of horsemanship,* translated into English by Richard Berenger from the French original by Claude Bourgelat. The 'centaur', the text states,

> is the symbol of horsemanship – for there is such an intelligence and harmony between the rider and the horse, that they may almost in a literal sense be said to be but one creature; the horse understanding the Aids of his rider, as if he was a part of himself, and the rider equally consulting the genius, powers, and temper of the horse.[7]

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[3] J.W. Waterer, *Leather in Life, Art and Industry,* (London, 1956), pp. 69-78; L. Gilmour (ed.), *In the saddle: an exploration of the saddle through history,* (London, 2004); C. Fern, [Review] Gilmour, *In the saddle, Antiquity* 79, Issue 306 (December, 2005).
[4] M. Mattfeld, ''Undaunted all he views': The Gibraltar Charger, Astley's Amphitheatre and Masculine Performance', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37.1 (2014), pp. 20-22.
[5] Ibid, p. 25.
[6] Ibid.
[7] R. Berenger, *The history and art of horsemanship,* (London, 1771), Vol. 1, p. 36.

By emphasizing this unity, Mattfeld challenges Constance Classen's interpretation of riding, and so too will this chapter. Classen argues that 'it is hard to overestimate the symbolic importance of riding in premodernity. Traveling on the back of a horse enabled one to remove oneself completely from the base earth. At the same time it showed one's dominance of the animal kingdom'.[8] Neither Mattfeld nor Classen's analysis of riding directly affords saddles a place within this framework, however, and given the attentiveness of contemporaries in citing them as essential in facilitating a cohesion of motion between horse and rider, this object needs to be placed squarely in the frame.

The other logical material companions to saddles are breeches and riding boots; objects which have been explored by Karen Harvey and Matthew McCormack. Harvey notes the material composition of breeches alongside the multifaceted meanings and representations they held for masculinity in the long eighteenth century, arguing that 'tight, pale legwear was a significant change in men's dress for the fact that it mimicked skin pulled tight across muscles' and that 'borrowing from a neoclassical emphasis on the body's borderlines, medical and philosophical writings theorized the body's edges and skin was redefined as the sensitive boundary to a newly individualized body'.[9] While the leather buck-skin breeches under Harvey's scrutiny echo the desired representation of the male leg in contemporary gender politics, saddles will be shown through this chapter to mirror a cross-section of contemporary understandings of skin, with the softest material at their innermost layer. Leather riding boots, meanwhile, as McCormack argues, were an important object within constructions of Georgian masculinity that were materially different from civilian walking boots.[10] 'Boots' association with the military',

[8] C. Classen, *The deepest sense: a cultural history of touch*, (Urbana, 2012), p. 104.
[9] K. Harvey, 'Men of Parts: Masculine Embodiment and the Male Leg in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 54 (October, 2015), pp. 811-812.
[10] M. McCormack, 'Boots, material culture and Georgian masculinities', *Social History* 42.4 (2017), p. 462.

McCormack suggests 'is underlined by their use in equestrianism, since the horseman was historically a warrior. He was also a gentleman, so riding boots connoted social status and authority'.[11] Not unlike Harvey's work on breeches, McCormack argues that 'boots are metaphorically an extension of the wearer's skin'.[12] The consumers of the saddles explored in this chapter were, similarly to the consumers of these breeches and boots, predominantly male, but it is possible to identify female consumers in the historical record.

The corresponding properties between saddles, boots and breeches demonstrate that 'skin' was materially and culturally an important element of the entire assemblage on the back of a horse. Although this chapter does not aim to explore skin as a biological entity, it does discuss how 'skin' as a descriptor and cultural presence functioned within an object consumption context. To this, how individuals regarded skin is central, and historians of skin have emphasized the importance of exteriority – the skin as an outermost boundary of the body which defined its limits – in shaping the appearance of individuals and their interactions with the environment. Most importantly, Jonathan Reinarz and Kevin Siena establish two key premises: first, that skin was central to identity, and secondly that identity underwent important change during the Enlightenment.[13] In this second premise, Reinarz and Siena particularly cite the research of Dror Wahrman, who proposes a shift from externally formed to internally constituted forms of personal identity in the eighteenth century.[14] This chapter relies on an understanding of skin as related to bodily boundaries. Similarly to Harvey and McCormack, it finds that objects were able to challenge bodily boundaries, but identifies this use of objects as occurring within the relationship between horse and rider and related to two separate but connected bodies.

[11] Ibid, p. 463.
[12] Ibid, p. 464.
[13] J. Reinarz and K. Siena 'Introduction' in J.Reinarz and K. Siena (eds) *Scratching the Surface: A Medical History of Skin* (London, 2013), p. 3.
[14] Ibid 2-3.

As a set of material sources, the objects used in this chapter are also relevant to contemporary notions of comfort. Traditionally, John Crowley suggested that comfort became 'increasingly used to indicate satisfaction and enjoyment of immediate physical circumstances' and that the stability of seventeenth century status-driven material culture gave way to a more comfort-oriented nature of consumption in the eighteenth century.[15] Furthermore, 'men and women embraced the notion that the healthy relationship between needful things and the body represented a social good' and the 'value of physical comfort became more explicit and desirable'.[16] While it is possible to identify moderate change in the form of saddles, their material realities would suggest that broader generalizations about comfort do not fairly represent the real range of objects consumed by eighteenth-century consumers. This chapter will suggest that saddles, rather than being actively comfortable for consumers, were akin to the chairs and tables of Mimi Hellman's focus, which 'were active protagonists in an elaborate game of cultivated sociability'.[17] The correct consumption of saddles demonstrated material literacy with the object.[18]

Crowley's argument also does not account for comfort within the interaction between humans, objects, and animals, as his supporting object studies primarily concern consumer relations with the domestic space. This is one point where this leather object study can usefully intervene. Saddles necessarily had two different users, of two different species, simultaneously. Although Crowley's thesis may loosely characterize the period as the 'rise of comfort', this

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[15] P. Griffin, 'The Pursuit of Comfort', *Review in American History* 30.3 (2002), p. 369; H. Clifford [Review], J. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort, Journal of Design History* 15.1 (2002), p. 58.
[16] J. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort,* (Baltimore, 2001), p. 141.
[17] M. Hellman, 'Interior Motives: Seduction by Decoration in Eighteenth-Century France' in H. Koda and A. Bolton (eds) *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 2006), p. 15.
[18] Ibid, p 19; M. Hellman, 'Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 32.4 (Summer, 1999), p, 424.

may only be a fair assessment in a limited range of circumstances and cannot be an all-encompassing statement of eighteenth-century consumption. Saddles needed to be functional first. Finally, Crowley's suggestion that seventeenth-century stability subsided to eighteenth-century comfort-oriented consumption does not reconcile with the significant amount of continuity present in these examples from the seventeenth century.[19] None of this is to reject Crowley's contribution, but it does suggest that in more complex arrangements of consumers, objects, spaces and animals the 'invention of comfort' thesis should be handled with care.

Exploring this literature poses issues about the role of one central object within a unique consumer format. This chapter asks how leather was used in this object type, how consumers responded to this material in this specific context and how the use of leather as 'skin', both linguistically and materially, reflected consumer sensitivity to the origins of objects and enriched consumption of the object. This chapter argues that, firstly, saddles were objects commonly, and meaningfully, identified as 'skin' and therefore were one of the most significant object types in which consumer awareness of the organic material origins of leather was reflected linguistically through consumption. Secondly, and most-importantly, saddles sat within a unique human-object-animal configuration – materially they mediated the sensory relationship between horse and rider, and were symbolic of the relationship between the two entities. 'Skin', as a material and conceptual category, was relevant to three separate dimensions of saddles: as a linguistic descriptor, as central to the sensory experience of saddles, and as metaphor for the boundaries of the bodies of both horses and riders.

[19] Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, Objects 54/717, 70/231 and 54/715.

The Objects

This section examines leather saddles in museum collections to demonstrate how leather was used in their construction. Survival rates of saddles from the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England in modern museum collections are surprisingly low. Only one English-made saddle dating from this period survives in the collections of the V&A, from c.1650-1700, with another example in the V&A dating slightly earlier, only one is held by the National Trust, and none from this period by the Museum of English Rural Life. The single example held by the National Trust, at Chastleton House in Oxfordshire, is in such a poor condition that it could not be examined.[20] Likewise, a purportedly Georgian saddle held in the collections of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers is unavailable for research purposes. 23 saddles survive in the National Leather Collection in Northampton, but as with many of the objects in this collection provenance is incomplete and it is not possible to date them with certainty. Only six of these 23 saddles appear to be possibly late eighteenth-century or early nineteenth-century objects, all bequests of Major W.P. Wilton. In summary, the two saddles which are housed at the V&A are easily those which survive in the best condition and with the most reliable provenance, and the yellow-seated saddle in Figure 4.4, below, corresponds most closely to the date range of this thesis.

This relative paucity of objects in public collections is difficult to explain, but establishing a broad narrative of change over time for the few available objects can compensate for this paucity by identifying incremental developments in this object type and allowing historians to place eighteenth-century objects in the centre of longer-term patterns. At the very earliest, a saddle housed by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust demonstrates the early-modern antecedents

[20] National Trust, object 1430181, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1430181. Accessed February 20th 2019.

of this object type (Figure 4.2). Dated to approximately 1550, this short side saddle is upholstered with green velvet that has been quilted with geometric designs across the surfaces of the flaps, rim and surface of the raised seat or pillion. A pommel mounted to the front of the saddle is in a poor state of wear, now held compacted by a layer of gauze. As a result of this conservation work it is possible to see that the pommel is chiefly composed of compacted wool, and the similarity in texture and rigidity of the seat suggests that this is stuffed with compacted wool, too. There is no leather at all on the outward-facing surfaces of this object, bar the leather straps which hang down and would connect to similar straps running under the belly of the horse to hold the saddle in place. The underside of this saddle, however, is fully lined with leather, the curried and shiny side facing inwards to meet the back of the horse. This surface shows some decay. It is wrinkled and cracked in places, and the stitching which connects these two materials together – the velvet and the leather – has become frayed.

Figure 4.2: Saddle c.1550, object 1993-31/950, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon. Image © the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Moving from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, the simpler structure of earlier saddles gave way to objects which the antiquarian Elwyn Hartley regarded more ‘elaborately padded’, ‘artistic’ and ‘ostentatious’.[21] The next saddle chronologically in this set of objects dates from c. 1640 (Figure 4.3). The upper section is completely covered in geometrically quilted red velvet. As the material shows little wear beyond minimal friction damage, and the metal fittings are untarnished, the condition of this upper section is inconsistent with the rest of this saddle, suggesting the object has been re-upholstered or refurbished throughout the saddle’s life cycle. A leather topped saddle with a raised yellow velvet seat dating from approximately 1650-1700 follows next in this chronological sequence (Figure 4.4). It bears obvious similarities to the red-velvet saddle, above. It is approximately 40cm in length and 55cm in width. The uppermost component of the saddle is a polished brown leather, quilted in order to create a basic floral pattern in what the conservation note indicates was silver thread – though it has lost its shine through decomposition. The raised velvet seat is quilted in a similar way, and the dark bands of material which border the seat would likely have housed fringing, as was the case for many leather chairs and can be seen in the other saddle at the V&A. Two metal loops are attached to the saddle in front of the seat, which would facilitate stirrups.

One of the most important changes between the sixteenth century object held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and these two saddles at the V&A was the introduction of a wood and metal saddle ‘tree’ that sits underneath and supports the visible body of the saddle, and a ‘panel’ which provided protective cushioning between this tree and the back of the horse. Saddles were, in short, now constructed of three discrete elements. This was a construction technique Waterer has previously noted remained popular throughout the eighteenth century,

[21] E. Hartley, ‘The Antiquity of the Saddle’, *Saddlery and Harness* 3 (August, 1893), p. 40 (National Leather Collection reference library, F2-01).

and, similarly, excavations at Colonial Williamsburg have identified saddle remains matching this form dating from an eighteenth-century site, corroborated by descriptions matching these objects from two account books of the saddler Alexander Craig dating between 1749 and 1776.[22]

Archival sources can also demonstrate the continuity of saddle trees and panels in England. The account book of the Somerset saddler John Maylard, for example, includes an entry for the fitting of a new panel to a saddle tree for F. Coleman in November 1793.[23] Maylard, whose account book is the largest available such document within an eighteenth-century chronology, repeated this service for Coleman in December of the same year, charging 3 shillings. As part of an overall account between November 1793 and December 1794 that was settled at two pounds, six shillings and five pence, these panels were a surprisingly expensive item, only second to repairs to a chaise in June 1794, while the majority of Maylard's work for Coleman, and indeed his other customers, was routine maintenance valued at just a few pennies per occasion.[24]

In both saddles held by the V&A, the panel is attached to the tree by simple pieces of string running through holes in its four corners. The panels are approximately 3-4cm in depth and stuffed with straw (Figure 4.5). The bottom of this panel is made of a rudimentary cloth and the upper an unpolished brown leather – noticeably different to the quilted flaps of the yellow-seated saddle.

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[22] J.W. Waterer, *Leather and the Warrior*, (Northampton, 1981), p. 113; Anon, *The Leatherworker in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg,* (Colonial Williamsburg, 1967), p. 12 and p. 19 (National Leather Collection reference library 685 0973).
[23] Somerset Heritage Centre 23/3 D/P/tau.m C/113, p. 33
[24] Ibid, p. 34

Figure 4.3: Object 78A-1893, V&A, London, side view (pictured with stirrups attached).

Figure 4.4: Object T.184-1914, V&A, London, side view.

Figure 4.5: The underside of T.184-1914, showing the panel in relation to the main leather body.

What sets these seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century objects apart from the earlier example held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is that the structural qualities of these objects more directly concern the comfort of the horse, rather than the rider. This is particularly visible through the padded panel, which used different materials on its horse- and saddle-facing surfaces: a soft cloth met the surface of the horse's back, while a tougher, more functional leather bore the wear and tear of constant friction against the saddle tree. By the nineteenth century the profile of these objects had shifted again. These changes were less structural, however. As numerous examples held by the National Leather Collection attest, the raised cantles and pommels which characterize earlier examples were removed to create objects with a generally flatter profile and which were, in tune with the increase of fox-hunting and equestrian-related pastimes throughout the eighteenth century, more comfortable for a range of consumers. Furthermore, the addition of other materials – such as velvet seats or metallic embroidery – to the surfaces of saddles was not a characteristic feature of nineteenth century saddlery. These objects are by and large more plain, and more functional. As Hartley argued, 'art and ostentation must give way to utility, and fifty or sixty years saw the showy seats superseded by a more serviceable and comfortable article'.[25] This would suggest a broad evolution in the standards of comfort afforded horse, and only subsequently rider, by saddles.

Production

Production is central to understanding the significance of leather to the consumption of saddles, as during the saddle-making process leather was one of a number of materials skilfully assembled to produce a finished object. The object descriptions above demonstrate that saddles were materially sophisticated objects, and understanding how their composition related to contemporary practices of making only serves to reinforce this. In 1747 *The London Tradesman* identified 'several distinct tradesmen' employed under the Master Saddler in the production of a saddle: the tree maker, the riveter, the founder, the bit-maker, the bridle-cutter and the embroiderer.[26] The saddler himself included this totals seven trades, and seven unique processes to produce the finished object, before other associated tradespeople responsible for the additional materials used are factored in; woollen-drapers, linen-drapers, mercers, lacemen and haberdashers.[27]

How the saddle itself was made is not described in the *London Tradesman*, but the text does outline the different components of a saddle and to which different tradesmen these components are attributed. The task of saddle-making revolved around designing and commissioning material contributions from several trades which needed to be assembled in a

[25] Hartley, 'The Antiquity of the Saddle', p. 40.
[26] R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman,* (London, 1747), p. 234.
[27] Ibid.

precise way. The tree-maker was responsible for the wooden saddle tree at the base of the saddle which was subsequently strengthened and secured with metal plates and buckles by a riveter.[28] A bridle-cutter – whose role sat somewhere between a saddler, a leather-dresser and a leather-cutter – was responsible for cutting the leather patterns which formed the body of the saddle.[29] A number of additional components were then involved, from metal caps and decorative housings to bridles and straps which were used to connect the different components within the overall assemblage of saddlery.[30]

The panel, sitting between the back of the horse and the underside of the wooden saddle tree is difficult to place within contemporary sources of production. The manufactory-origins of this component are not clear through *The London Tradesman*, and although Jacques de Solleysel's *The Compleat Horseman* of 1729 states that this padding should comprise deer fur, or the long hair of horse's manes and tails – so chosen for not becoming sodden with sweat – de Solleysel does not locate the manufacturer.[31]

Although *The London Tradesman* does not point to the exact processes of craft undertaken by the saddler, this trade is afforded prestige: 'he requires a large share of ingenuity and invention', 'must be a judge of every article he uses' and 'must be quick at inventing new patterns of furniture' of a 'grand and genteel appearance'.[32] In short, the saddler possessed both skill and taste – and not unlike Ulinka Rublack's case study of Hans Fugger, was able to communicate both of these qualities through the working of leather. A crucial difference is drawn between the saddler and the individual tradesmen who provided key components. The latter are largely

[28] Ibid. pp. 235-236.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. pp. 236-237.
[31] J. de Solleysel, *The compleat horseman* (London, 1729), p. 71.
[32] Campbell, *London Tradesman,* p. 234.

listed as unskilled and not incurring great costs within their individual trades while the saddler is a role of greater consequence as 'the materials he uses are high-priced'.[33] The role of the saddler therefore must have involved on the one hand skilful processes of design, but on the other the assembly of a number of different components which combined into a complete saddle. Such processes of assembly were not uncommon for multi-faceted leather goods, and the typical methods through which different pieces of leather were attached and affixed to other materials were sticking, stitching and riveting.[34]

Advertisements

As discussed in chapter 3, an explicit link was made between saddles and skin in consumer language through retail advertisements. Saddles were one of a small handful of objects, alongside breeches, shoes and bookbindings, which used 'skin' in their retail advertisements and used skin specifically to differentiate between the different values of individual objects. As these objects were frequently described as being made of 'skin' – especially in comparison to other leather commodities – this suggests that the animal origins of goods informed their consumption more readily, and that the significance of skin went beyond linguistic description. These sources were explored in chapter 3 of this thesis. It is not intended to revisit those conclusions here in any great depth, but to ask a different question of this evidence. Rather than asking what these sources can do to help understand the descriptive language of early modern consumers this section asks how these sources can inform a historical understanding of the meaning of leather in the context of consumption from the distinct perspective of retail, and finds that 'skin' was one meaning among a number of others that was actively employed by

[33] Ibid.
[34] H. Osborne (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts*, (Oxford, 1988), p. 541.

consumers as well as retailers. Similarly to chapter 3, these sources can be usefully grouped into different types of advertisement: retail, auction, lost and stolen goods.

Collocate data drawn from the *Burney Collection Newspapers (BCN)* lists the range and frequency of terms which feature in relation to the node term of 'skin'. For Richard Xiao the purpose of this process is to identify meaning resulting from the relationship between a node term and a collocate term, in so doing revealing the lexical associations through which a word acquires meaning in context.[35] More jovially, Xiao refers to this as 'knowing a word by the company it keeps'.[36] For this object study, a proximity search was used to identify instances where 'skin' or 'leather' featured within a five-word proximity of either 'saddle' or 'saddles' across all eighteenth-century publications. Of the sample of 202 advertisements this search generated, the split was approximately one advertisement identifying 'skin' for every two identifying saddles as 'leather'. This is a high ratio compared to breeches, with approximately one advert describing these objects as 'skin' for every four describing them as 'leather', and shoes, where there was approximately one advert describing objects as 'skin' for every 32 using 'leather'.[37]

Once this dataset was identified the number of available advertisements was divided into the three categories: sale by auction or by retail, advertisements for lost goods, and advertisements for stolen goods. These categories accounted for 102, 63 and 37 advertisements respectively. Across the total of 202 advertisements 84 were repeats and one advertisement – the London Saddle Warehouse – appeared in relation to both 'skin' and 'leather', and so this sample

[35] S. Th. Gries, 'Some Current Quantitative Problems in Corpus Linguistics and a Sketch of Some Solutions', *Language and Linguistics* 16.1 (2015), p. 106; R. Xiao, 'Collocation' in R. Reppen (ed.) *The Cambridge Handbook of English Corpus Linguistics* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 124, pp. 112-115.
[36] Ibid. p. 15.
[37] The specific ratios (skin:leather) are: saddles, 68:134, breeches 186:2409, shoes 17:639.

accounts for 127 unique sources. The earliest dated source within this dataset dates from 31 January 1701, and the latest 9 February 1797.[38] More importantly in comparison to the sources used in chapter 3, the sample covers a greater range of publications – 39 different newspapers – and in so doing a greater range of 'target' audiences, including five more 'provincial' sources.

First, this dataset serves to extend the earlier conclusion that the most important function served by 'skin' within this source context was to demarcate the animal origins of products and confer prestige accordingly. At the more 'exotic' end of the spectrum, for example, advertisements for sale, drawn from the *Daily Post*, *General Advertiser*, *London Evening Post,* and *Daily Gazetteer* feature some variant of leopard skin saddles. When the entire household goods of William Ireland were sold by auction in 1738, the lots included a 'saddle, with leopard skin, and blue velvet furniture trimm'd with silver and gold'.[39] The *General Advertiser* listed two further auctions featuring leopard-skin saddles: the first a 'leopard's skin hunting side-saddle […] made up in the newest fashion trim'd with a very neat mohair fringe with […] the seat of fine cloth, the colour of the ground of the skin embroidered with black spots to match' and the other – an auction overseen by Aaron Lambe in 1748 – a 'lady's leopard skin saddle and bridle with yellow cloth furniture trim'd with silver'.[40] At the other of the scale, meanwhile, the London Saddle Warehouse, William Wyatt's Warehouse in Chancery Lane and Williams' Saddle and Coach Harness Manufactory all sold hog-skin saddles, with doe skin saddle seats in the case of the London Saddle Warehouse and William Wyatt.[41] Looking beyond these examples demonstrates that 'skin' was also a useful descriptive term to identify stolen or lost

[38] *London Gazette,* 31 January 1701; *The Times,* 9 February 1797.
[39] *London Evening Post,* 28 September 1738 and 9 November 1738; *Daily Gazetteer,* 2 October 1738; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser,* 10-11 November 1738 inclusive and 13-17 November 1738 inclusive.
[40] *General Advertiser,* 30 July 1745; 13 October 1748.
[41] *Public Advertiser,* 16 May 1755; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser,* 12 May 1759; *Public Advertiser,* 9 August 9th 1759.

objects – saddles which those who placed the advertisements sought the return of. Advertisements for stolen saddles include references to 'hog's skin', 'red hog-skin', 'brown hog skin', 'black hog-skin', 'buck skin', 'English hog-skin' and 'doe skin'.[42]

By comparison, few advertisements which corresponded to the search parameters for saddles in a five-word proximity of 'leather' concerned sale either by retail or auction, and even fewer still directly concerned saddles: the majority are for leather saddle bags or other accessories.[43] Of the 134 advertisements which feature 'saddle' or 'saddles' within a five-word proximity of 'leather' – rather than 'skin' – only 56 concerned sale by retail or by auction, while the majority were made up of advertisements for stolen or lost goods. These attached a range of descriptors to saddles, from colours – 'black leather', 'red leather', 'brown leather', 'tan leather', 'red moroco leather' – to methods of manufacture – 'russia leather', 'tann'd leather' – and statements of decoration or quality – 'quilted', 'neat' and 'newish'.[44] These advertisements for lost goods similarly included 'tann'd hog's skin', 'calf skin' and multiple references to 'doe skin'.[45] What is meaningful about these examples is that they suggest something about the nature of these goods in the consumer space – 'skin' was more than a straightforward marketing strategy designed to confer prestige, but a semantic label which was used by consumers to refer to goods which they now owned and had lost. The parity within this source base between 'skin' and a range of other descriptive labels, as well as considering this in the context of two different

[42] *London Gazette,* 17 March 1701; *Daily Post,* 24 January 1723; *Daily Courant,* 7 November 1724; *London Journal,* 15 April 1727; *Fog's Weekly Journal,* 12 June 1731; *George Faulkner the Dublin Journal,* 25 August 1747; *Public Advertiser,* 6 January 1758.
[43] *Public Advertiser,* 28 October 1758; *London Gazette,* 20 January 1789; *E. Johnson's British Gazette.* 17 January 1796; *St James's Chronicle or British Evening Post,* 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 19 and 29 June 1779.
[44] *Post Man and the Historical Account,* 23 January 1707; *Daily Courant,* 9 March 1719; *London Evening Post,* 13 April 1742; *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencier,* 24 July 1750; *General Advertiser,* 30 November 1747; *Daily Courant,* 16 September 1727; *London Journal,* 20 January 20th 1728, *London Evening Post,* January 22nd 1732; *Country Journal of the Craftsman,* 9 August 1733; *Public Advertiser,* 3 January 1755.
[45] *Daily Courant,* 11 August 1720; *Post Boy,* 27 October 1722; *Daily Advertiser,* 27 May 1743.

types of source, suggests that the term held genuine meaning for consumers, but was one of a number of associated meanings and values.

These sources also enable some other more general conclusions about the social mobility of saddles, and through variation in the descriptive language of advertisements for stolen or lost objects the scale of investment which consumers could make in these objects. On the one hand, this could be more basic, such as the 'tann'd leather saddle' which fell from a led horse and was sought after by Jonathan Wilde and John Pott in 1722.[46] On the other, when Mr Chester of Bond Street in Piccadilly advertised for a pair of runaways in 1720 he described in more detail a 'new saddle made of neats leather with GC in a cipher on the skirts'.[47] Mr Chester's advertisement demonstrates both consumers' financial entanglement with these objects – this was a 'new' object, here an indicator of its quality and economic value – as well as commenting on their material properties: this saddle was personalized by decoration with the initials of its owner. A corresponding source for this form of personalisation was posted in the *Daily Courant* in 1717. Richard Purratt of the Black Horse in St Martin's-Legrand advertised his ability to raise crests and coats of arms on the skirts of gentlemen's hunting saddles – presumably ciphered initials would not be too much of a stretch.[48] In addition, the quantitative data presented by initial search results – 102 retail or auction advertisements, 63 documenting stolen goods and 37 documenting lost goods – suggests that although these were objects which were sold commercially they also circulated, if unwittingly, through secondary networks of resale, loss and theft.

[46] *Daily Post,* 26 October 1722.
[47] *Daily Courant,* 12 April 1720.
[48] *Daily Courant,* 1 June 1717.

By way of summary, advertisements for saddles drawn from a wider range of publications reaffirm the finding presented in chapter 3 that these objects were semantically tied to 'skin'. This association was used descriptively by those advertising these objects to distinguish between the value of different types of saddle, but casting a wider net shows that within the category of advertisements for lost and stolen goods this language was recognisable enough to identify objects. 'Skin' was more than a technical term for producers or a marketing strategy for retailers, therefore. In this example the use of a descriptive material term suggests that within the context of consumption leather had meaning to consumers – both tethering the object to its animal sources and stories of production as well as providing a means of distinguishing the value of goods. This is important in part as it suggests that consumer knowledge of materials had a genuine impact on the desire to consume, but also because – in response to the research questions of this thesis – it demonstrates that the meaning of leather was tied to animal origins and shows how the material was significant in acts of consumption.

Consumption

Understanding saddles in the context of production and sale paints a picture of materially complex, costly goods. Sources representing the consumption of saddles present two points of comparison. First, these sources show how these objects were significant within the horse-rider relationship, and performed both symbolic and physical work within the intimate and sensory context of riding. Secondly, advertisements for the sale of saddles included reference to objects marketed specifically to women, demonstrating that saddles could be owned and used by women, as Noël Riley and Amanda Vickery also suggest.[49] Representations of consumption, meanwhile, pertain wholly to male consumers with the exception of one author: Mrs

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[49] N. Riley, *The accomplished lady: a history of genteel pursuits c. 1660-1860*, (Plymouth, 2017); A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (New Haven and London, 1998) p. 6, 102.

Lovechild.[50] In the light of other riding objects – breeches and shoes – which have been connected to male consumers by the existing historiography, this suggests that the overriding association of saddles within the eighteenth-century culture of riding was with men.

To assess the relevance of leather to this branch of consumption, the following section addresses saddles through three significant bodies of sources: first, literary descriptions of human relationships with horses, secondly, farriery texts describing the meaningfulness of saddles within this relationship and, thirdly, material evidence of saddle furniture and other objects which shared a space with saddles. The source types used to discuss retail convincingly tie these objects to 'skin', culturally and materially, while the source types this chapter will turn to now indicate the function and meaning of both horses and saddles to consumers – completing the link between material, object, culture and consumer. These sources suggest that a close companionship existed between riders and horses, as these animals were ascribed with human and affective qualities, and that although saddles were conspicuous by their absence from literary sources, farriery texts demonstrate that saddles were used to embody this relationship by protecting the horse and generating 'synchronicity' between horse and rider. Meanwhile the construction of items of saddle furniture mirrored the material properties of the saddles themselves, with specialized roles for each material within their complex construction.

Literary texts

Literary sources – a category which Ceri Sullivan describes as both instructive to and reflective of the interpretation of contemporary readers – provide a rich avenue into assessing the relationship between horse and rider.[51] These sources demonstrate that an important

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[50] *Public Advertiser,* 16 May 1755, Issue 6501; 18 July 1758, Issue 7394.

[51] C. Sullivan, 'Literary sources', in L. Sangha and J. Willis (eds) *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources,* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 97-99.

relationship existed between horse and rider across the eighteenth century, that saddle furniture was equated with the exercise of power or control, and that such issues of power and control were central in how this relationship was presented. These texts don't talk about saddles explicitly, but they can be used to help historians understand the riding context for these objects. It is important to consider riding as part of the analysis of leather as a material because although riding was central to the culture of these objects, leather was central to the experience of them and consumers understood this material in this context in a particular way.

One point of consistency across different texts is the way in which horses and their riders are presented as one cohesive unit. There are a number of references where the terms 'horse' and 'rider' coexist within close proximity of one another, but instances of texts referring to 'a horse and his rider', 'a horse and its rider', or 'a rider and his horse' do not on their own say much about this relationship; bar statements of bodily proximity and reinforcing the somewhat straightforward idea that horses and riders occupied a shared textual space. The presence of saddles is inconsistent within these sources, though, and in many cases these objects are totally absent – especially in comparison to the sources of sale and production above, or to farriery texts. One objective of this section, accordingly, is to make use of this absence to paint a more detailed picture of the relationship between horses and their riders – in so doing showing the relationship which saddles acted within and priming a comparison between these texts and a source type where saddles were especially important: farriery texts. Recurring themes can be extracted in detail: the shock of characters upon finding either a horse or rider without its counterpart, statements which draw a parity between horses and their human companions and statements which indicate control, with or without saddle furniture.

A range of texts provide examples of shock and concern on the part of characters who find a horse on its own, and this motif of a lone horse is present across many eighteenth-century literary texts. For John Ray's collection of English proverbs (1737) 'for want of a horse the rider is lost'.[52] Meanwhile, Henry Fielding's *The history of Tom Jones* (1749) described the alarm of a father 'meeting his daughter's horse without it's rider', Henry Brooke's *The fool of quality* (1765) describes a horse which 'rode without its rider', Mr. Freeland's *Fatal obedience* (1769) describes his experience of passing a 'horse without a rider' shortly before encountering a man who 'by his attitude, appeared to have met with some accident' and William Hayley remarked in a volume of poetry (1782) that 'they are suddenly alarmed, and summoned to arms; but the alarm is occasioned only by a single horse without a rider'.[53] Some further examples directly express the concern of characters who witness horses returning home without their riders: Sarah Trimmer's *The two farmers* (1788), *The follies of St. James's Street* (1789), *The Progress of Love* (1789) and *Interesting anecdotes* (1794).[54] The final examples include *Lord Walford* (1789), describing 'a horse without his rider' and *The adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794), where Trevor described seeing 'a horse standing patiently, without his rider'.[55]

The alarm described in stories upon their characters meeting an apparently lone horse raises the question of why horses without riders should concern those who encountered them. This concern could indicate something about the spaces and contexts in which horses were expected

[52] J. Ray, *A compleat collection of English proverbs,* (London, 1737), p. 22.
[53] H. Fielding, *The history of Tom Jones, a foundling,* Volume 2 of 6, (London, 1749), p. 95; H. Brooke, *The fool of quality, or, the history of Henry Early of Moreland,* (Dublin, 1765) Volume 4 of 5, p. 191; Mr. Freeland, *Fatal obedience; or, the history of Mr. Freeland.,* (London, 1769) Volume 1 of 2, pp. 78-79; W. Hayley, *Poems,* (Dublin, 1782), p. 213.
[54] S. Trimmer, *The two farmers, an exemplary tale: designed to recommend the practice of benevolence towards mankind and all other living creatures,* (London, 1788), p. 97; Anon*, The follies of St. James's Street,* (London, 1789), p. 84; Anon, *The Progress of Love; or, the history of Stephen Elliot,* (London, 1789) Volume 1 of 3, p. 7; Mr Addison, *Interesting anecdotes, memoirs, allegories, essays and poetical fragments,* (London, 1794), p. 139.
[55] L.L., *Lord Walford,* (London, 1789) Volume 1 of 2, p. 92; T. Holcroft, *The adventures of Hugh Trevor,* (London, 1794), p. 56.

to exist. For these characters lone horses in the wild may have been alarming as there was an expectation that these animals were localized to domesticated or pastoral settings, and therefore these literary sources link to the nature of estate management in eighteenth-century domestic, rural or industrial contexts. If alarm was caused on the one hand by incongruency between these lone horses and their environments, on the other a more obvious concern was the absence of a – known or anonymous – rider. Both materially necessary to the act of riding, and its prime signifier would be a saddle, but this object remains absent and is not spoken of in these sources. In both the case of a horse's expected environment and the lack of a rider the central concern is for horses to exist in a human-driven context in which horses served as subjects or companions. Existing outside of either human context, these horses were natural causes of concern by disturbing this presumed relationship.

At the most extreme expression of the disruption of the horse-rider relationship was part four of Jonathan Swift's *Travels into several remote nations of the world, by Lemuel Gulliver* (1735). Here, Gulliver takes shelter in the country of the 'Houyhnhnms', who he discovers are the horse-inhabitants, civilians and governors of this land.[56] Once Gulliver steps foot in the country he quickly encounters two beings. The first, a 'yahoo', is human in form but wild, rugged and hairy all over, the second, a 'houyhnhnm', is a horse, but being the inhabitant civilians of the land are characterised by reason and possessing their own form of private discourse.[57] There are a couple of stand-out moments from this opening part of Swift's novel that speak to the object study at hand. Lost in a strange land, when Gulliver pleads for the help of the houyhnhnms to guide him they confer amongst themselves briefly. When Gulliver assumes that he should ride upon the back of one of the houyhnhnms he is stoutly corrected as

[56] J. Swift, *Travels into several remote nations of the world; by Lemuel Gulliver*, (1735, Oxford World Classics edn, Oxford, 2005), pp. 205-210.
[57] Ibid, pp. 210-211.

one houyhnhnm gestures that he should walk in front – which Gulliver does so penitently.[58] Later, Gulliver is placed in the care and home of a houyhnhnm who becomes his master and tries to teach him the native language and customs. Throughout the development of this relationship, Gulliver and his master come to know one another more intimately. The master is surprised by Gulliver's skin, hair and clothing, considering him to be the most perfect form of a 'yahoo', but even more shocked by the notion of a land in which horses were subservient, for he 'saw that Houyhnhnm should be the presiding creature of a nation, and yahoo the brute'.[59]

It is perhaps to be expected that saddles should not feature in the context of a story about a nation in which horses presided over humans, but a distinctly 'human' dimension for these animals is made clear through further literary texts which align these animals with human qualities and temperaments – painting an essential context for understanding how saddles were consumed. Alexander Pope's contemporary translation of *The iliad of Homer,* verse 226 reads 'there have been those who blame this manner introduced by Homer and copied by Virgil, of making a hero address his discourse to his horse. Virgil has given human sentiments to the horse of Pallas, and made him weep for the death of his master'.[60] Similarly, Granville's play *Heroick Love* contains a reference to a 'generous horse that bore his rider' and Theophilus Cibber's *A historical tragedy* to 'each prancing horse [which] neighs courage to his rider'.[61] An understanding of coexistence going beyond bodily proximity was explored by the anonymous author of *Bagshot Battle* in 1792. The author of this 'humorous poetical burlesque'

[58] Ibid, p. 212.
[59] Ibid, p. 222.
[60] A. Pope (tr.) *The iliad of Homer,* Volume 2 of 6 (London, 1715-1720), p. 249.
[61] G. Granville, *Three plays,* (London, 1713), p. 108; T. Cibber, *An historical tragedy of the civil wars in the reign of King Henry VI,* (London, 1723), p. 52.

remarked 'Ah, dainty *Dobbin!* – Christians seldom find, A horse like thee, amongst human kind!'.[62]

These literary sources would suggest that companionship, more than simple subjugation or ownership, existed between horse and rider, and more broadly that there were a range of ways through which this animal could exist in human contexts. These cases, in which saddles were absent, are an important part of understanding this object – not least because they demonstrate that the relationship between people and horses was characterized by more than the act of riding, and horses understood as more than objects to be ridden themselves.[63] Accordingly, this illustrates the broader context which saddles and riding functioned within. This relationship can be further complicated, though, by a final set of literary texts which do introduce objects into this relationship, and demonstrate the association between the objects of riding and human control. Saddles, however, are still conspicuous by their absence.

Eighteenth-century reprints of classical scholars suggested that it was 'the rider that turns the horse, and not the bridle' a 'skilful rider [who] keeps this skittish horse in the road and ring of obedience' by 'keeping himself firm in the saddle, and the rein constantly in his hand; by which he rules and turns the best under him at pleasure'.[64] Colley Cibber remarked that 'for rules are but the posts that mark the course, which may the rider should direct his horse' and Ambrose Philips that 'a high-mettled horse requires a skilful rider; and a gallant soul, the management of a philosopher'.[65] Further texts extend this to make control clear through their use of material

[62] Anon, *Bagshot Battle; a humorous poetical burlesque,* (London, 1792), p. 43.
[63] M. Meyer, 'Placing and Tracing Absence: A material culture of the immaterial', *Journal of Material Culture* 17.1 (2012), pp. 103-104.
[64] Anon, *Plutarch's Morals: in five volumes,* (London, 1718), p. 95; P. Charron, *Of wisdom. Three books. Written originally in French, by the Sieur de Charron,* Volume 3 of 3 (London, 1729), p. 1004 and p. 1216.
[65] C. Cibber, *She wou'd, and she wou'd not,* (London, 1717), Prologue; A. Philips, *The free-thinker: or, essays of wit and humour,* (London, 1739), p. 196.

objects. *Love and liberty* (1709) commented that 'the generous horse obeys the rider's rein', Richard Griffith (1757) remarked that 'we must cure ourselves by degrees; as a skilful rider manages a headstrong horse, guides his steps in the fastest course, and pulls and relaxes the rein by turns' and the *Six Assemblies* (1767) that it is a 'stubborn' and 'refractory' horse who does not yield 'to the check of his rein'.[66] There are further references to the necessity for riders to use a rein in *Genuine Letters from a Gentleman* – 'the horse […]; which we must sometimes give the reins to, sometimes check, sometimes spur and switch, but, at all times, direct' – *The south downs, a poem* and Charles Thompson's *Rules for Horsemen*.[67] The precise relationship between horse and rider, and the role of saddle furniture within this, is well captured by a passage from Mrs Lovechild's *Parsing lessons for elder pupils:*

> The horse is a noble creature, and very useful to man. A horse knows his own stable: he distinguishes his companions, remembers any place at which he has once stopped, and will find his way by a road which he has never travelled. The rider governs his horse by signs which he makes with the bit, his foot, his knee, or his whip.[68]

Literary sources can therefore be used to understand this relationship, but saddles – which were materially central to the act of riding – were second to the extended family of saddle furniture: bridles and reins. In part, this absence may be attributed to the precise kind of behaviour being described, as these texts describe physically controlling, steering and guiding horses as acts complicit within the overall learned behaviour of riding. By contrast, and as farriery texts

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[66] C. Johnson, *Love and liberty. A tragedy.,* (London, 1709), p. 33; R. Griffith, *A series of genuine letters between Henry and Frances,* (London, 1757), p. 291; Anon, *Six assemblies; or, ingenious conversations of learned men among the Arabians,* (Cambridge, 1767), p. 3.
[67] Anon, *Genuine letters from a gentleman to a young lady his pupil,* (London, 1772), Volume 2 of 2 p. 422; Anon, *The south downs. A poem,* (London, 1793), p. 54; C. Thompson, *Rules for horsemen.* (3rd edn, London, 1793), p. 7.
[68] Mrs Lovechild, *Parsing lessons for elder pupils,* (London, 1798), p. 16.

demonstrate, the presence of saddles in texts and descriptions of how they were fitted and consumed speak more closely to the desired relationship between horse and rider which literary sources communicated more metaphorically.

Instructive texts

Texts produced to instruct prospective or existing riders make clear that horses and riders were – or should be – engaged in shared movement and synchronicity through the act of riding. When tallied with Mattfeld's emphasis on the role of Bourgelat's 'centauric being', above, this suggests that the bodily boundaries of horse and rider were being metaphorically elided and reinforces that the popular labelling of saddles as 'skin' should be considered as much a cultural phenomenon as a material one. These texts link closely to what may be described as the 'design pedagogy' of saddles – here, the concerns and considerations taken by those involved designing objects in the light of their intended outcome or function.[69] Similarly to the texts cited in chapter 3 discussing tanning, these sources were identified using a keyword search within online repositories – here, *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*. 'Saddle' was the keyword used, and the sources used reflect those texts from this set which directly discuss the use of saddles: 17 of 140 total results.

Wherever these sources rest on a spectrum between viewing horses as an affectionate companion or subjugated and controlled object, they nonetheless demonstrate that horses were taken seriously; they were seen as an animal to which humans needed to show due care and attention when preparing to ride. Instructive texts, alongside a more material interest in farming and husbandry, were frequently mobilized by their authors to make more general points about

[69] M. Oppenheimer, 'Introduction: Histories of Design Pedagogy', in M. Oppenheimer (ed.) *Histories of Design Pedagogy: Virtual Special Issue for Journal of Design History*, (2016).

horsemanship and the chivalric relationship existing between animals and humans. In this relationship, the role of the saddle was perhaps most eloquently captured by William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, whose *General System of Horsemanship* was republished for contemporary readers in 1743. Having applauded the perfection, craft and material of his own personal saddle the Duke goes on to state it 'is neither a good saddle, nor good stirrups that make a complete horse, any more than a good pair of spurs put upon the heels of an ignorant person'. A complete horse was born of the 'good lessons, well applied to nature, spirits and strength of every horse that the great and subtle science of horsemanship exists.'[70] In short, while a saddle was clearly an admirable object, it was its relationship with both horses and riders in specific contexts which generated its power and social meaning.

A central concern of these texts was a desired relationship of synchronicity between horse and rider, first put forward in this sample by *The gentleman's compleat jockey* (1715). Here, the saddle plays a much more active, and conspicuous role. Having explained the process of fitting the saddle itself, the author proceeds to describe the process and method for the rider to safely mount the horse, to sit:

> with an upright and straight body; his ridge-bone answering the ridge-bone of the horse, so as the horse and rider may ever seem to be as one body in all motions; during which time let the rider claw the horse with his hand, to remove from him all fear or hard conceit of his riding.[71]

[70] W. Cavendish, *A general system of horsemanship in all its branches: containing a most faithful translation of that most noble a useful work of his grace,* (London, 1743), pp. 26-27.
[71] A.S., *The gentleman's compleat jockey: with the perfect horse-man and experienc'd farrier* (London, 1715), p. 33.

Seven years later, Gervase Markham's *The gentleman's accomplish'd jockey* echoed these sentiments. His readers are advised to sit exactly upright and in a steady posture, 'so that as the horse moves your motion must seem to be one and the same'.[72] Indeed, these sentiments also found traction in the novel *Reginald du Bray* (1779), in which one character – of their riding – is described to have 'sat [the horse] so well, that the horse and rider seemed but one body'.[73] For these authors – including the prolifically writing Markham – the act of riding was more than the passive ownership and use of an animal by its human owner. Rather, they both argue that the activity unified the two into a symbiotic state of shared action. Notably, both authors locate these suggestions of synchronicity within the context of saddling and breaking their horse. This suggests in turn that the saddle itself was a tool enabling such shared motion.

More general texts concerning horsemanship suggest that the act of mounting a horse was considered a ritualistic process and extend the argument for synchronicity to later in the eighteenth century. *The Country Gentleman's Companion* (1753) reinforces that it was important that the rider assumed a central and balanced position in the saddle, enabling the horse and rider to move with synchronicity.[74] Contemporaries of this genre, however, place a greater onus on the initial action of mounting a horse. For Geoffrey Gambado – the pen name of Henry Bunbury – a drawn out process of generating sentiment between the horse and rider predicated the action of mounting.[75] Gambado suggests that the horse and rider should come to know on another before the act of riding, supported by an 'endearing' relationship between the two.[76] That the act of riding should be balanced and ensure simultaneous action and movement was further supported by *The British Sportsman* (1792). This text describes in

[72] G. Markham, *The gentleman's accomplish'd jockey; with the compleat horseman, and approved farrier* (London, 1722), p. 33.
[73] Anon, *Reginald du Bray: an historic tale,* (Dublin, 1779), p. 51.
[74] Anon, *The Country Gentleman's Companion, Volume 1,* (London, 1753), pp. 24-25.
[75] G. Gambado, *An Academy for Grown Horsemen,* (Dublin, 1788), pp. 27-31.
[76] Ibid, p. 27.

rigorous detail the way in which a rider was expected to position themselves on the back of the horse to support careful and comfortable riding, but also provides a similarly rigorous series of steps which were required in relation to the saddle, saddle furniture and horse before the rider could mount the animal.[77] In more general terms this precise manner of sitting, in addition to the processes leading up the act of riding suggests something ritualistic about mounting and riding. As a repeated action which developed into a habitual behaviour, the function served by this carefully structured and choreographed ritual was to ensure the comfort of the horse and correct application of saddlery, but it also created a meaningful synchronicity of motion between horses and riders.

Saddles were also present in the visual culture attached to some of these texts. Henry Bunbury, an artist and caricaturist who Horace Walpole regarded as 'the second Hogarth', produced a series of such drawings which accompanied both *Hints to Bad Horsemen* (1781) and *An Academy for Grown Horseman* (1787); two texts he wrote under the pseudonym of Gambado.[78] In these drawings Bunbury made the act of riding a central focal point, and all of these images – made in charcoal on paper – featured a saddle. Contextualizing these images is not straightforward. Bunbury had pieces exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1779 and his works were published from the 1780s.[79] Christopher Reeve comments that these images of horsemen were of a wider appeal in comparison to Bunbury's other works, and this may be the case as there are multiple editions of reproductions available across a range of contemporary collections; the Lewis Walpole Library, British Museum and the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera to name three. These sources serve to reinforce both the desired

77 W.A. Osbaldiston, *The British Sportsman, or nobleman, gentleman and farrier's dictionary* (London, 1792), p. 406.
78 C. Reeve, 'Henry William Bunbury', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3937. Accessed February 22nd 2018.
79 Ibid.

synchronicity between horse and rider and that these were particularly ‘human’ animals. In ‘How to ride a horse upon three legs’, for instance, a stout man sits upon an equally stout horse (Figure 4.6). A saddle and girdle is visible beneath the folds of the man’s coat, and the horse is equipped with a bridle and reins, while the rider holds a crop in his raised right hand. While the physical stature of both the horse and rider correspond to one another, there are other forms of visual symmetry between the two: the back of the rider slopes seamlessly into the back of the horse and the left foot of the rider is perfectly parallel to the hoof it rests alongside. In ‘One way to stop a horse’ the ponytail of the rider is presented closely to the tail of the horse, and in ‘A bit of blood’ the gaunt frame of the rider is matched by the skeletal qualities of a wiry horse.[80]

[80] Lewis Walpole Library, accessed online through http://findit.library.yale.edu/?f%5Bdigital_collection_sim%5D%5B%5D=Lewis+Walpole+Library, November 27th 2018. Call numbers Bunbury 786.09.01.06, Bunbury 786.09.01.10 and Bunbury 787.08.01.01.

Figure 4.6: Left: H. Bunbury, ‘A bit of blood’, printed by W. Dickinson (London, 1746 or 1747), Lewis Walpole Library, call number Bunbury 787.08.01.01. Right: H. Bunbury, 'How to ride a horse upon three legs', printed by W. Dickinson, (London, 1746). Lewis Walpole Library, call number Bunbury 786.09.01.06.

This synchronicity of motion and unity of action suggests that the meaning of skin as related to the exteriority of bodies was reflected and challenged in the material reality of saddles. At the point at which riders kinetically interacted with saddles, the desired unity of action and motion disturbed a more straightforward separation of human and animal. As the quote from Bourgelat, above, attests, these were two bodies which needed to act as one. It is meaningful therefore that an additional layer of material which consumers understood to be made of skin, as reflected in the language of advertisements, was positioned between the two bodies, disrupting their respective boundaries. Culturally, therefore, the onus placed on synchronicity demonstrates how leather became significant in the consumption of these objects.

Skin was also materially relevant to saddle consumption through the preoccupation of consumers and farriers to fit this equipment properly to the horse and prevent harm being caused – this links directly back to the material evidence of saddles explored at the beginning of this chapter. More generally, and at the earliest, *Markham's Masterpiece* (1710) commented how saddles should fit a horse comfortably.[81] Seven years later Jacques de Solleysel made a number of clear points about saddle consumption – one of which he goes so far as to call his 'infallible maxim', that 'a saddle will never hurt a horse'.[82] De Solleysel also argues that no part of the saddle must press upon the horse more than any other, that the rider must be placed exactly in the middle in order to distribute weight most evenly and that stuffing and velvet – used to ease the pressure of the saddle on the horses back – must not be overused, and certainly not exceed the width of two fingers.[83] Markham comments again on saddles in 1722, that the saddle must be fitted correctly to the horse, and Cavendish in 1740 that a horse could not be expected to ride properly with a saddle that does not fit.[84] John Bartlet's *The gentleman's farriery,* published in Dublin in 1757, speaks both to the importance of a saddle being fitted appropriately to the horse and the incumbency upon the rider to care as equally for the saddle as the furniture of riding as the horse itself.[85]

More specifically, for those who did not heed the advice of the authors above such texts also provided a warning of the consequences of a poorly fitting saddle, which could evidently have significant implications for the skin of the horse. In 1714's *The gentleman's new jockey,* the importance of the saddle is stressed, as is the risk of not fitting the saddle properly – in this case the appearance of a 'sitfast' under the saddle, which appeared 'like a piece of old leather

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[81] G. Markham, *Markham's Masterpiece; containing all knowledge belonging to the smith, farrier or horse-leach* (London, 1710), p. 124.
[82] J. de Solleysel, *The compleat horseman: Discovering the surest marks of beauty, goodness, faults and imperfection of Horses* (London, 1717), p. 91.
[83] Ibid. p. 90.
[84] Markham, *The gentleman's accomplish'd jockey,* p. 32; W. Cavendish, *A new method, and extraordinary invention, to dress horses, and work them according to nature,* (London, 1740), pp. 101-102.
[85] J. Bartlet, *The gentleman's farriery: or, a practical treatise on the diseases of horses* (Dublin, 1757), pp. 173-174.

in the horse's back, […] commonly the relic of some old bruise or desperate saddle gall'.[86] As a result, the horse was disabled from carrying weight and performing its proper function. Markham described the same injuries as 'saddle sores' and Antoine de l'Etang as 'ulcers', while a similar attitude was conveyed by W. Burdon in 1788 who discusses the possibility of a saddle bruising or cutting a horse.[87] This is clearly presented more as an occupational hazard, and certainly more reactive than preventative, as Burdon writes that if such an injury should occur cures are available, but the saddle must be altered subsequently.[88]

The desire for correct consumption is important for a historical understanding of these objects for three reasons: firstly, it demonstrates that saddles and their correct consumption was understood to have significant implications for the skin of the horse, and secondly it suggests that the comfort of the horse was a major preoccupation for eighteenth-century consumers. Thirdly, and most importantly, it suggests that this object type, and its leather-fronted surfaces, were understood as the material factor which mediated the mutual experience of riding for horse and rider; the specific consumer conceptualization of these objects as 'skin' is made clear through the description of 'sitfasts' – a negative by-product of poor riding – as 'leather'. This is one example of the significance of the material to the consumption of an object type, and the onus placed on skin demonstrates how the meaning of a material to consumers was played out within a precise object context. For broader histories of consumption this suggests that object types being consumed need to be conceived specifically, relative to the materials they were made from. The example of these saddles demonstrates that the leather material was as

[86] G.L., *The gentleman's new jockey, or, farrier's approved guide,* (London, 1714), pp. 16-23 and p. 120.
[87] Markham, *Markham's Masterpiece* pp. 180-184, 191-192; A. de l'Etang, *The practice of farriery, calculated for the East Indies, collected from the best Authors, and founded upon experiments made during a residence of ten years in this country,* (Pondicherry, 1795), p. 64; W. Burdon, *The gentleman's pocket farrier; showing how to use your horse on a journey,* (London, 1788), pp. 15-16.
[88] Burdon, *Gentleman's pocket farrier,* p. 16.

important a part of the practice of consuming them, as was their form. The manner in which consumers experienced these objects depended equally on both.

These sources suggest that protecting the skin of the horse, and ensuring the animal's comfort, was a central concern for farriers. This can be seen in the material evidence of saddles introduced at the beginning of this chapter; they facilitated both the comfort of horse and rider and corresponded closely to the requirements laid out by farriers. The yellow-seated saddle – and, correspondingly, red velvet saddle – were both equipped with a seat which, through quilting and a raised cantle, forced the rider to sit in a particular location and riding position. This design would have created a more limited range of movements for the rider, whose legs would be confined into a smaller space and forced the body into a set form. Friction damage to the surface of the velvet in the earlier saddle slightly in front of the saddle seat would also suggest that, overall, the saddle was consistently used in one seating position. Although the later removal of such pronounced pommels and cantles from the designs of saddles would have relieved the pressure on riders, by 1792 a precise seating position was still desirable as *The British Sportsman* described the position for riders as 'the thighs and legs turned in without constraint, and the feet in a strait line', going on to state that 'the hand ought to be of equal height with the elbow; if it were lower, it would constrain and confine the motion of the horse's shoulders'.[89] The clearly demarcated seating position of the material saddles in relation to the horse supports statements made by Markham and de Solleysel that the rider ought to occupy a carefully selected, specific location in relation to the horse's back.

The bodily manipulation of riders displayed by saddles corresponded to panels under the saddle which were installed to accommodate and provide comfort for the horse, and some variant of

[89] Osbaldiston, *The British Sportsman,* p. 406.

this component is observable in all cases except the sixteenth-century example held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. In the examples from the V&A the stuffing of the pads was made of straw, rather than the horsehair which de Solleysel desired. This may not have offered the same levels of comfort as horsehair, but straw was a material which retained its rigidity for longer and was cheaper to replace. These sections of padding would ease the pressure of the saddle on the horse and work to distribute weight evenly, but they operated in conjunction with a custom fitted saddle tree and a seat which forced the rider into a specific position. These three elements were simply connected with straps and string, suggesting that the arrangement of the three could be easily altered for purposes of repair or adjustment (Figure 4.7). This versatile object reveals through its structure a careful configuration of material elements that sat between the requirements of rider and comfort of horse. Furthermore, the evidence of these objects reinforces that the attention paid by the authors of farriery texts to ensuring riders were obliged to take a disciplined seating position was more than an ideal communicated through texts; physically, saddles were designed and manufactured to ensure this was a material reality.

Figure 4.7: V&A object T184-1914, showing the three distinct layers of a saddle and method of connection.

In summary, the understanding of saddles as skin reflects how these objects were used and culturally constructed. The objects themselves show that different materials functioned within a complex construction and served a range of purposes: from the softest leather at the base providing comfort, to the most decorative and hardy outer layers. Production sources show that these configurations resulted from relatively complex construction practices drawn from a range of specialised crafts. Newspaper sources, meanwhile, show the financial implications of purchasing these objects and the efforts consumers underwent to ensure the return of saddles which may have been lost or stolen. Advertisements also speak to consumer awareness of production, and shared language between those written by producers and those written by the consumers themselves reinforces this. Literary texts demonstrate that the complexity of this construction was mirrored in the relationship between horse and rider; horses needed to be protected for more reasons than their economic value. Horses were also companions and were presented as moving in synchronicity with riders. This chapter will now test these conclusions against other object types connected to saddles – most importantly saddle furniture.

Saddle Furniture

'Saddle furniture' as a term relates to the gamut of accoutrements related to saddles and facilitated their various functions – some have already been partially explored through literary texts. These sources, unlike the literature above, were – for some – part of the practical reality of saddle ownership and consumption, rather than indicative of intellectual or cultural expectations. Principally, these objects were consumed as part of the same assemblage of leather goods which included saddles, breeches, and riding boots. Looking at saddles alongside saddle furniture shows that objects made out of the same material were described very differently. While saddles and saddle cloths were described as 'skin', hames, harnesses and so on were described as 'leather' or simply by colour. This reinforces that the material properties of an object were only one element of how they were described, which is indicative of how leather goods were viewed, and accordingly suggests that culture played an important role in how materials accrued meaning.

The body of newspaper advertisements analysed earlier in this chapter can be used to identify these objects. The range of items of saddle furniture highlighted within the *BCN* sample is shown in Table 4.1, alongside their frequency within the source base and the range of descriptors applied to them, where applicable. The most commonly occurring items of saddle furniture within this sample were bridles and saddle bags. Some items of saddle furniture are ascribed with material descriptors – notably bridles and saddle bags, which are described as variants of 'leather', and saddle cloths which are often made from 'swan skin'. There is no clear relationship between saddle furniture and advertisements for 'skin' or 'leather' saddles particularly, and saddle furniture appears across advertisements for sale, lost and stolen goods generally quite evenly with no particular bias towards any one category.

Item	Frequency	Descriptors
Bridle	12	'black', 'double-reined', 'tann'd leather', 'red moroco leather', 'leather snaffle', 'Weymouth'
Crupper	2	
Furniture	2	'Yellow cloth'
Girth	4	'Best lined', 'green'
Headstall	1	'leather'
Housing	3	'blue', 'velvet', 'foreign-skin'
Saddle bags	12	'leather', 'black leather', 'tann'd leather'
Saddle cloth	7	'swan skin', 'white swan skin', 'blue, bound with leather'
Stirrups	1	
Surcingle (or 'sursingle')	7	'leather'
Total	51	

Table 4.1: Evidence of saddle furniture, frequency and accompanying descriptors from Burney Collection sample.

Figure 4.8: Item 1634-1888:A, V&A, London.

Figure 4.9: 1634-1888 underside.

This harness saddle (Figures 4.8 and 4.9, above), pair of hames (Figures 4.10 and 4.11, below) and saddle cloth (Figures 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14, below) are all late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century objects used in England, and therefore would have existed in the same 'culture of farriery' as the saddles above. Their physical properties mirror those of the saddles, as will be explained, but they provide an interesting counter-point as, based on newspaper advertisements from this sample, they were not – with the exception of the saddle cloth – described as 'skin'. The example of saddle furniture therefore suggests that although saddles should be read as part of an assemblage of other objects, they held a different meaning for consumers which was reflected in language.

In the context of saddles, synchronicity and the importance of being carefully fitted, the harness saddle is an interesting example of how the layered physical qualities of saddles extended to items of saddle furniture. The object would have rested on the horse's shoulders and be held in place by tension generated by a girth; a strap which runs under the belly of the horse behind the front legs and serves as a central fitting to which other items of furniture were attached.[90] The two eyelets shown clearly in Figure 4.8 would act as 'run-throughs' for the reins, connecting to the bridle and bit in the horse's mouth.[91] The frame itself is made of carved wood, which is used to create a decorative flower in the centre of the frame, facing proper front. More interestingly, the underside of the frame – that part of the object which would have been in contact with the horse – comprises five separate materials (Figure 4.9). The object comprises a lining made of two different kinds of leather – one softer, lighter leather on the underside and a darker tanned leather to reinforce the cover and provide depth – which are sewn together with string or twine and attached to the wooden frame by metal nails. This harness saddle – an

[90] V&A, object number 1634-1888:A.
[91] Salaman, *Dictionary of Leather-Woking Tools,* pp. 224-225.

example of saddle furniture – similarly mirrors the structure of saddles in the composition of these layers. At its base the harness saddle uses the softest materials, working from the bottom-up towards the darker and stronger materials at the outermost, more decorative level.

Figure 4.10: Items W32A-1921 and W32B-1921, V&A, London, view of front-facing side of objects.

Figure 4.11: The back-facing side of W32B-1921.

Figures 4.10 and 4.11 show the forward and backward facing sides of a pair of hames kept in the V&A.[92] These pieces of saddle furniture would also feature as part of a harness, and come as a pair as one would be used on each side of the horse to create a frame which would connect to that which it towed; curved to meet the natural contours of the horse's flank. A larger metal loop is crudely inserted into the outside of the hame, which would hold the 'trace' of the harness – a chain attached to the long 'arm' connecting the horse with the cart – and a smaller loop is connected on the inside of the hame at a lower point, which would presumably be used to connect the two hames underneath the horse. As Figure 4.11 shows, the front of the hames were decorated using carved wood into floral patterns. This motif is similar to the saddle harness discussed above, but these hames are made of a far lighter wood, and the front motifs are stained red, green, yellow and blue.

Closer inspection of the outer edge of the hames suggests that the backward-facing sides, now plain wood, were originally covered in leather. Each hame has a series of small holes around the outer edge, consistent with pins or tacks as used in the harness saddle, and in the upper inside edge of one hame (Figure 4.11, right) a row of tacks similar to those used in similar contemporary objects are still present, holding beneath them small fragments of dark leather. Accordingly, the hames show some similarity to other items of saddlery as they are also a 'layered' object. In the same way as saddles and the harness saddle, above, as the front edge of the hame was the 'outward-facing' component, which is more decorative and made of a hardier

[92] V&A, objects W82A-1921 and W82B-1921.

material and the inward-facing component – which would be in direct contact with the horse – was made of a relatively softer material which was not decorative.

Figure 4.12: Item T.184A-1914, V&A, London, side view showing top surface and under layer.

Figure 4.13: Item T.184A-1914, underside of saddle cloth showing size, shape and surface area.

The final category of saddle furniture which these adverts highlighted is saddle cloths. Figures 4.12 and 4.13 show the saddle cloth which accompanied the yellow-seated saddle discussed earlier in this chapter, and Figure 4.14 shows a focused image of the underside of the cloth. Not a substantial amount of space will be devoted to this object specifically as it does not comprise any leather component. However, its structure will be briefly outlined to suggest that a similar structure existed for saddle cloths which were specified as including 'skin' as identified in Table 4.1. This saddle cloth, and the further two examples in the V&A, are approximately 60cm in length and 150cm in width, presumably allowing for the reasonable girth of the horse's back.[93] Through frayed patches of wear in the underside of the cloth, it is possible to identify four discrete layers of material. The uppermost layer is yellow velvet fringed with silver thread and braid. Underneath, the velvet is reinforced by a tightly-woven cloth, hessian and finally linen painted black, which would make contact with the horse. Figure 4.14 shows that the linen layer became damaged and underwent repair. The way in which saddle furniture as a whole exploited leather would suggest that in the case of swan skin saddle cloth the innermost layer would be made of softer leather, and the uppermost layer a coloured material – possibly white, to reciprocate the animal in the same manner as leopard skin saddles which were embroidered with black spots.

[93] V&A objects 880-1864, T.111-1917.

Figure 4.14: Close up of underside of T.184A-1914.

These items of saddle furniture neatly mirror the overall conclusions for this chapter because they demonstrate that although these objects shared a material composition with the saddles themselves, they did not share the cultural association of ‘skin’. In literary texts it was these items of saddle furniture which were associated with the exercise of power and control by riders over horses, while saddles were absent and only appeared in texts when a relationship of synchronicity and shared action was being described. Accordingly, this reinforces that the 'skin-like' meaning of saddles was drawn from more than their use of leather, and also relied on consumer attitudes towards the behaviours and relationships in which saddles would be consumed.

Boots and breeches

Supplementary object types can be used to demonstrate the full material range with which consumers engaged when riding on horseback. The footwear used by riders in the eighteenth century was often made of leather, which was sometimes set into a hard form using the *cuir bouilli* method. There are extensive collections of contemporary footwear available to historians, including the National Trust Snowshill Wade Costume Collection, where examples of footwear from this period include jack boots, postillion boots and gambados. Expanding this search out into National Trust collections more broadly also includes generic 'boots', made of a softer sheepskin rather than a stiffened hide, and riding boots. All these types of footwear, as McCormack discusses, have their own distinctive form and construction. There is a keen difference between the subtle and more restrained form of the riding boots held at Smallhythe Place in Kent – their soft and supple material ideally suited to closely fitting the body of their wearer – and the postillion boots at Snowshill (Figure 4.15).[94]

[94] National Trust object numbers 1118774 and 1350732.

Figure 4.15: Sheepskin leather boots, National Trust object 1118774, image © National Trust Images/John Hammond (left). Postillion boots, National Trust object 1350732, image © National Trust / Richard Blakey (right).

These postillion boots are far sturdier objects which appear to serve a primarily protective function for the feet and shins of their wearers. Accordingly, by examining examples of the surviving footwear which would have been used in close combination with saddles, historians are able to observe how the range of uses of leather could correspond to the desired function of the relevant object, and how functional qualities took on cultural importance. While saddles served key functions in both protection and comfort, the same functions can also be ascribed to different examples of footwear that were also implicit in the action of riding. A key point of difference, however, is that while saddles were understood more generally to be 'skin-like', it was only particular kinds of leather footwear which communicated the same meaning. This comparison also enables some degree of social breadth to be applied to this object study; because postillions were the staff who rode alongside a carriage, rather than occupied the carriage as a consumer, what this chapter finds regarding the protective functions of leather may also be understood in the context of consumers who occupied a lower social rank.

Harvey's study of breeches primarily considers these objects in relation to masculine embodiment. This was another typical leather object which formed part of the overall assemblage on the back of a horse and, as the newspaper advertisements consulted in chapter 3 make clear, breeches were another item which consumers may often have identified as skin. Two materials which featured in advertisements for these objects were doe and buck skin, used to manufacture breeches for women and men respectively. One such example, also held by the Snowshill Wade Costume Collection, are a pair of buckskin breeches which date from c.1770 to 1799 (Figure 4.16).[95] The main body of the breeches are made of tanned buckskin, and the additional materials used include pearl and bone buttons. If themselves an object lesser characterized by mobility, when situated alongside this object study of saddlery and the supplementary object type of boots these breeches further reinforce that skin was an important concept. Here within the wider context of horse riding, breeches were used at the point where horse and rider connected – part and parcel of a behaviour where bodily boundaries were being culturally challenged.

[95] National Trust object number 1348890.

Figure 4.16: National Trust object number 1348890. Image © National Trust / Richard Blakey.

Carriages, sedan chairs, and mobility

Saddles were also characterized by mobility. There is therefore a useful comparison to be made between saddles and other eighteenth-century object types which were not typically represented in probate inventories: carriages and sedan chairs. These large objects, either towed by horses or carried by chairmen to transport their consumers, came in a range of styles, sizes and extents of sophistication. While the major physical structures of these objects were constructed from wood, leather was an important material component used to upholster the interior seats, sometimes cover external surfaces, support the weight of the coach as a rudimentary form of suspension and form the main material basis for the roof. In so doing, leather was used to provide additional protection to the wooden structures of the carriage or sedan chair and act as a canvas for aesthetic embellishments. In their application of this material, they are therefore similar to the chairs which will be discussed in chapter 5.

As an object type, carriages naturally served a very practical function, but in an eighteenth-century social and cultural context served a representational function too. When owned, these were the expensive goods of those afforded status and esteem, and often maintained by a separate staff. Leather-fronted carriages were a far cry from the wagons and carts used to support rural and agricultural labours. Meanwhile, sedan chairs made a direct statement about the esteem of their occupant. As an enclosed seat complete with roof, windows and space for bars which chairmen would use to carry the object, their users were physically lifted above the streets and protected from the elements. How these objects were seen and perceived, in short, was as important a part of their consumption as how they were used.

Contemporary museum collections provide good artefactual evidence of sedan chairs from the eighteenth-century, and given the relatively exquisite nature of these goods partnered with their obvious economic value this level of survival is perhaps unsurprising. Carriages, in contrast, do not seem to hold a place in contemporary collections – even less so than saddles themselves. This may be that due to their size and the complex practicalities of their maintenance that collections today shy away from holding these goods in their stores, particularly as evidence of these objects from the period can be identified among the sold lots of auctions. There is also no obvious typical museum classification in which these objects would reside; carriages may be placed in generic ‘woodwork’ collections or among items of furniture, but neither reflect the multimaterial nature of these goods, nor their intended purpose.

Carriages were representated in depictions of urban or rural landscapes. In such images as John Collet’s *Scene in a London Street* (1770), Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg’s *Coach in a Thunderstorm* (1795) and Michael Rooker’s *Merton College, Oxford* (1771), viewers can see carriages tested in a range of spaces: the bustling London street, the storm-stricken country road and the becalmed provincial road with few people in sight (Figures 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19).[96] Indeed, Collet's *Scene* appears to be unique in depicting both a leather-fronted carriage and a leather-fronted sedan chair in close proximity. These images and others, when taken together, make some suggestions about the cultural function of these goods, and therefore further the set of associations within which leather should be read. First, and most keenly, leather serves a protective function, and this mirrors the physically protective nature of leather saddles.

Figure 4.17: J. Collet, Scene in a London Street, oil on canvas, 95.3 x 124.5 cm, 1770, (Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT, USA).

[96] J. Collet, *Scene in a London Street,* 1770, (oil on canvas, 95.3 x 124.5 cm) Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT, USA; P. de Loutherbourg, *Coach in a Thunderstorm,* c. 1795, (oil on millboard, 42.5 x 61 cm) Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT, USA; M. Rooker, *Merton College, Oxford,* 1771 (oil on canvas, 70.5 x 90.5 cm) Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT, USA.

Figure 4.18: P. de Loutherbourg, Coach in a Thunderstorm, oil on millboard, 42.5 x 61 cm, c. 1795, (Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT, USA).

Figure 4.19: M. Rooker, Merton College, Oxford, oil on canvas, 70.5 x 90.5 cm, 1771, (Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT, USA).

In the *Scene,* a sedan chair and carriage occupy a shared space to the right of the scene. Both foreground a pub, but are peripheral to the central conflict. A woman in fine garb emerges from the sedan chair, whilst three figures peer outwards from the carriage. This representation makes obvious allusions to a boundary being crossed between the inside and outside of these objects; there is a clear conceptual difference between the internal and external facets of these goods being materialised here. In the case of the carriage, the privacy of its consumers was protected not only by the physical dimensions of these goods – preventing passers by from easily looking in – but also concealed windows. In *Merton College*, a similar reference is made to the private nature of these objects as a horse-drawn carriage is positioned to the left of the scene and blends seamlessly with the edifices of neighbouring buildings. This carriage, with shut doors and windows concealed by panels, seems to represent leather as used both in the roof and side panels.

In both cases, there is an association drawn between these objects, their constituent materials, and protection. On the one hand, *Merton College* paints carriages as offering protection in a more literal sense. The positioning of the carriage adjacent to the buildings of Oxford suggests that – similarly to these built structures – this object offered physical safety and security. When also read in the context of *Scene,* carriages can be understood to protect more than the bodies of their consumers. In presenting such a marked distinction between the consumers using carriages and those occupying the street outside, Collet's piece suggests that carriages were private spaces which protected the sensibilities of their occupants in equal measure. Coupled with their role as status objects, carriages served both functional and cultural purposes, therefore. Both carriages and saddles were multimaterial objects which used leather to a significant extent, but what this comparison suggests is that these goods collectively shared more than mobility. While saddles physically protected the horse at the same time as engendering synchronicity of movement between horse and rider, carriages were about more than transport because they protected bodies as both material and emotional entities and materialised the distinction between internal and external selves.

A further comparison to sedan chairs reinforces this nexus of practical and cultural impact. Sedan chairs from this period don't appear to be a very present feature of probate inventories, but there are representations available and – crucially – a wider range of extant objects. Within National Trust properties alone, sedan chairs are held by the Shugborough Estate in Staffordshire, Calke Abbey in Derbyshire, Packwood House in Warwickshire, Dunster Castle in Somerset, Moulton Hall in North Yorkshire, Belton House in Lincolnshire, Saltram in Devon, Dyrham in Gloucestershire and Snowhill Manor in Gloucestershire, which holds two examples. One of those sedan chairs held at Snowhill Manor, dated c.1783-1805, is comparably more basic (Figure 4.20, left).[97] Standing at approximately a metre and a half tall, the outwards-facing surfaces of this sedan chair are panelled with a simple black leather, which is attached to the wooden body of the object with nails. The application of leather to the other materials used to make the object is relatively simplistic and does not do a great deal to embellish this object – certainly in comparison to the saddles from the period examined above. The interior of the object is upholstered with red cloth, and the consumer of this sedan chair would like through plain glass. Both the glass and the cloth upholstery show signs of conservation work.

[97] National Trust object number 1332879.

Figure 4.20: National Trust objects 1332879 (left) and 872068 (right). Images © National Trust / Claire Reeves & team (left) and National Trust / Sophia Farley & Denis Madge (right).

The example of a sedan chair held by Saltram makes a useful comparison (Figure 4.20, right). Dated c.1764-1769, this sedan chair is also approximately a metre and a half tall, and also panelled with black leather. However, there are a few key points of difference. The roof of this sedan chair is domed, rather than flat. The interior is upholstered with a fine green damask. Where the black leather is attached to the wooden panels, decorative gilt metal has been used to frame each outward-facing surface. Gilt metal ornamentation has been affixed to the sedan chair at each corner, and in the centre of the domed roof. Lastly, a mahogany frame surrounds the glass windows which face outwards from the seat itself. While these two sedan chairs embody two relative extremes within the range of this collection, they each share a use of leather as the most outward-facing material of multi-material objects. Setting the glass windows aside as a practical feature of this object, there is an obvious contrast between the soft textile interiors and the hardy leather exteriors of both goods. In this way, these sedan chairs mirror the use of materials shown by the examination of saddles above, and therefore suggest that the meanings found of leather in this object study have applications within a wider geographic range.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown that although contemporary public collections are surprisingly lacking in surviving examples of saddles, broad stages of a life cycle can be established from surviving documentary and print records to enable a meaningful material analysis of some surviving objects. Saddles, also consumed as part of a wider assemblage of specific objects, were used by consumers to seek a synchronicity of motion with their horses through the act of riding. Although riding, comfort, function and performance are all relevant contexts through which to evaluate the consumption of these objects, through a body of literary sources – some of which were accompanied by visual representations of riding – this chapter has argued that the broadest context in which these objects were consumed was a relationship of synchronicity and, to some extent, companionship. This significant relationship was mediated by saddles. Most importantly, this chapter has argued that across production, sale, consumption and repair, skin – as a material and a linguistic descriptor – characterized eighteenth-century concerns and demarcated the objects which enabled riders to 'feel close' to their horses. Although leather was the material being used, when this term was used it tended to describe objects which emphasised ontological distance between horse and rider. In both cases these descriptors show that consumers reflected on the materials their objects were made from, but the inclusion of descriptors relating to skin suggests an awareness of the longer-term production processes leading up to their ownership of the good.

To reflect on these findings, saddles enjoyed something of a special position in being compared to skin. 'Skin', though understood within the context of newspaper advertisements to differentiate between types of saddles and link these types to extents of prestige, was also a term which fell under heightened textual scrutiny in the eighteenth century as the biological structures and implications of this organ became increasingly investigated and better understood. Accordingly, saddles shared a linguistic territory with an organ that was understood on the one hand for its layered qualities, and on the other as an exterior-facing indicator of identity and porous boundary between the body and the environment. The former presents a unique material overlap – in which the layered-construction of saddles answered the material qualities of skin – while the latter presents opportunities for new forms of analysis of these objects. The material analysis of eighteenth-century saddlery and saddle furniture demonstrates that their consumers were attentive to the complications caused by sharing an object with an animal companion; one of the most noticeable features across the range of goods examined was the way in which softer, lighter and all-round more 'skin-like' forms of leather were used to materialize the point of contact between the horse and the object. Within the well-established contexts of horse-rider synchronicity and companionship, the function of saddles as a unique object within the act of riding did more than physically accommodate either or horse or rider, or make allowances for their comfort. Instead, this object should be viewed as having particularly transformative power; enabling the fusion of horse and rider within the specific context of riding.

By turning to supplementary object types which shared a common basis with saddles – whether the sedan chairs and carriages which were also characterised by mobility, or the breeches and boots that were also 'skin-like' – this chapter has been able to substantiate its findings of saddles across broader consumer bases in the period. 'Skin', in the case of boots and breeches, also challenged bodily boundaries, and the use of leather in mobility provided more than only physical protection. This is important as these other objects allow historians to tease out why leather was used more broadly – its functional qualities and, perhaps, accessibility – but also specifying the particular meanings for certain leather objects. Saddles, boots and breeches alike bore ‘skin-like’ associations in the same way that saddles, sedan chairs, and carriages were connected by mobility, but the ‘skin-like’ associations of leather garnered particular and heightened significance in the context of saddles as an object which required synchronicity of motion between two different living entities.

This chapter therefore concludes by suggesting that material literacy of saddles hinged on the material and cultural meanings of the linguistic terms used to describe them. The physical structure and materiality of saddles when understood in the context of contemporary material culture enabled these objects to disrupt the bodily boundaries of both entities in a relationship which was already culturally predicated on affection, and facilitated a unique mode of consumption.

Chapter 5 - Chairs

Figure 5.1: Stacked leather chairs viewed through the attic window of Lady Blackett's baby house, Museum of London.

Introduction

This chapter will explore one of the most common object types in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English homes – leather-upholstered chairs – and examine these objects as reflections of style, taste and the utilisation of space by early modern consumers. Lady Blackett's baby house, currently in the *Museum of London*'s 'Expanding City' gallery, is a useful way in to examining the meaningfulness of these goods. Its façade opens to visitors to reveal four internal rooms which contain a plethora of material cultural sources in miniature. In the kitchen a servant tires over meal preparation atop a wooden table which is accompanied by basic wooden ladder-back chairs. In the room immediately across the corridor, a darker and shinier table is laden with silver plate and flatware which the house's wax and linen residents would use to dine while sitting on comfortable chairs upholstered in a deep red textile, all the time surrounded by picturesque *en grisaille* landscapes on the walls.[1] The sitting room is located immediately above the dining room. It has the same lush carpet, but the walls feature rococo flowers set against a rich blue paper.[2] Positioned around a small drinks table, in between the hearth, a gilt-lined door frame and an Italianesque changing screen are three cream silk chairs with upholstered seats and backs held in place with neat rows of tacks, and supported by cabriole legs. A fourth chair of this style and material sits in the neighbouring first-floor bedroom, next to a poised doll in a pink dress, her décolletage concealed by layers of white lace. There are leather-upholstered chairs to be found in Lady Blackett's baby house, but to be afforded a glimpse of these objects one must peer through the top-floor window into the concealed attic (Figure 5.1). Here, six apparently unwanted chairs with leather-upholstered seats are stacked haphazardly on top of one another; out of sight, out of mind.

[1] J. Hermans, P. Meehan and B. Heiberger, 'The Blackett Baby House: Conservation in Miniature', *The Conservator* 15 (1991), pp. 35-37.
[2] C. Fox, 'Domestic Duodecimo', *Country Life* (December, 1988), p. 66.

Figure 5.2: Blackett's baby leather chairs, Museum of London collection numbers 37.13/83, 84 and 85 (top, left to right) and 37.13/86, 17 and 16 (bottom, left to right) Images © Museum of London.

Understanding Blackett's baby house as albeit one form of representation situates leather chairs in a particular context. The object is dated to 1759. This object and its contemporaries 'function as virtual realities; they are representations of human environments wherein lives may be imagined, possessions held, and existence shaped in ways perhaps unavailable in full scale, with minuteness giving things a magical or delightful quality they might not otherwise possess'.[3] The term 'baby' house, Nancy Wei-Ning Chen suggests, was indicative of their size

[3] J.E. Bryan, *Material Culture in Miniature: Historic Dolls' Houses Reconsidered,* (PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2003), p. 2.

and not their function, as these increasingly available objects reflected adult concerns and interests; replicas of real homes to mirror contemporary architectural tastes, diversions for collectors and status symbols.[4] Johan Herman et al concur that 'baby houses refer to miniaturised family residences. Made and used for the amusement of adults, they are usually large and architectural in contrast to dolls houses that were purely meant as toys for children'.[5] In brief, Blackett's baby house should not be understood as a plaything, but as a representation of Lady Blackett's home – here, a combination of stylistic elements drawn from the family's residences Matfen Hall in Northumberland, and Newby Hall in Ripon, North Yorkshire.[6]

As an object on display in a modern heritage institution, curatorial interpretation provides an inevitable barrier to understanding the contemporary use of this object. Historians cannot be sure of how any of these individual items of furniture were positioned in the eighteenth-century consumption of this baby house. However, the story of how this baby house was found – in a concealed loft that had not been opened since the early nineteenth century – lends weight to the suggestion that these objects occupied in contemporary use the same location as they are displayed in now, as this much has not changed since the house was discovered. In any case, this object provokes questions. Evidently, the Blackett dolls did not find a place in the domestic interior for their leather chairs (Figure 5.2), relegating them to storage in the attic. Though they were not valuable enough to use in the drawing room, bedroom or dining room, they were valuable enough to keep and not throw away. More than this, the chairs were valuable enough to retire momentarily, and not to be repurposed in the kitchen, and were at least reasonably current objects as they featured cabriole legs and sculpted splats – both mid-Georgian

[4] N. Wei-Ning Chen, 'Playing with Size and Reality: The Fascination of a Dolls' House World', *Children's Literature in Education* (2015), pp. 279-280.
[5] Herman, Meehan and Heiberger, 'The Blackett Baby House', p. 33.
[6] Museum of London online collections, http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/755643.html. Accessed March 7th 2017.

innovations. In sum, this representation of leather chairs suggests that these objects were mobile within homes, and that their value was contingent on particular spatial and temporal contexts.

This chapter situates an analysis of four object studies of leather-upholstered chairs available in sets of six within a variety of source types and in so doing demonstrates that the meaning of leather was played out differently to saddles through three different approaches to this object type: first, when leather is understood as one of a number of materials used to create these objects, second within more generic contexts of use and appraisal, and third within more abstract contexts of style and aesthetics. The chapter starts by asking questions about the significance of leather to the consumption of these goods: how leather was used in this object type, what the range of this object type was and where these objects were used. Subsequently, and through an analysis of the objects, the chapter asks how the leather upholstery offers opportunities for the consumption of these goods to have meaning. Although acknowledging that the functional qualities of leather were important to the consumption of these goods, ultimately this chapter argues that the most significant way in which leather had an impact on the meaning of these objects was by relating them to far wider-ranging visual motifs.

At the same time, leather-upholstered chairs are significant in demonstrating the specific potentials and limitations of this material; what it could, and could not, achieve. There are commonalities between these objects which reinforces that although ‘leather chairs’ was a broad object category, there were shared expectations of this product. This chapter further argues that concentration on leather upholstery and its associated working practices enriches traditional furniture history by providing an avenue for the incorporation of modern material and design studies.[7]

First, this chapter will introduce the traditional furniture historiography and propose ways in which focusing on leather upholstery can contribute towards this somewhat niche field. Secondly there will be a brief overview of the production of upholstered chairs to demonstrate how upholstery materials more generally were one consideration relative to other materials within this object type. Thirdly, this chapter will define the contexts for understanding this object type through their presence in probate inventories. Lastly, and most substantively, four sets of leather-upholstered chairs will be analysed through their material and aesthetic properties. Throughout the analysis of leather-upholstered chairs, this chapter also addresses items of furniture which use leather inlay as supplementary object types: desks and tables. These supplementary object types enable the main themes of this chapter to be considered within a broader compass than chairs alone – nevertheless reinforcing that the use of leather in items of furniture relied on the material's functional properties while contributing significantly to the meaning consumers derived from the visual appearance of these goods. Leather, therefore, sat at the centre of an equation between its functional qualities and visual appearance. While this comparison extends one finding of this chapter to a wider range of objects with broader social applications, this chapter nevertheless argues that leather served specific aesthetic ends within the context of upholstered chairs.

This chapter studies leather-upholstered chairs in sets because this was how they were largely intended to be consumed, but this is also a useful methodological choice as it highlights unique

[7] C. Gilbert, *English Vernacular Furniture 1750-1900*, (New Haven, 1991), p.6.

instances of damage, repair and handling in individual examples set against the norm of the remaining objects in the set.[8] The first set will be the ‘Taunton Chairs’, held in the Geffrye Museum of the Home. The next set of chairs is held in the collections of the V&A: the Samuel Fairhead chairs. Two further sets are found the Bradley Manor dining chairs in Devon, and the Old Rufford Hall dining chairs in Lancashire. These latter two examples are both located in non-urban National Trust properties. This range of objects corresponds to the most basic selection criteria of the chapter as they are all the available sets of six – here chosen as the modal value of the number of chairs in a set found in the sample of c.1,500 probate inventories introduced in chapter 1 – can be dated with certainty to the period, and still have contemporary leather upholstery. This range of objects also offers a range of types of chair so that leather can be viewed within a range of contexts. The Taunton chairs are upholstered with Russia leather against an oak frame, the Fairhead chairs use mahogany and the Old Rufford Hall chairs are upholstered with gilt leather. The category of leather chairs therefore includes a substantial range of objects which share a common material.

As an assemblage, these leather-upholstered chairs speak to an overall story of eighteenth-century material culture which was defined by consumer investment in goods, repurpose and repair.[9] Leather did not uniquely set these objects apart, bar some specific embellishments this material could be a canvas for, and so in some way this chapter demonstrates how the study of an object can enrich the history of a material, rather than the reverse. What analysing these objects through their mutual upholstery material does achieve is to give coherence to this set of objects and the sensory reactions they could provoke. This chapter closes by arguing that

[8] M. Hellman, ‘The Joy of Sets: The Uses of Seriality in the French Interior’ in D. Goodman and K. Norberg (eds), *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us About the European and American Past,* (London, 2006), p. 130.
[9] See A. Fennetaux, A. Junqua and S. Vasset (eds), *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (London, 2014).

though these objects were ultimately functional, the way that leather was most relevant to the objects – and way in which this material enhanced the consumption of these objects – was through visually-derived forms of meaning.

Historiographical context

One of the first fields that this chapter contributes to is the body of traditional furniture studies, which have more often provided a connoisseurial perspective which prioritizes visual appearance and change over time over context or consumption. These histories, such as Ralph Fastnedge's and Bernard Price's, also tend to be far more all-encompassing in terms of their chronology.[10] Fastnedge's text covers a 'long' early modern period, from 1500 to 1830, but Price's far exceeds this in its scope, starting with 'pre-1600' and finishing in the twentieth century. More specific studies devoted to chairs published in the 1960s and 1970s include Ralph Edwards, John Gloag and substantial sections of John Rogers' *English Furniture*.[11]

One of the most common strategies these authors employed to provide structure was to create a periodisation of chair types based on the wood used to create the frame. The nature of this periodisation is somewhat contested, but there are some consistencies. For Edwards, the late sixteenth century to c.1660 marks the 'age of oak', c.1660 to c.1720 the 'age of walnut' and c.1720 to c.1790 the 'age of mahogany' respectively. Post-1790 was characterised by increased use of satinwood, but this did not mark the 'age of satinwood', as Edward uses 'Regency style' to describe this period.[12] For Rogers the 'age of oak' occurred between the middle ages and c.1660, the 'age of walnut' between c.1660 and c.1750 and the 'age of mahogany' between

[10] R. Fastnedge, *English Furniture Styles 1500-1830,* (Harmondsworth, 1970); B. Price, *The Story of English Furniture,* (London, 1982).
[11] J.C. Rogers, *English Furniture,* (London, 1964), R. Edwards, *English Chairs,* (London, 1970) and J. Gloag, *The Englishman's Chair: Origins, Design and Social History of Seat Furniture in England,* (London, 1964).
[12] Edwards, *English Chairs,* pp. 1-15

c.1750 and 1820.[13] By contrast, Gloag eschews giving primacy to the material of chair frames as a means to create such a periodisation as these ‘amorphous generalisations’ obscure or conceal the significance of changes in style.[14] Gloag may also challenge periodisations such as G.M. Ellwood’s which structure the chronology of objects around the reigning monarchs.[15]

Although Gloag and Ellwood did not follow the suit of their contemporaries none of these authors addressed changes in upholstery or attempted to create similar structures on this basis, and the reasons for this are unclear. These authors also do not explicitly reject the relevance of upholstery, and following more traditional curatorial practices upholstery may have been interpreted as the purview of textile historians, rather than those studying furniture. This is one shortfall of the 1960s and 1970s historiography on this subject, however. While devoting attention to changing frame material speaks to changing practices of manufacture, narrowing this focus to the upholstery of chairs explores a dimension of objects which was more regularly revised and situates individual objects within more specific contexts of style. A frame manufactured from oak pre-1660 may be emblematic of an ‘age of oak’, but this does not mean that its consumption ceased after that point. Understanding upholstery is a window into understanding how chair frames regarded as out-of-date were modified and adjusted to meet the demands of new frameworks of cultural reference.

This chapter demonstrates that a particular focus on leather as an upholstery material can update traditional studies: first by enriching the historic concentration on the materials comprising chair frames with equal focus on one of the most common and frequent materials

[13] Rogers, *English Furniture*, pp. 15-16, 69-70 and 147-148, and on the physical qualities of specific woods p. 17, 69 and 153.
[14] Gloag, *The Englishman’s Chair,* pp. 89-90
[15] G.M. Ellwood, *English Furniture and Decoration 1680-1800,* (London, 1924) pp. v-x, Gloag, *The Englishman’s Chair,* p. 87 and 115

for their upholstery, and secondly by showing – in line with the research questions posed in the introduction to this thesis – how the choice of upholstery material could mediate the nature of consumption of that object. The functional properties of leather were clearly important to the consumption of chairs, but this object type when analysed historically also presents opportunities to understand how the stylistic and visual properties of the material played out in consumption. This is a further example not only of the different qualities of leather being exercised unevenly across different object types, but of the ability of materials to take on different meanings in different contexts. Furthermore, understanding the upholstery of a chair answers the research question of this thesis regarding the significance of materials to consumer engagement with objects. The material was, in some cases, a fluid component which consumers could change. This aligns with Hannah Greig and Giorgio Riello, who challenge the earlier historical view of 'consumers only as patrons and supporters (but not necessarily proactive agents) in the development of aesthetics and interior styles'.[16] Attention to upholstery in particular allows historians to understand one way in which the proactivity of consumers was exercised.

This analysis relies to some extent on visual signifiers, using an established historiographical position validating this way of assessing objects. Analysing the visual motifs on these objects is important because understanding how an object looks in a given context is an important part of understanding the reaction it provoked in consumers. On the range of eighteenth-century styles, Michael Snodin argues that 'The mere possibility of such choice was a sign of profound changes in attitudes to style, for it allowed style and ornament to carry the kinds of meanings and feelings that mark our experience of them today'.[17] More explicitly, Snodin argues that

[16] Greig and Riello, 'Eighteenth-Century Interiors', p. 279.
[17] M. Snodin, 'Style', in M. Snodin and J. Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts: Georgian Britain 1714-1837,* (London, 2004), p. 39.

there were a range of styles into which objects could fit, and these styles – characterised by visual features – intimated feeling in consumers. Similarly, Andrew Morrall seeks to 'claim the visual sphere of ornament as a medium of cultural and social experience'.[18] Lastly, Tara Hamling insists on a place for the overlapping analysis between visual and material culture, breaking down this broad category into surface decoration, colour, iconography, surface quality and features, and inscriptions.[19] This assessment of visual cues is more than description, therefore.

Finally, a close focus on leather as an upholstery material – and particularly through the object study of the Rufford chairs – links to the established literature on repurpose, recycling and regeneration. For Ariane Fennetaux, Amélie Junqua and Sophie Vasset these processes were relevant to eighteenth-century objects as 'they went through wear, tear, and repair, they moved from the hands of one owner to another through gift, theft, selling, or pawing, and they changed appearance and shape through alterations, transformations, and mending'.[20] Moreover, Fennetaux, Junqua and Vasset suggest that recycling or reuse was 'not only driven by an avoidance of waste or a pursuit of thrift', but was 'part of transformative cycles that affected the whole of society – from the very poor to the very rich'.[21] It is the 'very rich' who are the focus of Jon Stobart's contribution to the same volume. He argues that 'the eighteenth-century reality of country houses was […] the nature and arrangement of furniture, paintings, books, tableware, and so being in constant flux'.[22] Further, 'there is plenty of evidence that recycling formed an important activity within the prosperous and even elite households'.[23]

[18] A. Morrall, 'Ornament as Evidence', in K. Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture,* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2018), p. 51.
[19] T. Hamling, 'Visual and material sources', in L. Sangha and J. Willis (eds), *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources,* (Oxford, 2016), p. 138.
[20] A. Fennetaux, A. Junqua and S. Vasset , 'Introduction' in A. Fennetaux, A. Junqua and S. Vasset (eds), *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century,* (New York, 2015), p. 2.
[21] Ibid. pp. 2-3.
[22] J. Stobart, 'Luxury and Country House Sales in England, c.1760-1830', in Ibid, p. 25.
[23] Ibid.

Producing upholstered chairs

The level of skill involved in producing the base, wooden chair frames was painted in fairly rudimentary terms by the author of *The London Tradesman* (1747), commenting that 'upholders employ a species of carvers peculiar to themselves; who are employed in carving chairs […] or any other furniture whereon carving is used. their work is slight, and requires no great ingenuity to perform it; I mean, he need no elegant taste in the general art of carving'.[24] The production of a chair frame clearly required some level of ability was not the purview of a 'craftsman', or one equipped with particularly great taste; a tension mirrored between the different levels of craftsmen involved in the production of saddles.

It was the work of the upholsterer, or 'upholder', which transformed a naked frame to a functional chair and equipped these objects with the material which placed them in a specific context of design. The author of *The London Tradesman* shines more favourably on the upholder in contrast to the chair-carver, or the cabinet- maker or joiner, who then assembled and coloured them.[25] Although *The London Tradesman* does state that 'the stuffing and covering [of a] chair or settee-bed is indeed the nicest part [of] this branch, […] it may be acquired without any remarkable genius'. [26] The upholder more generally is held in a much higher regard, the master making choices of material or design, rather than one of his extensive range of employees carrying out pre-decided patterns and designs.[27]

[24] Campbell, *The London Tradesman*, p. 172.
[25] *London Tradesman*, pp. 171-172.
[26] *London Tradesman*, pp. 169-171.
[27] Ibid.

The work of the upholder – or, indeed, the 'master' upholder – in contrast to the 'unremarkable' work of the chair carver or more mechanical and dextrous work of his right-hand man the cabinet maker, was presented as responsible for taste in the production of this category of goods.[28] The author writes:

> I have just finished my house, and must now think of furnishing it with fashionable furniture. the upholder is chief agent in this case: he is the man upon whose judgement I rely in the choice of goods; and I suppose he has not only judgement in the materials, but taste in the fashions, and skill in workmanship.[29]

In brief, the making of upholstered chairs can be understood as a series of material and economic transformations from base materials to the finished object. At each stage work performed and materials used increased the cultural and economic value of the object, and accordingly each subsequent craftsman involved in production was afforded a higher level of esteem. This brief overview of making suggests that the upholder added the most value to these chairs, but it also suggests that it was the upholstery of a chair which lent it the greatest meaning in terms of taste or fashion. The section below will use probate inventories to speak to the specific use and meaning associated with chairs upholstered specifically with leather.

Object use

This section investigates what can be understood of the consumption of these objects through probate inventories in order to identify their basic contexts: where these objects were used, how much they were valued at by appraisers, what behaviours they were part of. As such, it draws

[28] Ibid, p. 169.
[29] Ibid, pp. 169-170.

closely on the probate inventories outlined in the introduction as its primary body of sources and relies on the corresponding selection criteria also outlined in the introduction. While there is nothing in this schematic outline of production to suggest that the production of leather-upholstered chairs was not a cross-rank activity, probate inventories provide a clearer sense of the availability of these goods through the rough index they provide of the monetary value of these objects and the occupations of their owners. Drawing a link to chapter 3 of this thesis, newspaper advertisements also demonstrate that leather chairs could be purchased both through retail, and more secondary forms of circulation such as auction.

Chairs appeared in a range of inventories, and account for 76 of the inventories including a reference to at least one leather object used in this thesis. Although the nature of these documents can limit the amount of detail historians can gather about these objects in some ways – such as the often brief or vague descriptions of objects – when read as a body of sources they can provide an understanding of the salient qualities of objects from the perspective of inventory consumers: both those compiling inventories and the deceased whose homes were being appraised. [30] Of the owners of leather chairs, these inventories provide evidence of 14 attributed to recently-deceased female consumers, and 62 to males, or a ratio of roughly one to four. This is a slightly distorted figure, in part due to the likelihood that women – as wives, mothers and daughters – were present in the homes which inventories attributed to men. Within the 14 probate inventories attributed to women, all bar the Bristol victualler Hannah Foot were described as widows.[31] Although there are difficulties in making preliminary statements about who the consumers of leather chairs were, probate inventories in the least provide evidence of

[30] G. Riello, 'Things Seen and Unseen: The material culture of early modern inventories and their representation of domestic interiors', in P. Findlen (ed.), *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800,* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 140-143.
[31] E. George and S. George (eds), *Bristol Probate Inventories Part III; 1690-1804,* (Bristol, 2008), p. 203.

instances where they were part of the material composition of women's homes, and suggest that these objects were not actively divested upon the death of the husband.

Occupational identity or rank was not consistently noted in the inventories used in this thesis. However, instances where this kind of information has been provided by appraisers allow historians to make judgements about the social accessibility of leather chairs – although what inventories do not allow is an understanding of the ways in which these consumers accessed these goods. On the one hand, the consumers of leather chairs could include Bailiffs and Gentlemen, as in the case of the six leather chairs owned by Charles Lightfoot, Bailiff of Whitby, appraised in 1743, the five leather chairs owned by Thomas Ivey, gentleman of Bristol, appraised in 1707, or the four leather chairs owned by John Choyce, gentleman of Ratby, appraised in 1723.[32] Other examples demonstrate that, by comparison, leather chairs were also owned by those drawn from less prestigious occupations: Whitby mariners, a Bristol rope maker and cork-cutter, and a Clifton planker.[33] Including these examples, the number of identifiers totals 35 within this source base: master mariner, widow, mercer, joiner, butcher, mariner, Bailiff, hair weaver, wool-comber, surgeon, musician writing master, haulier, rope maker, brass founder, blacksmith, gentleman, cooper, gunsmith, cork-cutter, basket-maker, saddler, mason, pipe-maker, wine-cooper, cordwainer, brush-maker, sexton, victualler, innholder, yeoman, planker, baker, looking-glass maker, and slaughterman.[34] This finding is

[32] N. Vickers, *A Yorkshire Town of the Eighteenth Century: The Probate Inventories of Whitby, North Yorkshire, 1700-1800*, (Studley, 1986), p. 73; George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* p. 61; J. Wilshere (ed.), *Ratby Probate Inventories, 1621-1844*, (Leicester, 1984), p. 9.
[33] Vickers, *A Yorkshire Town of the Eighteenth Century,* p. 65 and p. 81; George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* pp. 46-47, p. 90; J.S. Moore (ed.), *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories, 1609-1761,* (Bristol, 1981) p. 160.
[34] Vickers, *A Yorkshire Town*, p. 40, p. 42, p. 55, p.61, p. 65, p. 69, p.74, p. 81; George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* pp. 2-3, pp. 26-27, pp. 30-31, pp. 34-35, pp. 36-37, p. 40, p. 49, pp. 52-53, p. 57, p. 63, p. 68, p. 78, pp. 90-91, p. 98, pp. 104-106, p. 119, p. 155, p. 164, p. 189, p. 203, p. 207; R.A. Machin, *Probate Inventories of Chetnole, Leigh and Yetminster,* (Bristol, 1976), p. 96; Moore, *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories,* p. 141, p. 148, pp. 154-155, p. 158, p. 160, p. 175, p. 186, p. 189, p. 191, p. 206; Wilshere, *Ratby Probate Inventories,* p. 9.

important, because it suggests that contrary to the typical 'museological priority given to the connoisseurial best' – a factor that has limited the available object selection for this chapter – leather chairs could also be found in a range of lower-status homes in the period.[35]

Within these parameters, the key findings from these sources can be summarised as follows: how many chairs consumers owned, what objects leather chairs were used alongside, how much consumers thought these objects were worth, what range was contained within the descriptions of these objects, where in the home consumers used these objects. These findings contribute to the overall aims of this thesis by suggesting what the common associations of leather were, and have implications for the object studies which follow – chiefly that in order to assess the importance of leather to the consumption of these chairs more than simply the leather component must be studied. Each object comprises a number of individual components and existed in a spatial context.

The modal value of the number of objects in entries for leather chairs was six and, as Rogers argues, in the early modern period these objects were produced to be sold in sets.[36] This is a common figure for leather chairs as indicated by the probate inventories studied across the period and across the geographic range surveyed, but at the least inventories include infrequent entries for just one or two leather chairs, while at the most two of these inventories included items for twelve chairs: a Whitby Master Mariner deceased in 1702 and a Bristol brass-founder deceased in 1703.[37]

[35] S. Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should the small things still be forgotten? Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale', in K. Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture,* (2nd edition, Oxford, 2018), p. 225.
[36] J. Rogers, *English Furniture,* (London, 1964), p. 26.
[37] Vickers, *A Yorkshire Town of the Eighteenth Century* p. 40; George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* pp. 48-9.

On the one hand, where leather chairs shared an item with multiple objects, as was the case for 37 of these references, evidence from probate inventories shows where leather chairs coexisted in the subdivision of a room with other objects. The most commonly associated objects with leather chairs were tables. This is unsurprising, but makes a suggestion about the role of leather chairs in habits and practices of dining and communal consumption. There were other objects which featured within the immediate contexts of leather chairs in this way: on six occasions leather chairs shared an item with chests, on five occasions with stools, on three occasions with cushions and looking glasses, on two occasions with carpets, chests of drawers, coffers, brass andirons, boxes and ranges, and on one occasion each with an old squab, a fireplace, a bedstead, a cupboard, a tripett and window curtains. Beyond illustrating that these most common leather objects shared proximity with a range of other goods, these inventories, if scattered and inconsistent, do demonstrate that these chairs were used within a range of different object configurations within the home. It is fair, therefore, to describe these as versatile or multifunctional objects which, even most commonly used with tables – and therefore in the context of dining – could be used in a range of object contexts.

These object contexts can be paired with spatial contexts for leather chairs in the domestic environment, as 60 of these inventories identified the space within the home which leather chairs occupied. There are two key findings from this body of sources. Firstly, between 1671 and 1776 – the chronological range covering these sources – the most common type of spaces in which leather chairs were used were those of food preparation and consumption. This accounts for approximately 53% of the 60 inventories which define a location for these objects, drawn from the inventories of Bristol, Chetnole, Clee, Clifton, Ratby, Smethwick and Whitby. Certainly, this is not an exhaustive base of probate inventories, but covering the urban Bristol as well as rural Ratby it can claim to offer an understanding of the commonalities between different types of homes. The locations inventoried include the following range of terms: ‘kitchen’, ‘kitchen chamber’, ‘fore kitchen’, ‘dining room’, ‘parlour’, ‘best parlour’, ‘front parlour’, ‘back parlour’ and ‘pantry’.

This evidence therefore suggests that across the long eighteenth century leather-upholstered chairs were more closely associated with the social behaviour of dining, and in so doing supports Sara Pennell’s argument that the ‘kitchen-diner was […] a reality for many early moderns’ by showing the range of spaces which accommodated this behaviour.[38] As spaces distinct from parlours, which were sites of occasional but more formal dining and socializing, Pennell states that,

> kitchens were busy places, day and night, with continual labour of all sorts. But it could also be a place of retreat or recreation, the hearth a gathering point and the table transformed from food preparation surface to gaming table or reading desk, walls into theatres.[39]

Indeed, although these probate inventories do place leather chairs in dining rooms, this was a far less defining feature than when compared to other spaces, with only four inventories doing so: two from Bristol in 1691 and 1738, and two from Whitby in 1702 and 1711.[40] Other types of chairs – such as ‘rush’, ‘cane’ and ‘joyn’d’ – also featured in these spaces, but leather was clearly an important identifier for the chairs which featured in spaces of food preparation and consumption, and this association incorporated leather chairs within space-specific forms of consumption. This also placed leather chairs within a space rich with material culture, including

[38] Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen*, p. 99.
[39] Ibid, p. 105.
[40] George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories*, p. 8, p. 155; Vickers, *A Yorkshire Town*, p. 40 and p. 60.

the ‘pots and pans [that] were material testimony to a predominantly female sphere of not only operation but expertise’.[41] In addition to the inventories above which attributed leather chairs to women, evidence which materially situates leather chairs within homes suggests that they were part of the fabric of both feminine and masculine consumption.

These sources also point to change over time in the places where leather chairs were consumed. The distribution of leather chairs across different rooms was more evidently geared to spaces of display before 1700; rooms in inventoried houses which featured leather chairs in this period included the ‘hall’, ‘hall chamber’, ‘forestreet room’, ‘great chamber’ and ‘first chamber’. Although before 1700 leather-upholstered chairs were also used in spaces of food preparation and consumption, the greater proportion of instances where the location of chairs is noted was in such ‘front spaces’. The earliest of these dates from Clee in 1671, and subsequently two inventories from 1684 from Chetnole and Clifton and a further from Clifton in 1687.[42] During the 1690s the use of leather chairs was almost evenly divided between spaces of food consumption and spaces of display. In the former, inventories from Bristol and Clifton, all dating from 1691, locate leather chairs in the ‘dining room’, ‘kitchen’ and ‘parlour’.[43] However by the 1700s through to the 1770s, the use of leather chairs was far more concretely located in spaces of food preparation and consumption. By the 1740s the rooms in which leather chairs were located include the full range of terms indicated above.[44]

[41] Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen*, p. 130.
[42] R. W. Ambler, B. Watkinson and L. Watkinson (eds), *Farmers and Fishermen, The Probate Inventories of the Ancient Parish of Clee, South Humberside*, (Hull, 1987), p. 119; R. A. Machin (ed.), *Probate Inventories and Material Excerpts of Chetnole, Leigh and Yetminster*, (Bristol, 1976) Inventory number 79; Moore, *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories,* Inventory number 161.
[43] George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories*, p. 8; Moore, *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories,* Inventory numbers 173 and 174.
[44] George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* pp.162-225; Moore, *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories,* Inventory number 246.

Another aspect of these objects which can be suggested by inventories is how much consumers valued them, and this is also significant as it is suggestive of the range of objects captured by the single term ‘leather chair’. In 39 inventories in this sample leather chairs are valued as individual items. The earliest object dates from Clifton in 1671 – five leather chairs valued at 10 shillings – and the latest from Bristol in 1776 – six walnut chairs with ‘leather bottoms’ valued at 1 pound and 10 shillings.[45] In just these two examples there is already a range of values indicated: 2 shillings per chair in 1671, set against 5 shillings per chair in 1776. At 5 shillings per chair, the entry from 1776 is both the chronologically latest inventory and the inventory which places the greatest value on a set of chairs, but this was not simply a case of change over time. Further inventories from Bristol, dated 1742 and 1744 each value leather chairs at 8 pence each, with a further from 1731 valuing chairs at only 9 pence each.[46] There are also examples of earlier sources which place greater value on these objects. One inventory from Clifton dated 1681 features two separate entries for sets of leather chairs, valued at 3 shillings and 4 pence per chair for a set of six, and 3 shillings and 9 pence per chair for a set of eight.[47] Furthermore, an inventory from Bristol dated 1699 features an entry for a set of six leather chairs, valued at 3 shillings and 8 pence each.[48] Across all 39 inventories where extracting the individual values of leather chairs is possible the average value was 2 shillings and 2 pence.

This data is interesting as although there is not a great deal of linguistic variation between the descriptions used for these objects in inventories, there was a significant range in value within this relatively narrow object category. ‘Leather chair’ was used as a description both in

[45] J. S. Moore (ed.), *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories 1609-1761*, (Bristol, 1981) Inventory number 132; George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* p. 225.
[46] George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* p. 162, p. 167, p. 131.
[47] Moore, *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories,* Inventory number 154.
[48] George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories*, p. 40.

inventories where they were lesser expensive objects and where the objects in question were comparably more expensive. In the examples considered here the more expensive leather chairs could be nearly eight times as valuable, using this rough metric, as the lesser expensive examples. One simple descriptive term used in probate inventories, therefore, could have a range of meanings in terms of material goods, and a relate to a range of values of objects. This becomes even more pronounced when contextualizing leather with other materials – broadly speaking, how this average value of 2 shillings and 2 pence stacked up against chairs upholstered with other materials. There are some examples from the inventories above where direct comparisons can be drawn between chairs made of different materials within the same records. Broadly speaking, they show that there is no hard-and-fast rule regarding how leather was valued compared to other materials, and that inventories cannot function in isolation to capture the range of goods consumed.

Some inventories suggest that leather was a more valuable material, even by this inventorying stage. A record of 1690 from Bristol situates leather against ‘matt’ and ‘wood’ chairs, valuing three leather chairs at 3 shillings – 1 shilling each – two matt chairs at 9 pence and 4 wood chairs at 1 shilling and 4 pence – averaging at 4 pence per chair in each case. Similarly in Whitby a record of 1720 values seven cane chairs at 7 shillings and seven leather chairs at 14, while an inventory dated 1743 values six leather chairs at 9 shillings and six wooden chairs at 5.[49] These sources may be used to suggest that leather was a more valuable material, but a comparison to Bristol inventories of 1698 and 1724 suggests this was not always the case. In the former, eight leather chairs were valued at 1 pound, compared to six sedge chairs at 2 shillings and – importantly – six cane chairs at 1 pound and 7 shillings, while in the latter eight

[49] Ibid, p. 5; Vickers, *A Yorkshire Town*, p. 65, pp. 73-74.

leather chairs were valued at 12 shillings compared to 1 pound for four cane chairs.[50] The differing valuations of the same materials show that a material basis was only one factor which drove consumers to make judgements of value. This would include the condition of objects, therefore another implication of this finding for the object studies which will follow is to suggest that the material must be contextualized against other factors in the consumption of these objects to understand how far it enriched the consumption of these goods.

In summary, then, the use of material signifiers in probate inventories reinforces the historical-archaeological onus placed on the importance of description, but does not find in this category of objects the use of descriptors to indicate real difference. The picture painted here is much vaguer.[51] The historical work that these inventories can do, however, is to place chairs within tangible spaces, and in proximity to other objects. As such, historians can glean something of changing context in which a material made meaning, especially when only a carte blanche descriptor – 'leather' – was applied to a range of products without great scope for very specific forms of description.

Aesthetic meanings of leather-upholstered chairs

The probate inventories explored above have demonstrated that the description 'leather chair' could pertain to a variety of objects and that context was a central part of how contemporaries consumed them. This section describes and analyses four sets of leather-upholstered chairs – all contemporary sets available in public museum collections in sets of six, corresponding to

[50] George and George, *Bristol Probate Inventories,* p. 30, pp. 110-111.
[51] J.P.P. Horn, '"The Bare Necessities": Standards of Living in England and the Chesapeake, 1650-1700', in G.L. Miller, O.R. Jones, L.A. Ross and T. Majewski (eds), *Approaches to Material Culture for Historical Archaeologists,* (London, 1991). See also G.L. Miller, O.R. Jones, L.A. Ross and T. Majewski, 'Introduction' in *Approaches to Material Culture for Historical Archaeologists* and B. De Munck and D. Lyna, 'Locating and Dislocating Value; A Pragmatic Approach to Early Modern and Nineteenth-Century Economic Practices' in B. De Munck and D. Lyna (eds), *Concepts of Value in European Material Culture, 1500-1900,* (Farnham, 2015), pp. 8-10.

the modal average of contemporary probate inventories. Because this section relies on objects drawn from modern collections, which tend to disproportionately represent the lives of higher-rank consumers, the material culture discussed here pertains to a more elite consumer. Although this narrows the scope of these object studies, this section still nevertheless demonstrates that the meaning of materials was contextual. When read within the overall context of this thesis, this section also affirms the social breadth of the applications of leather. The objects considered in chapter 6, for example, pertain to consumers of a far lower social rank.

Materially, the clearest commonality is that in these sets leather was more commonly used to upholster the seats of the chairs alone, as opposed to both the seats and backs, and that the upholstery was fixed to the chair frame through tacks or nails, although there was also variety here. Examining these chairs closely can both – from a more curatorial perspective – validate their authenticity and – from a more historical perspective – make some suggestions about the physical realities of these goods in contemporary use: their functionality, comfort, ease of maintenance and general appearance.

Responding to the overall thesis question of understanding what leather meant in the context of consumption, this section will also ask how leather helped consumers engage with these objects, what meaning leather gave these objects, and what wider styles and processes this material and these objects were attached to. It also sheds light on the practical realities of chair-ownership. The analysis of probate inventories found first that in this context ‘leather’ had a broad meaning as representative of a range of objects, indicated by the wide range of associated values inventories placed on goods, second that leather chairs were closely related to spaces of food preparation or consumption and third that leather chairs existed within a range of different object-configurations in the home. This section argues that leather was significant in the consumption of these objects by connecting them to contemporary notions of style and appearance. This study of objects does not demonstrate that leather was a unique form of chair upholstery, nor that other upholstery materials could not also create meaning, but it does suggest that leather did specific things.

The Taunton Chairs

At the earliest, a set of six chairs housed in the Geffrye Museum of the Home in London, herewith the 'Taunton chairs', have been traced to Taunton Castle in Somerset in the 1680s: the site of Judge Jeffreys' 1685 'Bloody' Assizes.[52] The chairs use a combination of oak, brass tacks and Russia leather with a black stain. As a set, the Taunton chairs are largely similar with only marginal differences in terms of repair and survival; each frame in the set is approximately 90cm tall, with the seat located approximately halfway up the total height of the chair. The chairs match in style a typical backstool, which was a square seat upon which a raised back was attached by supportive uprights (Figure 5.3). The four legs are reinforced by both horizontal and vertical stretchers connecting the front and back legs. The stretcher between the two front legs is spiral turned, and the two front legs are ball turned, creating a patterned effect which plays on light, shade and reflection. The front feet of the chair are box-carved. These carved legs are certainly more ornate than their immediate neighbours, but were by no means the most ornately carved wood chairs available.

[52] Geffrye Museum, 265/2011 object file.

Figure 5.3: Image © The Geffrye Museum, one of the Taunton chairs.

Figure 5.4: Red rot on one of the Taunton chairs.

Figure 5.5: The cross-hatched pattern, suggesting use of Russia leather.

Figure 5.6: The band of lighter leather attached to the seat rail.

While the frame has a number of carved features, and displays technical skill through the use of mortise and tenon joints, there is no other carving or engraving on the wooden frame. Besides the oak frame, the most substantial materials used in the chairs are two types of leather, brass tacks and straw used to stuff the seat and back. Pieces of the black leather also serve as a covering to the front edge of the uprights, held in place by two neat rows of metal studs. The edges of the leather covering which overlap the edges of the uprights match the tone of the wood. The lack of any other deviation in shade, tone or colour in the leather upholstery used for the Taunton chairs suggests that an overall dark, shiny aesthetic was being sought through the assemblage of materials: the dark colour of the leather mirrors the tone and shade of the wooden frame and the relatively dark, shiny nature of the brass studs (Figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6).

In the case of the Taunton chairs the most obvious visual feature of the leather upholstery is the close cross-hatched pattern. While this technique imbues the otherwise brown leather with long black lines and contributes towards the overall dark appearance of the chair, it has also been used by its conservators to describe the material as 'Russia leather'. The *OED*, however, defines 'Russia leather' as a 'durable leather made of skins impregnated with oil distilled from birchbark'.[53] One definition, therefore, rests solely on visual aesthetic, while the other on material ingredients and method. *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather*, discussed in chapter 3, suggests that the eighteenth-century reality was somewhere in between the two.[54] While the cross-hatched pattern may be a distinctive quality of Russia leather, it is more a by-product of the manner of making, rather than an intrinsic quality of the material itself. The text's description of the making of Russia leather, based on observations at St Germain and testimonies from a tanner who had worked in Muscovy, highlights that the most important

[53] 'Russia leather', *OED Online*, http://www.oed.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/view/Entry/276926?redirectedFrom=russia+leather&. Accessed November 8th 2016.
[54] C. Vallancey, *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather*, (Dublin, 1775), pp. 195-197.

qualities of the process are its dying with black or red dye, its subsequent exposure to sunshine to 'make the colour penetrate'.[55] Its description also refers to a process the material underwent as being 'cylindered'.[56] This, it becomes clear, was the method used by craftsmen to imbue the leather with oil:

> the machine with which they give that grain [...] to the Russian leather, consists in a steel cylinder of about one foot in length, and three inches in diameter: this cylinder is cut with a multitude of small ridges very close together, like the threads of a screw, not spirally, but circular; it is loaded with a mass of stones weighing three or four hundred weight.[57]

Explaining how the cylinder is run back and forth across the material at right angles, the material is impressed with a cross-hatched pattern and 'the intersection of these lines forms squares or lozenges on the grain of the leather [and…] being thus printed, is smeared with the Russia oil, which strengthens the grain, and hardens the surface of the surface of the leather, so that water cannot penetrate'.[58] *The Art of Tanning and Currying Leather* does note that the patterns 'please the public eye, because they find them on the Russian leather', but this is still as a result of the process of imbuing the material, and not a design feature, even if the pattern came to accrue such aesthetic capital.[59] Considering the entry in the *OED* and this text in tow, the material used to upholster the Taunton chairs can be fairly described as Russia leather. It has the necessary indentations in fitting with the 'cylindering' process, a clear shiny surface

[55] Ibid, pp. 195-196.
[56] Ibid, p. 195.
[57] Vallancey, *The At of Tanning and Currying Leather,* p. 197.
[58] Ibid, pp. 197-198.
[59] Ibid, p. 197.

from the impregnation of oils and a dark colour potentially achieved through dyeing black as part of the tanning process itself.

The use of Russia leather in this example, based on contemporary descriptions from Vallancey, suggests that the choice of upholstery material was functional. As objects used at assizes these would need to be sturdy, wearing, and able to be transported without sustaining significant damage. Considering the upholstery of the uprights of the chairs, however, suggests that something else – something more aesthetically motivated – was at stake in this design and use of materials. One of the first meanings which can be derived from the Taunton chairs is how they conformed to a contemporary 'puritan aesthetic' historians have identified in the specific chronological context for Jeffreys' chairs.[60] Figure 5.3 shows the plain but ordered nature of these chair frames, and Figure 5.5 demonstrates how this regularity even extended to the relatively simple tessellation of Russia leather. Both elements conform to the hallmarks of this style: in which ordered and uniform design was popular. These chairs can be corroborated by other contemporary examples which use Russia leather as upholstery in the Geffrye Museum, and even a quick recourse to traditional texts provides examples of other items of furniture which embody similar characteristics: tables with similarly turned legs and a dark finish, chest of drawers on stood legs and scriptors or bureaus.[61] Here, then, the leather upholstery of these chairs had meaning because as a defining visual quality it connected these objects to an expanded range of others and functioned within an established repertoire of stylistic motifs.

[60] V. Chinnery, *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition,* (2nd edn, London, 2012), pp. 151-152; W. Brissett, 'Edward Taylor's Public Devotions', *Early American Literature* 44.3 (2009), p. 457; M. Craske, 'Plan and Control: Design and the Competitive Spirit in Early and Mid-Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Design History* 12.3 (1999), p. 189.
[61]Geffrye Museum of the Home, London, objects 1/1952-1, 1/1952-2 and 7/1958; Fastnedge, *English Furniture Styles 1500-1830,* plate 12; Price, *The Story of English Furniture,* pp. 43-45; Bradford, *Antique Furniture,* plate 3.

The visual appearance of these objects therefore can be understood within this broader social context, one in which faith and organization of design were closely related as a ‘bulwark’ against the designs of a foreign flavour of Catholic material culture.[62] This nature of design developed its social relevance in the intellectual culture of Enlightenment England, ‘centred upon the notion of imposing rational control over the formerly ungovernable’; the capacity to organize was portrayed by some as more important than the capacity to embellish.[63] The Puritan ‘aesthetic’ therefore must be more than a visual reaction to a plain and somewhat unexciting surface. Within this context, the Taunton chairs – as the earliest example of leather-upholstered furniture within this source base – can be justly understood as meaningful to consumers through their regular form, ordered design and subtlety. The Russia leather upholstery was significant here not only because of its unique visual appeal, but because it tethered these chairs to a broader category of material goods which embodied the Puritan aesthetic. Looking forward, long-lasting taste for the ‘Puritan aesthetic’, or at least some of its requisite qualities, was indicated by a letter from Thomas Grantham to his sister, Anne, dated 6 June 1774. On his dining at the Castle of the King in Madrid, Grantham comments upon the ‘very comfortable furniture owing to Mr. Wall who, whilst Minister, filled the place with english mahogany leather chairs instead of rotten gilt ones’.[64]

[62] Craske, ‘Plan and Control’, p. 190.
[63] Ibid, p. 198.
[64] *Bedfordshire Archives*, L 30/17/4/80.

Figure 5.7: Left: John Michael Wright, George Jeffreys, 1st Baron Jeffreys of Wem, 1675 (oil on canvas, 121.3 cm x 101 cm), National Portrait Gallery, London, Right: John Michael Wright, George Jeffreys, 1st Baron Jeffreys of Wem, circa 1680 (oil on canvas, 126.4 cm x 102.2 cm), National Portrait Gallery, London.

The Taunton chairs are also a useful springboard from which to discuss firstly how leather, within the context of object consumption, provoked specific forms of consumer engagement, and secondly how the construction of objects enabled consumers to engage with them. Chairs similar to the Taunton chairs appear in the two portraits above, both by John Michael Wright, both of 1st Baron George Jeffreys of Wem (Figure 5.7). These portraits are being highlighted here because there is a direct link between their subject and the objects in question. Despite changes in the appearance of the portraits' subject, the leather-upholstered chair is a stable entity which physically roots Jeffreys to the same location in each portrait. Behind Jeffreys, the top corner of the seat is visible and under his left arm, the arm of the chair. On the seat back, the chair uses dark leather and brass nails to provide a padded and protective covering while on the arm, the structure of the chair is revealed as being made of wood with a dark fringing also affixed by brass nails. These portraits provide a direct link between the contemporary context of these chairs and a contemporary form of representation, placing leather-upholstered chairs in a specific environment which contributes to their meaning.

The way this upholstery was portrayed suggests that the Taunton chairs had visual or aesthetic significance, and turning back to the chairs themselves suggests that consumers were engaged in practices to maintain this visual appearance throughout consumption. Each of the Taunton chairs shows evidence of maintenance through a replaced disc of Russia leather in the centre of the seat, also held in place with shiny nails. As the underside of the seat is a solid wooden board, any re-stuffing of the seats would be done through a hole in the material of the seat, subsequently covered with a disc of material and fastened in place. The replaced discs of Russia leather (Figure 5.8) could indicate either that wear and tear through use necessitated that the surface of the seat was materially repaired, or that the original disc was removed in order that the straw stuffing could be replaced or replenished. In either case, that the discs correspond closely to one another, despite clearly being made from a different piece of leather to the rest of the chairs, suggests this maintenance was undertaken by an upholder as part of one, cohesive task. This in turn demonstrates that these objects were economically valuable enough to make continual investments in, and that maintaining the leather exterior was key to how these goods were consumed. Considering the work done on chairs while they were in situ therefore demonstrates a step in the life cycles of these goods, from attractive and purchasable commodities to owned goods with real value. That a poorly maintained chair was clearly not acceptable demonstrates further that the repaired Taunton chairs had a role to play in terms of appearance.

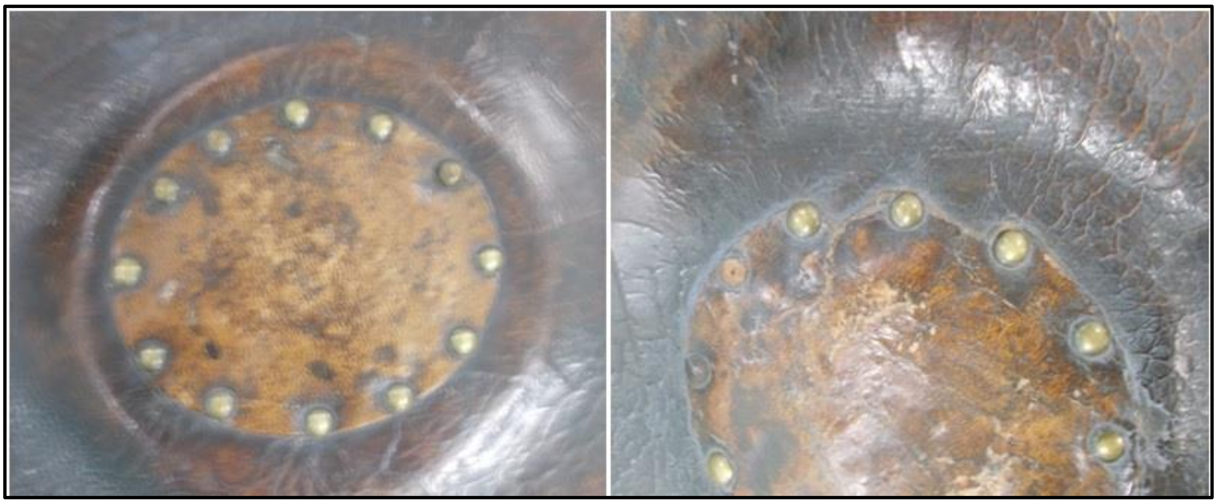


Figure 5.8: Two patches of repair on the Taunton chair's seats.

The Fairhead and Bradley Chairs

Held by the V&A is a neat set of six leather-upholstered chairs dated to 1783 and identified as owned by the London-based Samuel Fairhead through an ink inscription on the underside of the front seat rail. The wooden frames of the chairs are made of mahogany, which has been carved to provide decoration to the legs, feet and seat back. The legs are relatively simplistic; squared formed with only minor aesthetic additions to the feet – a spade ridge – and tapered across the length of the legs.[65] The seat back is a relatively up-to-date contemporary design, matching the pattern of one featuring in George Hepplewhite's *Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* of 1788.[66] The square seat back has a curved cross rail and a splat comprising four evenly-spaced vertical columns which are connected by horizontal bands both at the base and at the top of the design. While the four columns are reasonably shallow designs, the more basic carved wood not lending a great deal of depth to the design of the seat back, the floral motifs at the top of the seat back provide greater depth. This seat back is an intricate geometric design, but given the simplicity of its component shapes does not appear as complex

[65] E. Bradford, *Antique Furniture,* (London 1970), p. 177; A. Bowett, *Early Georgian Furniture, 1715-1740,* (Woodbridge, 2009), p. 151.
[66] V&A Collections Online, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O158266/chair-unknown/. Accessed June 23rd 2017.

as others from the period. Some further appearance value is added to the chair, however, by the leather upholstery (Figures 5.9, 5.10, and 5.11).

The leather upholstery of these chairs is in really good condition. It is still clearly red, but this colour would have been brighter and clearer in its contemporary consumption, providing a rich, warm contrast to the darker coloured wood of the frame. The upholstery resembles other contemporary examples of split-skin cow leather and does not have the stiffness or thickness of larger animal hides. For this reason, it is fair to suggest that in contemporary consumption this material was chosen for the upholstery because it would have been soft and comfortable. In comparison to other leathers which could have achieved similar levels of comfort, cow leather would have also been somewhat cheaper. Going beyond these physical qualities, the choice of red dye would also bring this material within the stylistic canon of morocco leather, creating a parity between these leather chairs and other popular leather objects in the period. The leather is affixed in place to the frame with two neat rows of brass tacks, the regularity and consistency of which places this chair correctly later in the eighteenth century, as these kinds of tack would have been machine-manufactured.[67] There is a significant impression made by continued use in the centre of the seat, and the texture of the padding is indicative of a cheaper straw seat, rather than curled horse hair. This is reinforced by exposed straw through a small tear in the front of the seat of one chair, while small diapered patterns localized around another tear indicate that the leather may have been manufactured using a Russia leather process.[68]

[67] L. Trench (ed.), *Materials and Techniques in the Decorative Arts,* (London, 2000), pp. 542-543.
[68] Objects W.75-1940 and W.76-1940 respectively.

Figure 5.9: The back of one of the Samuel Fairhead chairs.

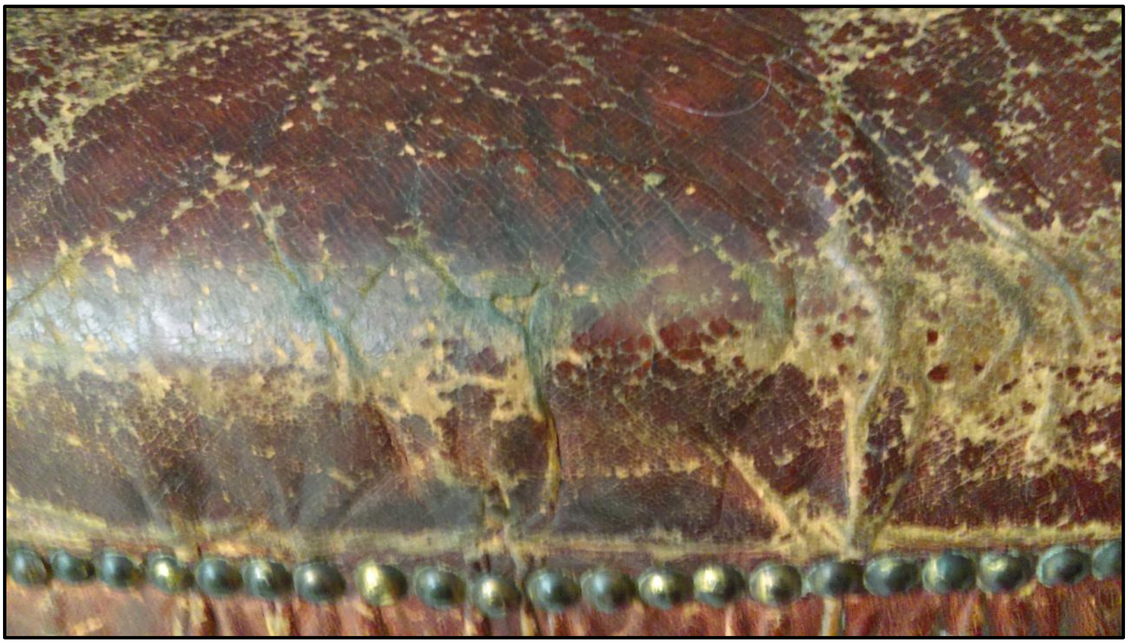


Figure 5.10: Close up of leather upholstery of Samuel Fairhead chair.

Figure 5.11: Samuel Fairhead chairs, showing seat and back.

It is useful to analyse these chairs alongside another set: six leather-upholstered dining chairs located at Bradley Manor near Newton Abbot in Devon. For all the practical qualities which can be read from the Fairhead chairs individually, taking both in hand demonstrates that leather served more than function. These chairs are also particularly interesting because the lack of invasive conservation or restorative practices at Bradley has resulted in unique forms of wear for these objects. They therefore present an instructive example of authentic contemporary objects which have been allowed to degrade with consumption and comprise their original material components.

The frames of the Bradley chairs are made of walnut or another lighter-brown wood, and the design comprises spade front feet which are connected by an H-frame of stretchers. Beyond the spade feet, the legs of the chairs are unembellished. The backs correspond more obviously to a simple Sheraton style, but have been previously attributed to drawings published by Hepplewhite by the chair's curators. There is no direct match for this splat design in Hepplewhite's 1794 design manual, but designs of a generally similar nature – the use of curved lines to create a florid design with symmetrical spacing.[69] Furthermore, the general proportions of the chairs – the ratio between the length of the legs and the back as well as the overall height of the chair – do match Hepplewhite's descriptions.[70] As far as the chair frame goes, therefore, these objects closely resemble Hepplewhite's designs in the most significant ways, but the lack of specific corroboration between designs and the objects, partnered with the absence of detailed embellishment, clearly indicates that these objects are not genuine Hepplewhites. It is more likely, therefore, that the Bradley chairs correspond to the Dumfries' chairs of Jones's analysis – as objects made according equally to both the expectations of design manuals and the demands of local styles and conditions of making.[71]

[69] A. Hepplewhite, *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide,* (London, 1788), plates 1, 5 and 9.
[70] Ibid, p.1.
[71] Jones, 'Common or Genteel?'.

Figure 5.12: Bradley chair seat frame, showing upholstery.

Figure 5.13: Full image of Bradley Manor chair.

Narrowing in on the upholstery, the seats of the Bradley chairs are upholstered in a light brown leather. The spacing of follicles, paired with an uneven grain pattern, would suggest that this leather is made from tanned cow skin, like the Fairhead chairs.[72] This would mirror the choice made by the upholsterers of the Fairhead chairs to select a wearing material with comfort in mind, Indeed, similarly to both the Taunton and Fairhead chairs, and the saddles explored in chapter 4, the leather here survives in good condition and is testament to its lasting, tough nature. In areas where the upholstery has been scratched and torn the leather upholstery is shown to be thin – suggesting a split skin – and where the leather is torn completely a more

[72] M. Kite and R. Thompson, *Conservation of Leather and Related Materials*, (Oxford, 2006), pp. 17-19.

comfortable, curled horsehair stuffing is revealed. The seats are supported by webbing underneath and bear a significant impression in the middle where the horsehair stuffing has become densely compacted. As the most significantly compressed area of the seat is towards the front of the frame, in some examples the forward most webbing has torn away from the frame and the portion of leather upholstery covering the front of the seat frame has been forced down to create a lip. These elements suggest that in common use consumers sat forward in these chairs, and therefore suggest that they were used around a table and are best attributed to dining (Figure 5.13).

A final component of these chairs, and one which can be understood to have a primarily visual significance with closer material analysis, is the brass studs which line the seat frame. Their use was primarily aesthetic, and allowed consumers to derive meaning from these chairs – here, that meaning was the sense that these objects possessed visible and performative value. The reason that these studs should be understood as primarily aesthetic is because closer material analysis demonstrates that they did not serve a practical function. In the Bradley chairs, the leather upholstery is folded around the corners of the frame, and the brass studs are applied at the base of the seat and in vertical lines on each of the corners. Although these would appear to fasten the upholstery to the frame, this function is in reality served by rows of hand-wrought nails underneath the seat (Figure 5.12). Indeed, in one example where a brass stud has fallen off the only shallow, pin-like hole underneath would reinforce that these brass studs served only an aesthetic function. Similarly, in the areas underneath the seat where the leather upholstery is held in place by these hand-wrought nails the leather is visibly stretched and strained to the tension point of the nail.

Similar, if not identical, upholstery techniques and material components are used across the Taunton, Fairhead and Bradley chairs, and may be readily observed in numerous other examples of contemporary objects in public heritage properties. Although the Taunton chairs use a chair board to protect the stuffing, in contrast to the webbing of the Fairhead and Bradley chairs, both sets affix the leather upholstery of the seat to the seat frame through nails or tacks, with the tack heads serving a dual function as an outward-facing aesthetic feature. Seemingly small and insignificant, the Nottinghamshire upholder John Clifford charged only eight pence for the nails he used in an entire day's work on 8 April 1760, but aesthetically this small material component enabled the Taunton, Bradley and Fairhead chairs to connect to established aesthetic principles.[73] As pieces of historical evidence, these chairs also show the importance of leather within this object context functioning in line with other materials as part of an assemblage.

Although the rows of tacks used in the Fairhead and Bradley chairs achieve a uniformity similar to that observed with the Taunton chairs, when considered in the round these objects cannot be described as aesthetically 'Puritan' in the same way. Furthermore, the example of the Bradley chairs reveals that the use of these tacks was not necessarily structural, in the same way that the tacks of the Taunton chairs achieved both a functional and a visual use. Brass tacks therefore were used sometimes as a constituent component of the upholstery, and sometimes seemingly purely aesthetically. These shiny studs were a material not limited to one style or design; they were a shared component between the Taunton chairs and other more distinctively Georgian objects.

[73] *Nottinghamshire Archives*, DD/E/142/24.

Taken together, the studs, polished leather and varnished wood functioned as an assemblage which achieved an overall appearance of shininess. Shininess is a material property that a number of historians have responded to, traditionally arguing that it translates to value and attractiveness.[74] This 'value' is an important historical concept which in eighteenth-century retail and consumer spaces had two important functions: to make goods attractive to consumers, and therefore justify their more tangible economic cost, and to improve the quality of their domestic spaces. Specifically, Grant McCracken argues that in contemporary use this shininess was associated with the shine of patina, in so doing relating these objects to materials – such as a range of polished woods, metals, marble and stone – of known economic value. Most importantly, as patina was accumulated over time and through constant exposure to the environment, ownership of items with patina illustrated an extended ownership of items of value, or membership of a wealthy family. Tom Fisher and Nic Maffei extend this argument to show how this desirable quality was also thought to denote value through 'polished shine' – a natural glean in materials such as hard wood and leather that undergoes regular treatment, care and work.[75] Shininess, therefore, should be understood as both a material quality and a culturally loaded texture. The shine of the chairs achieved through this configuration of materials suggest that the making of the Taunton, Bradley and Fairhead exploited the potential of their constituent materials in order that these chairs would be treated as stylish, fashionable and valuable.[76]

[74] G. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities,* (Indianapolis, 1990).
[75] N. Maffei and T. Fisher, 'Unstable surfaces: slippery meanings of shiny things', paper delivered at *The Skin of Objects: Re-thinking Surfaces in Visual Culture*, University of East Anglia, Sainsbury Centre, Norwich Castle, Norwich, 27 June 2015. Available online at: http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/27546/. Accessed September 28th 2017.
[76] G.D. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: new approaches to the symbolic character of consumer goods and activities,* (Indiana, 1988), p. 146.

Taken as a collection, then, the Taunton, Bradley and Fairhead chairs all suggest that beyond adhering to the requirements of an object type, the use of leather within a well-defined assemblage of other materials was conducive to particular types of association that conform to established contemporary aesthetic principles. The shininess of a curried hide was only one of a number of its physical properties which lent specific qualities to these objects, but it was a physical property specifically exploited by this particular arrangement of materials. These chairs therefore provide an example of the reinforcing loop which existed between object and material. Chairs relied, to some extent, on the qualities which upholstery materials provided – and leather was a common choice for upholstery which could be used in a variety of styles of chair. While these choices of upholstery were central in the appearance of chairs, the chairs themselves teased out particular potentials of leather as a material which related these chairs to the value derived from shiny-textured objects, and the order derived from its association with other similar goods in contemporary domestic interiors.

Furniture

What these individual object studies – not unlike the saddles explored in chapter 4 – are demonstrating, therefore, is that the use of leather in this context represented a careful balance of the physical and visual potentials of a material, measured against the requirements of the object type in question. In so doing, these leather-upholstered chairs mirrored the broadest object category of which they were a part: furniture. Within this broader category of goods leather also found a number of other applications, demonstrating that some of the patterns observed of leather in leather-upholstered chairs had broader purchase. Not limited to other forms of upholstered seating furniture such as benches, settles, double chairs and settees, leather was also used as a form of inlay in a range of tables, desks, sideboards, bureaus and dressers. Here, leather which was typically tanned and dyed dark brown, red or green was inlaid into the surface of items of furniture as were other types of wood, ivory, or pearl.[77]

While serving functional ends in protecting the tabletop, as well as providing a textural and aesthetic contrast to the polished wood, leather furniture inlay responds to studies of contemporary leather consumption as explored in the introduction to this thesis. Leather inlay, unlike some of the more accessible uses of leather as upholstery, was generally isolated to items of furniture owned and consumed by elite households, and this is reflected in the nature of museum collections today; there is an observable range present within leather-upholstered chairs which cannot be seen in available and surviving items using leather inlay. Furthermore, these objects correspond to Ulinka Rublack's analysis of the material in allowing craftsmen to demonstrate their skilful manipulation of a resistant material: the leather used in these objects was typically very fine, dyed and often incorporated gilt or other pattern work. As Dena Goodman remarks of writing desks specifically, in so owning such a piece, the wealthy individual 'performed their inherited status and privilege in sumptuously decorated surroundings'.[78]

There are numerous examples of these kinds of objects available in collections today, and the examples highlighted below will contextualise both an additional application of leather, and the interiors in which leather-upholstered chairs could have existed. Taking the National Trust collections alone suggests that inlaid leather was used in items of furniture which had a variety of purposes and intended settings. The full list can be broadly divided into tables, desks and

[77] K. Smith, 'Production, purchase, dispossession, recirculation: Anglo-Indian ivory furniture in the British country house' in M. Finn and K. Smith (eds), *The East India Company at Home: 1757-1857,* (London, 2018), pp. 68-71.
[78] D. Goodman, 'Furnishing Discourses: Readings of a Writing Desk in Eighteenth-Century France' in M. Berg and E. Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods,* (Basingstoke, 2007) p. 71.

other items. There are tables held by too many properties to list them each individually, but the types of table curators have identified include: rent tables, games tables, a tea table, a dressing table, Pembroke tables, card tables, a library table, a night table, a Pembroke games table, writing tables, and an architect's table. Desks are available in a narrower range, including a bureau at Trerice in Cornwall, partner's desks at Knighthayes Court in Devon, Basildon Park in Berkshire and Wimpole in Cambridgeshire, Carlton House desks at Uppark House in West Sussex and Trelissick in Cornwall and a pedestal desk at Kingston Lacey in Devon. Among the miscellaneous items are secrétaire chests at Polesden Lacey in Surrey and Nymans Estate in West Sussex, bureau cabinets at Greenway in Devon and Mompesson House in Wiltshire, a washstand at Saltram in Devon and a dumb waiter at Felbrigg in Norfolk.[79] Similarly to the findings of the sample of probate inventories explored in the introduction to this thesis and revisited here, these objects demonstrate how the descriptors of objects reflected their intended function. While these labels rely on curatorial expertise, the histories of gaming tables and bureaus alike are well established in eighteenth century historiography.[80] Chiefly, these labels also reflect the range of circumstances in which leather furniture was consumed.

Drawing on two examples of leather inlay from this sample, a rent table at A La Ronde is dated to 1770 and features leather inlay in a round mahogany table, with brass fixtures and inlaid bone initials into drawers.[81] Each drawer has a different set of lettering completing the alphabet

[79] Evidence of these different types are available, respectively, at A La Ronde in Devon and Mompesson House in Wiltshire, Stourhead in Wiltshire and Montacute House in Somerset, Betton House in Lincolnshire, Penrhyn Castle in Gwynedd, Peckover House and Wimpole in Cambridgeshire and Saltram in Devon, Ightham Mote in Kent and Mompesson House in Wiltshire, Melford Hall in Suffolk, Wimpole in Cambridgeshire, Melford Hall in Suffolk, Uppark House in West Sussex and Grantham House in Lincolnshire and Polesden Lacey in Surrey, and Erddig in Wrexham.
[80] See H. Koda and A. Bolton (eds), *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century,* (New York, 2013); E. Miller and H. Young (eds), *The Arts of Living: Europe 1600-1815,* (London, 2015); A. Bowett *Woods in British furniture-making, 1400-1900: an illustrated historical dictionary,* (Kew, 2012), *English Furniture, 1660-1714: from Charles II to Queen Anne,* (Woodbridge, 2002), *Early Georgian furniture 1715-1740,* (Woodbridge, 2009) and *Thomas Chippendale 1718-1779: a celebration of British craftmanship and design,* (Leeds, 2018).
[81] National Trust object number 1312296.

– bar J and Z – around the full perimeter of the table, and there are 8 drawers in total (Figure 5.14). The drawers were used as a filing system for a rent collector, and therefore it is fair to treat this table as a functional and indeed regularly used object. Accordingly, one reason for the use of leather inlay would probably be durability, but that requirement for a durable surface is not wholly explained by the treatment this leather has received. Dyed green and decorated with gilt tooling around the outer edge of the tabletop, this leather was clearly serving an aesthetic function too.

Figure 5.14: National Trust object number 1312296. Image © National Trust / Simon Harris.

A suitable contrast to A La Ronde's rent table is found in a c. 1730 bureau held by Trerice (Figure 5.15).[82] A metre tall and constructed primarily of walnut, this object also uses brass fixtures to open its six internal drawers and as casings for the keyholes to its slope and cupboard

[82] National Trust object number 336835.

doors. One way in which the construction of this object differs from the A La Ronde rent table – besides each being representative of different object types – is in the use of their respective leather inlays. Both use this durable material to soften writing surfaces whilst protecting the wooden component of these objects, but while the rent table's leather is visible for all to see, the leather used in the bureau is contained to its private, inner compartment behind lock and key. What may be expressed as a public-private distinction between two objects was reflected in the use of leather. In contrast to the rent table, the leather – designed to be unseen by those other than its owner – used in the bureau is undyed and undecorated. This reinforces that the choice of material in these objects was both functionally- and aesthetically-motivated.

Figure 5.15: National Trust object number 336835. Image © National Trust / Lynda Aiano.

The same relationship between what was functional and what was visually appealing can be readily observed in items of leather seating furniture other than simple leather-upholstered chairs. Observing the contemporary artefactual record, at least in the collections of the National Trust, suggests that this object category was comparably less diverse than the range of objects using leather inlay, above. Among these objects in the National Trust collections are a bench at Florence Court in County Fermanagh, a sofa at the Kingston Lacey Estate in Dorsey, a settle bed at Nostell Priory in West Yorkshire, and porter's chairs at Snowshill Manor and Garden in Gloucestershire and Ickworth in Suffolk. Where porter's chairs differ from ordinary leather-upholstered chairs is that the seating apparatus is incorporated into a tall, arched 'hood', which extends above and over the heads of the users, as well around their bodies in place of chair arms. These objects are also distinct from typical upholstered chairs because the legs are concealed, and the seat, internal and external surfaces of the objects are either covered in leather or varnished wood panelling (See Figure 5.16). In the three examples of these objects at the National Trust, the leather surfaces have been uniformly dyed red, black and brown respectively.[83] Corresponding to this, the other available objects of seating furniture exhibit broadly similar materials and techniques to the leather-upholstered chairs which will be profiled in this chapter: there are dyes used to colour the leather, the upholstered sections of the furniture are stuffed and the leather upholstery is attached either to a separate wooden frame forming a slip-seat, or directly to the wooden frame of the furniture with metal fixings.

[83] National trust object numbers 1331871, 850197 and 1332412.

Figure 5.16: National Trust object number 1331871, held at Snowshill Manor. Image © National Trust / Claire Reeves & team.

This evidence from the artefactual record enhances the object study at hand. First, the skills, materials and techniques which were used to make leather-upholstered chairs found an application in a small range of other object types which shared a broadly similar function. Second, there is a relative paucity of surviving other leather seating furniture – admittedly within one particular collection – in comparison to the abundance of leather-upholstered chairs. This, in turn, suggests that leather-upholstered chairs were a more ubiquitous form of object serving this function using leather as a material basis – reinforcing what was suggested about the commonality of this object from the major sample of probate inventories explored in chapter 2. Taken collectively, and in the context of leather upholstered chairs as a primary focus, these supplementary object types demonstrate that the use of leather more broadly may have been motivated by the functional qualities of this material. In the chairs, the rent table, and the bureau discussed above, leather undeniably served functional purposes. However, more individualised practices of decoration and application demonstrate how the material could contribute more uniquely to the consumption possibilities of individual objects. In brief, these supplementary object studies tease out why leather was used more broadly, but also help identify what was particular about the use of leather in specific objects. Shared functions of the material across a range of object types did nevertheless accommodate diversity, and this was particularly pronounced in the aesthetic appeal of leather-upholstered chairs.

The Rufford Chairs

The final set of six leather-upholstered chairs, at Rufford Old Hall in Lancashire, are presently located in the house's dining room. They demonstrate how the visual appearance of chairs could be altered significantly through upholstery, in turn recoding these objects to meet the requirements of new notions of taste and décor in shifting domestic interiors.[84] Furthermore, these chairs are an important example of where leather served a role that was less functional; here, the choice of upholstery material could not be said in the same way to serve the qualities of chairs as comfortable or wearing objects. The most visible difference between the frames of this set of chairs and the others explored in this chapter is in their design, which correspond closely to examples in Thomas Chippendale's design manual. Taking the chairs as a whole, they, similarly to the Bradley chairs, match the style of chairs in Chippendale's catalogue but do not exactly replicate any single design. In the Rufford Chairs, the front legs more closely resemble a French leg, with ogee back legs. The knees of the chairs have a basic carved ornamentation and the feet are of a basic claw design. The backs of the chairs comprise plain

[84] G. Savage, *A Concise History of Interior Decoration*, (London, 1966), pp. 7-8; H. Greig and G. Riello, 'Eighteenth-Century Interiors – Redesigning the Georgian: Introduction', *Journal of Design History* 20.4 (2007), p. 286.

uprights which are tapered towards the top of the frame and flare out slightly from the seat of the chair. These uprights are connected by a cupid-bow cross rail, and the back completed by a pierced vase-shaped back splat (Figure 5.17).

The leather upholstery of these chairs is their most notable feature, and the most revealing aspect of their specific biography: stunning gilt leather, painted in a range of bright colours and embossed with complex patterns (Figure 5.18). Confined to trapezoidal slip-seats which fit snugly into the seat frames, and despite clear signs of conservation, the current leather upholstery is more recent than previous blue damask. Only one of the slip-seats is loose enough to be removed entirely from the seat frame, and in so doing larger fragments of blue damask are immediately visible (Figure 5.19). Nevertheless, in all cases through examining the underside of the chairs it is possible to identify some smaller fragments of the same material. Evidently, at some point after the original mounting and use of the chairs an additional leather covering was used as reupholstery. The metal nails used to affix this reupholstery material to the original slip seat are consistent with other eighteenth-century objects; accordingly this dates the act of reupholstery – as well as the leather material used – to the eighteenth century, although as will be discussed below the leather offers signs of this too.

Figure 5.17: Full view of Rufford Old Hall chair.

Figure 5.18: Close up view of Rufford chair seat.

Figure 5.19: Showing original damask upholstery of Rufford chairs.

One way of analysing the meaning of these chairs specifically is to turn to objects which share its visual and material properties, and the most obvious corresponding object is eighteenth-century embossed-leather panels. The presently-surviving chair upholstery displays all the characteristic features of this predominantly eighteenth-century object type. The centres of the seats are embossed with a vase design. The vase itself has been painted with red and green highlights on an otherwise gold body, and on either side is flanked by rococo geometric designs. These shapes use decorative elements including embossing and stamping to create a range of different textures, and are separated from the body of the vase by large sections of blue or blue-green enamel paint. The gold colour which occupies the majority of the space on this seat covering has been created by applying silver leaf to the surface of the leather and subsequently staining it with a yellow dye. The result is an appearance which offers the desirable warmth and shine of gold despite being cheaper to produce. In all – across the flowers, vase and rococo geometric designs of the panel – the panel uses seven different paints or dyes in addition to the stained silver. In some areas of the seat signs of obvious wear reveal the leather underneath.

Figure 5.20: National Trust object number 652777.

This is really interesting, because through a single act of maintenance the Rufford chairs combined two applications of leather in an eighteenth-century domestic context. The stamped and painted leather, which appears to have originally been a screen or wall panel, was used to reupholster these chairs and in so doing recreate another object as a different leather object type. One object which may be connected to these chairs is a leather screen located at Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire (Figure 5.20), although similar objects are also located at Croft Castle in Herefordshire, Penrhyn Castle in Gwynedd, Great Chalfield in Wiltshire, Tyntesfield in Somerset, Upton House in Warwickshire, Blickling Hall in Norfolk, the Cliveden Estate in Buckinghamshire and Coleton Fishacre in Devon. The screen at Sudbury Hall comprises four vertical wooden frames, connected with folded leather hinges and each covered in three leather panels on each side. The entire object therefore contains 24 individual leather panels. Although the colour of the screens has dulled considerably, what sets the Sudbury Hall panels apart is its clear congruencies in layout, design and style as those used for the Old Rufford chairs. [85] The positioning of the vases and flowers in relation to the rococo background of the panels in particular suggest that these panels are in some way related – although the panels of the Sudbury screen and the Old Rufford chairs differ in the composition of the flowers, the design of the vase and the handles and rim of the vase, which have different colour schemes. As these panels are affixed to the screen at the edge of the frames, and are otherwise hollow – that is, they are not glued or otherwise adhered to a solid board – it is easy to see how the leather panels could be easily removed from the frame to be recycled as chair covers. Although these panels therefore are not a perfect match to the panels of the chairs, they are stylistically similar enough to point to mutual patterns of design and making, and in the very least date the present material coverings of the chairs to c.1700-1730.

[85] National Trust object number 652777.

To think about how meaning was created for consumers within the consumption of these objects – especially through their upholstery – it is necessary to think more deeply the leather panelling. Focusing on the upholstery suggests that these objects are relevant to notions of recycling and reuse in the long-eighteenth century and – following Greig and Riello's arguments about a shifting interior – are evidence of reupholstery significantly altering the style of an object in the domestic space. In the case of the Rufford chairs, there is clearly a historic context for the recycling of panels to be used as seat upholstery. On the one hand, this could be a case of thrift, to which Fennetaux, Junqua and Vasset allude, but the material realities of the goods do not readily support this. Simply put, if the reuse of leather wall panels in the chairs – and, indeed, the overwhelming similarity between the leather materials used both in Rufford and Sudbury Hall would reinforce that these were originally panels used either for a screen or similar object – was thrifty, this suggests both that the chairs were in regular use and needed such maintenance, and that the screens were surplus to requirement. This cannot be the case, as there is nothing of these chairs to suggest that after the act of reupholstery they were in frequent use. The coloured paints and dyes used in these panels, subsequently used in the Rufford chairs, maintain their brightness and only show minimal areas of wear. Furthermore, the curled horsehair stuffing of the seat is far from compacted in the Rufford chairs. When compared to the chairs from Bradley manor, which shows signs of regular use and accordingly tightly compacted stuffing, the Rufford chairs seem almost unused. This suggests that the reupholstery of the chairs was not driven primarily by maintenance – in order to maintain the functionality of these objects. Instead, the lack of any sign of consumption of these goods suggest that the motivations for reupholstery were primarily stylistic, and the result was a transition from objects of utility to objects which were scarcely used and served primarily decorative or ornamental functions.

Through the act of reupholstery, these chairs became echoed an already-established visual cultural context. As shown by the two images below (Figures 5.21 and 5.22), such panels were also used in display either as wall panelling or covering. These images are Dutch, and date to the seventeenth century, but they are nevertheless the best representations for the luminescence of these screens, and how they appeared relative to other objects in early modern consumption. Sara Pennell has challenged the use of early modern Dutch paintings, such as these, to understand the historical material realities – of kitchens specifically – 'without gloss'.[86] As 'they display such obvious differences in fuel use, housing arrangements and even (given the confessional contexts of much continental 'everyday' kitchen art) religious culture, […] they bear limited kinship with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English kitchens'.[87] Although the paintings by van der Burch and de Hooch are of Dutch interiors, they are used here only as an indicative because, as Eloy Koldeweij has explored, there is a lack of similar kinds of representation for these objects in an English context; where these objects do survive in the historical record of eighteenth-century England is through sources for their commissioning, purchase and maintenance, printed and manuscript sources describing consumer responses and – chiefly – through surviving objects in contemporary collections.[88]

Although these images do not transport historians to eighteenth-century British interiors, therefore, they do provide a representation of how these wall panels could have been experienced, and the sensory reactions they might have provoked. A lone surviving example of such an installation in Britain, at Dyrham Park in Gloucester (Figure 5.23) suggests that the way these objects were represented in Dutch paintings as dominated spaces has cross cultural

[86] S. Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1600-1850,* (London, 2016), p. 21.
[87] Ibid.
[88] E. Koldeweij, 'Gilt Leather Hangings in Chinoiserie and Other Styles: An English Specialty', *Furniture History* 36 (2000).

validity. Indeed, the wall at Dyrham Park is composed of 342 individual panels, transforming the interior of the house's East Hall.[89] Taking the physical composition, material analysis and cultural context of these chairs together, and understanding the historiographical basis for eighteenth-century recycling, the use of panels as upholstery suggests that once the Rufford chairs were reupholstered leather was most significant in consumption through its decorative functions, similarly to the panels with which they now shared a visual basis.

Figure 5.21: Hendrick van der Burch, 'Merry Company at a Table' (1627). Oil on canvas, (550mm x 690mm), Private collection.

[89] National Trust object 453483, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/453483.4. Accessed April 30th 2018.

Figure 5.22: Pieter de Hooch, 'Interior with Figures' (1663-1665). Ol on canvas, (583mm x 694mm), Robert Lehman Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.23: Leather-panelled wall at Dyrham Park, Gloucs. Object NT 453483. Image © National Trust/Seamus McKenna.

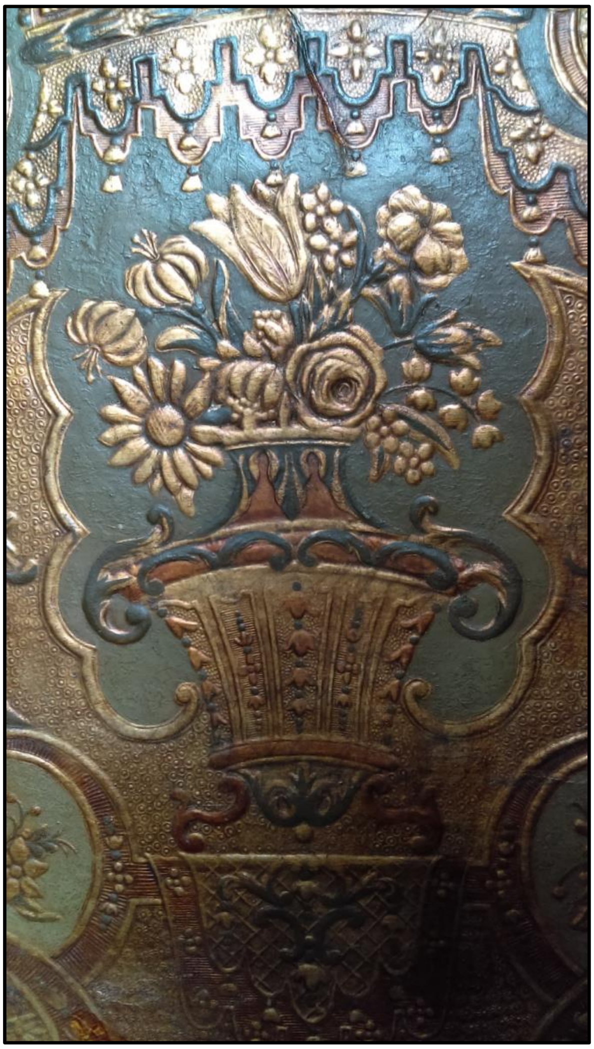


Figure 5.24: Close up of Sudbury Hall screen design.

Across the Taunton, Fairhead, Bradley and Old Rufford chairs, therefore, focusing on the leather upholstery reveals a range of potentials of leather, including how meaning was created for early modern consumers. On the one hand, the leather upholstery can be considered in the context of the other materials used to make these objects: the wood of the frame, the metal of any fixings. When understood within this framework, different types of leather upholstery can be understood to contribute towards contemporary associations with these chairs; here, these examples have been used to demonstrate how these objects were comfortable, wearing goods which nevertheless were expected to be visually appealing to their consumers. On the other hand, this upholstery can be studied out of its immediate object context and be related to the material landscape more broadly. This was the case for the Old Rufford chairs, showing that the current leather upholstery was pre-dated by damask and that the leather used for reupholstery originally served a different purpose as embossed leather panelling. This speaks to contemporary making and maintenance practices, but more importantly to ways in which the materials used – here leather upholstery specifically – had an impact on the consumption of these objects. The lack of any signs of consumption in the Old Rufford chairs, relative to the other objects in this source base, would suggest that this reupholstery also marked a point at which these chairs began to fulfil a primarily decorative role.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the most commonly-identified leather object from the probate inventories used in this thesis through multiple source types. By reading the probate inventory source base introduced at the start of this thesis more closely, this chapter made some preliminary claims about this source type: that these objects became increasingly associated with spaces of food preparation and consumption across the period, that they were compatible with a range of object configurations in eighteenth-century domestic spaces and that, despite a reasonable volume of inventories to investigate, one limitation posed by these sources was relatively vague descriptions for an object category which featured considerable range in monetary value. From this point, this chapter turned to surviving sets of leather-upholstered chairs in public collections that correspond to the modal average in contemporary probate inventories. Extracting the upholstery for analysis specifically, this chapter then explored the different ways in which leather contributed to the meaning of these objects to eighteenth-century consumers. These were, in part, the visual cues performed by this material to associate them with stylistic practices, but also functional material associations which could be drawn between different applications of leather. In both cases, these chairs are another example in which cultural meaning was created through a combination of material and object type, production and consumption.

It is important to note the ways in which specific materials do not matter as much as they do. This chapter does not argue that within the object-type of eighteenth-century upholstered chairs leather was a unique material. However, it does argue that concentration on leather as an upholstery material can reveal particular insights into a commonly-owned object category. First, chairs were composite objects and should be understood as a series of connected components. Secondly, appreciating the importance of the upholstery material highlights the transformative abilities of upholstery which traditional furniture historiography has ignored. Thirdly, leather, similarly to other upholstery materials, served both functional and decorative ends. Running across these three arguments are two more general points: that historians need to be attentive to the full assemblage of materials and how they worked together within the close contexts of an object, and that historians incorporating upholstered forms of furniture into their research need to understand reupholstery as a force which helped the domestic interior to be fluid.

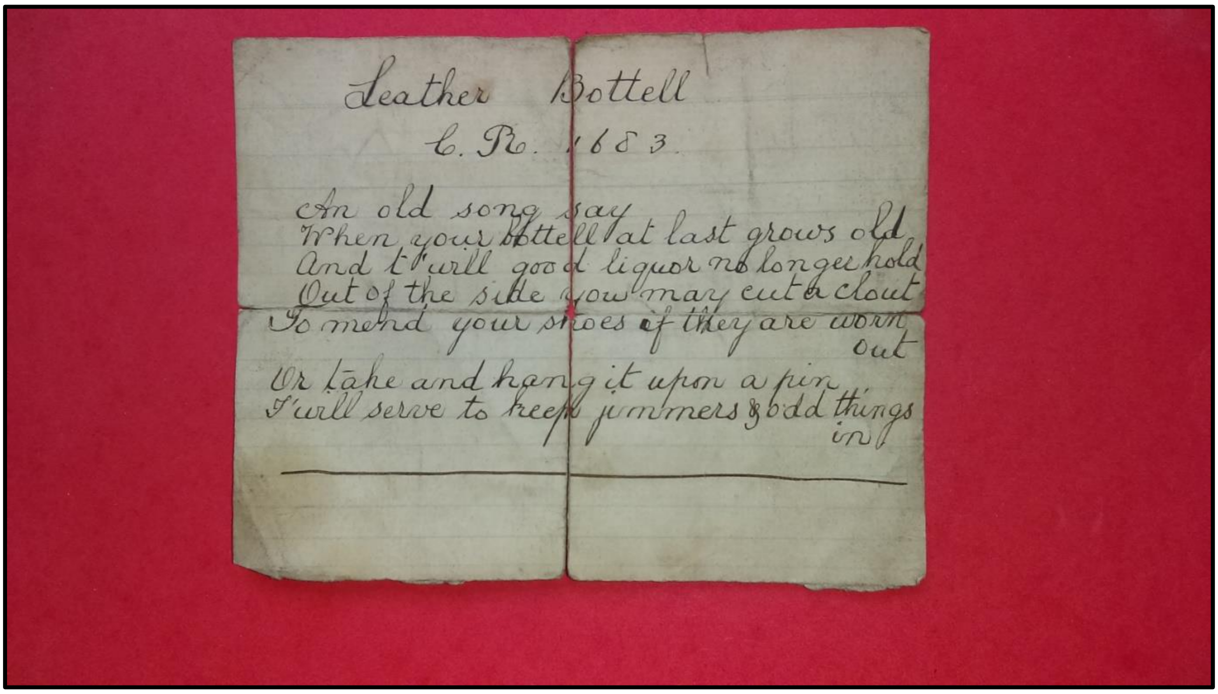
Understanding this object type within a life-cycle approach, and these specific objects within their biographies, enfolds complex processes of making, business practices and a significant role within the domestic interior. Investigating the manner of making in turn demonstrates the economic transformations of an object. Simply put, from raw materials chairs were substantially ‘up-valued’ by at least three different craftsmen: the chair carver, cabinet-maker and upholder. The greatest economic value was imparted by the upholder, who was also responsible for the material aspect which would equip these objects with the greatest cultural capital. Attentiveness to the material underpinning of objects therefore also demonstrates that objects were the product of a series of individual processes. The division of labour in the making and maintenance of these goods, as well as the differing values placed on materials as evidenced from probate inventories suggests that consumers also understood objects in this light: as a series of individual processes.

This chapter has also, more methodologically, demonstrated the value of studying objects as part of a set. Taking these leather-upholstered chairs as individual objects could not reveal anything especially significant in terms of their appearance, but being able to study these objects within their respective sets has revealed features of uniformity and exceptional examples of repair or maintenance which were more meaningful. In the case of the Rufford Old Hall chairs, for example, it was only through having access to six matching chairs that any confident statements regarding reupholstery could be made, and in the case of the Taunton chairs access to a set of six revealed both the uniformity of the objects and their individual repairs. Studying multiple sets, drawn from a range of geographic locations and type of heritage institution methodologically demonstrates the need to combine documentary evidence with primary objects to understand material culture fully. As has been demonstrated above, probate inventories and other forms of document only adhere to vague material descriptors – these serve to obscure the material range of objects which are encapsulated by a single term.

As part of the broader and more multifaceted question of the meaning of leather to eighteenth-century consumers, the object studies above make a case for measuring meaning on a contextual basis, and this is reinforced by recourse to supplementary object types. These objects – tables, desks, and other forms of seating furniture – demonstrate both the value of leather across a range of object types while also suggesting what was particular. Leather was functional, certainly, across a range of objects within what might be referred to as the object 'category' of furniture, but it was as part of comparatively visible objects, including the chairs examined in this chapter, that function and aesthetic potential dovetailed most neatly. Leather contributed to the meaning of these objects, but that meaning was contingent on the overall assemblage of materials which the object comprised, how and where consumers placed these objects and contemporary shifting notions of style and fashion.

Leather was used in a range of chair types, and although this chapter does not argue that leather was unique in connecting chairs to broader aesthetic trends, it does show that a material focus drawn from physical qualities, visual appearance and sociocultural context can more richly contextualize the meaning of objects to consumers. One significance of this argument to the field more broadly is to demonstrate that a historical understanding of the material world should be seen as multifaceted – from the raw materials to the finished object and the stages in between – and to suggest that a close focus on the material components of objects in order to reveal wider trends can be exercised with chronological, geographic and social precision. More importantly, and as a result, more precise contexts for a historical understanding of the materials are created in and by the object itself; the relationship between object type and material was one which was mutually constituting.

Chapter 6 - Drinking Vessels


Leather Bottell
C. R. 1683

An old song say
When your bottell at last grows old
And t'will good liquor no longer hold
Out of the side you may cut a clout
To mend your shoes if they are worn out
Or take and hang it upon a pin
T'will serve to keep jimmers & odd things in

Figure 6.1: Item 10150,2014; National Leather Collection, Northampton, notepaper found inside a donated leather bottle (10137, 2014).

Introduction

When a leather bottle was donated to the National Leather Collection in Northampton in 2014, the above piece of paper was found inside it (Figure 6.1). An undated – but most likely dating from the early nineteenth century – note on discoloured lined notepaper, it reflects the behaviour of its collector and contains a few brief lines:

> An old song say
>
> When your bottell at last grows old
>
> And t'will good liquor no longer hold
>
> Out of the side you may cut a clout

To mend your shoes if they are worn out

Or take and hang it upon a pin

T'will serve to keep jummers & odd things in

The note is an almost direct quote from a late seventeenth-century ballad – *A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel* – which has been a source for historians and collectors alike in discussing early modern drinking material culture. It is useful as it points to the practical versatility of historic drinking vessels, their mutability and, in tandem with other sources, begins to paint a picture of the social contexts of their consumption, which are a primary concern of this chapter. For Angela McShane, the ballad points to the interplay between drinking, song and sociability as a medium for the expression of popular politics, while Oliver Baker dissects the ballad to open a framework for comparison between early modern leather drinking vessels and those made of other materials, such as wood and glass.[1]

This chapter will examine the category of leather drinking vessels as one element of the broader, multi-material experience of dining. It will ask who the audience for this object type was, how leather was used in relation to drinking vessels and how the properties of the material dictated possibilities for consumption; what some materiality scholars might refer to as 'affordances'.[2] First, this chapter recognises the importance of social rank to this object study, and argues that an object study of leather bottles challenges an association between the materials of drinking vessels and rank, instead arguing for a closer and more pragmatic relationship between materials and function or social occasion. Leather drinking vessels were from a broader social range than the other primary object types examined in this thesis.

[1] A. McShane, 'Drink, song and politics in early modern England', *Popular Music* 35.2 (2016), p. 170; O. Baker, *Black Jacks and Leather Bottells: Being some account of Leather Drinking Vessels in England and incidentally of other Ancient Vessels,* (Stratford-on-Avon, 1921).

[2] See chapter 2 of this thesis.

Secondly, and most centrally, this chapter argues that their consumers used the surfaces of bottles as a site in which consumers could exercise their material literacy, personalise and own their goods. Here, this chapter draws on leather buckets as a supplementary object type which demonstrate how this practice found other applications. Thirdly, this chapter demonstrates that an approach which is geared towards a close reading of objects, in absence of documentary evidence, highlights possibilities for a more uniform kind of bottle-making industry than has previously been acknowledged in the eighteenth century. These questions support the overall research aims of the thesis in understanding the meaning of leather to consumers and the significance of this material in shaping consumption by showing first which key behaviours and comestibles leather was associated with in this context, and second by understanding how leather in one of its unique forms – *cuir bouilli* – made possible particular actions relating to possession and ownership.

For Baker, who wrote the most cited text discussing these objects, there are multiple reasons to justify the study of leather drinking vessels.[3] Here, this chapter will concentrate on leather drinking vessels – especially costrels and blackjacks – because they were among the more commonly identified small and moveable commodities in probate inventories, but these objects also serve a purpose within the overall narrative of change central to eighteenth-century consumption. While leather drinking vessels do not register within the broad categories of objects Lorna Weatherill explores in her 1999 study of patterns of ownership, which is unsurprising given the low quantities of leather drinking vessels found in the sample of probate inventories used in this thesis, the material record explored in this chapter suggests that these objects experienced broad continuity – set in contrast to the pattern of increasing ownership

[3] Baker, *Blackjacks and Leather Bottells*, p. 10.

Weatherill identifies for utensils for hot drinks.[4] Running counter to the ideas of an explosion of goods in the period as explored in the introduction to this thesis, therefore, leather drinking vessels are valuable because they are an example of an object which showed remarkably little change.

In probate inventories, there are a handful of examples of leather drinking vessels in a range of homes. These references are far outweighed in number by those to leather-upholstered chairs, and are too few in number in order to be able to usefully apply any form of statistical analysis. One example, from the probate inventories of Rogate and Rake, privileges leather drinking vessels above others, reading ‘a leatherne bottel and other vessels’.[5] Other references are scattered across the geographic range of the sample: Great Stretton, Ratby, Clifton and Westbury, and Smethwick.[6] These entries are not particularly meaningful in and of themselves, but neither is the relative dearth particularly surprising. On personal objects, as this chapter will argue leather bottles were, Weatherill notes that probate inventories are sometimes sparse in their listings: ‘Some goods may have been too small, or of too little value, to be appraised in detail. Many personal items, such as hair combs, were rarely listed. There may have been some doubt about whether personal effects […] should be listed at all’.[7] There are natural issues of sampling here, but as Weatherill also argues, object studies aim not ‘to produce national aggregations, but to explore the mechanisms behind patterns of behaviour.[8]

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[4] L. Weatherill, ‘ The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England’, in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods,* (London, 1999), Table 10.5.
[5] L. Lloyd (ed.), *Property and life in 17th Century Rogate and Rake,* (Rogate, 1997), Column 49.
[6] J. Wilshere (ed.), *Great Stretton History; Parish Registers, Probate Inventories*, (Leicester, 1984), p. 23; J. Wilshere (ed.), *Ratby Probate Inventories 1621-1844*, (Leicester, 1984), pp. 17-19; J. S. Moore (ed.), *Clifton and Westbury Probate Inventories 1609-1761*, (Bristol, 1981), Inventory number 8; M. Bodfish (ed.), *Probate Inventories of Smethwick Residents 1647-1747*, (Smethwick, 1992), pp. 20-21.
[7] L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1660-1760,* (London, 1987), p. 203.
[8] Ibid. p. 202.

One benefit of these probate inventories is to highlight that drinking vessels as a broader category of goods were made of various materials, while the different types of specifically leather vessels will be outlined in the first section of this chapter – defining a taxonomy and schematically outlining the source base. Although this is a finding based on evidence that will be presented throughout the chapter, it is introduced at this early stage to define the terminology that will be used when describing both the objects themselves and their cultural representations. Next, this chapter will explore the limited range of representations of these objects in a social and cultural context. Finding few sources which represent these goods, subsequent sections will analyse the objects themselves, asking how leather shaped consumers' use of these objects and how this evidence can compensate for absences in the cultural and documentary record.

On leather costrels and blackjacks this chapter will argue that these objects – available in relatively rich quantities in museum collections – show marks of personalisation that demonstrate their mobility; in this sense, leather drinking vessels demonstrate some overlap with saddles and their accoutrements, as discussed in chapter 4. In addition, the physical forms of a range of drinking vessels – their size and dimensions – suggests that differences between individual examples are best viewed as only micro-variations. Accordingly, this chapter argues that the material evidence suggests a standard for these goods, despite a lack of documentary evidence to support a regulated industry.

Across all sections, and similarly to other object studies in this thesis, this chapter also uses a close reading of objects. This chapter follows the suit of chapters 4 and 5 in showing how objects created meaning for consumers based on a combination of material and cultural factors, but differs in using a close reading to accommodate the relative dearth of other source types. In the case of leather drinking vessels specifically, a material analysis is more fruitful than a typical cultural approach based on limited representational evidence. This chapter ultimately argues that the consumption of these objects was shaped by consumers' understanding of the potentials and tolerances of the materials which made them.

Historiographical context

This chapter engages with three areas of historical scholarship: the consumption of alcoholic beverages and their associated objects, absences in the historical record and typological classification of objects. The most obvious context is the popular field of studies in drinking and dining: ubiquitous behaviours which the objects discussed in this chapter facilitated. Although Asa Briggs' seminal *A Social History of England* (1983) restricted analysis of comestibles in this period to how patterns of import shaped domestic consumption, Adam Fox has argued more recently that 'the food and drink that people ingested provided resonant markers in the expression of worth and the articulation of status'.[9] Fox finds a 'hierarchy' of comestibles determined by 'the cluster of ideological and cultural assumptions surrounding them, as well as by their simple price and availability'; an 'inferior sort' were associated with cheap, 'vulgar' comestibles, including beer.[10] Meanwhile, McShane finds similar associations not only between comestibles and social rank or prestige, but also between such status and the material objects used in the action of consumption.[11] Here, McShane argues that the materials of eating and drinking vessels were 'indicators of social rank and esteem' in the early modern period, dichotomising glass and silver on the one hand, against wood and leather on the other.[12] What is shared is that both Fox and McShane situate these associations within a broader

[9] A. Briggs, *A Social History of England,* (London, 1983), p. 152 and p. 202; A. Fox, 'Food, Drink and Social Distinction in Early Modern England', in S. Hindle, A. Shepard and J. Walter (eds), *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England,* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 165.
[10] Fox, 'Food, Drink and Social Distinction', p. 169 and p. 180.
[11] A. McShane, 'Drink, song and politics in early modern England', *Popular Music* 35.2 (2016), p. 170.
[12] Ibid.

narrative of change over time in which the strength of the material-esteem association diminished amidst increasing consumption.[13]

The leather drinking vessels discussed in this chapter however relate to alcohol consumption specifically. In this subfield, McShane has explored the ways in which both 'too much' and 'not enough' alcohol bred disruption, but ultimately concludes first that alcohol consumption was central in lubricating 'communal bonding rituals', and second that 'willingness' to drink was essential for one to qualify as a 'socialized' subject.[14] Drawing on Jordan Goodman and Woodruff Smith, Phil Withington similarly highlights the contemporary tensions of alcohol consumption, which were characterized by 'excess' and the most 'primeval' forms of sociability, rather than the civilizing powers of more moderate forms of colonial intoxicant such as chocolate, coffee and tobacco.[15] Meanwhile, the public presence, accessibility and continued enjoyment of alcohol is demonstrated by drinking booths in eighteenth-century fairs for Benjamin Heller.[16] One central concern for the historiography of alcohol consumption, therefore, is to highlight some of the inconsistency with which contemporaries consumed this substance.

Primary sites in which this consumption took place, and in which drinking objects were used, were the increasingly accessible public drinking spaces mapped out by Peter Clark.[17] Clark argues that in the earlier seventeenth century there was a clearly-drawn distinction between inns, taverns and alehouses which dissipated amidst the shift to larger alehouses with better

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[13] Fox, 'Food, Drink and Social Distinction', p. 183; McShane 'Drink, song and politics', p. 170.
[14] A. McShane, 'Material Culture and 'Political Drinking' in Seventeenth-Century England, *Past and Present* (2014), Supplement 9, pp. 265-276.
[15] P. Withington, 'Introduction: Cultures of Intoxication', *Past and Present* (2014) Supplement 9, p. 18, p. 30.
[16] B. Heller, 'The 'Mere Peuple' and the Polite Spectator: The Individual in the Crowd at Eighteenth-Century London Fairs', *Past and Present* 208 (2010), p. 150.
[17] P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830,* (London, 1983).

facilities and a more demanding client base across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[18] Within this broader narrative of change Clark identifies a move after 1700 away from drinking vessels made of heavier earthenware and stoneware, towards lighter vessels made of pewter with a greater profusion of types and sizes.[19] Drawing on a 1700 source from Thomas Nourse, Clark highlights the range of vessels consumers may have used. The full quote includes: flagons, jugs, mugs, jacks, carmikins, beakers, tumblers, glass bottles, tankards and silver tankards.[20] If Nourse made this comment in a text of 1700 it is likely that Clark's proposed shift to a wider range of available drinking vessels had already achieved some momentum by 1700, but it is important to highlight – as this chapter does – the material record also demonstrates significant continuities in this regard.

Where this chapter contributes to the established field on alcohol consumption – and by extension drinking and dining more generally – is in two key ways. First, this chapter shows what a close focus on the drinking vessels themselves may say about who these consumers were, what was being consumed specifically, and where this behaviour was taking place. As will be argued, these objects held a close association with beer drinking, and by narrowing in on the drinking vessels used to consume this drink this chapter demonstrates how patterns of object ownership and consuming behaviour overlapped. This, in some cases, challenges both the association between objects made of certain materials and social rank or esteem, as well as challenging the association between social rank and the comestible itself. Secondly, and more importantly, focusing closely on the material form and object type makes suggestions about the nature of that behaviour, how it was carried out, and the significance it held. The personal

[18] Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 8-1 4 and p. 197.
[19] Ibid. p. 198.
[20] T. Nourse, *Compania Foelix*, (London, 1700), p. 180.

and cultural meaning of beer drinking is held in these objects in a way that does not survive in the record and is not accounted for by economic or social analysis of alcohol consumption.

One key historiographical concept with which this chapter engages is absence. While leather drinking vessels are abundant as artefactual sources, and were not totally absent from the representational record – these objects were recorded in some probate inventories and the material record available in modern collections is rich – this issue merits some discussion because they do not appear to have been recorded by contemporaries in some key areas. Printed texts do not provide the same sense of production historians may gain of saddles and leather-upholstered chairs, and nor are these objects generally present in documentary records of production or maintenance. They were recorded less frequently in probate inventories than leather-upholstered chairs, and do not appear to have been sold as commodities in newspaper retail advertisements. Where these objects were recorded was through a limited number of fictive representational sources, visual and textual, but it would be wrong to suggest that their kind of presence was either quantitively or qualitatively on a par with the external evidence available to support a study of saddles or chairs.

This chapter accepts the limitations posed by these areas of absence, but interprets this absence as indicative of the ways in which these objects were learned and related to by consumers: through consumption, rather than through instruction or representation. As Susan Pearce argues, objects operate both as signs and as signifiers, but the role of certain objects is harder to affirm when they exist largely outside of the most typical forms of representation.[21] Furthermore, as Jennifer Van Horn argues, the cross-class 'meshworks' and 'constellation[s]

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[21] S. M. Pearce, 'Objects as meaning; or narrating the past' in S. M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections,* (London, 1994).

of individual motives' that objects were entangled in enabled them to resist roles as simple ciphers or signifiers; possessing material realities, roles as tools and functional items.[22] This absence prompts questions about other data sets in which these leather drinking vessels are missing: namely archaeological excavations.[23]

This chapter will address this problem of absence through a very detailed approach to objects, and this is sensible given the survival of these objects in museum contexts set against the relatively limited quantity of representational sources. In terms of tackling this absence problem previously, historians have established two major strategies to address the absence of a range objects. The first strategy concerns the role of small objects in representation more broadly and understands the failure of the objects to be represented as stemming from their mundane or unextraordinary nature. By contrast, those objects which were represented were those which held symbolic or metaphorical power in a given representational context. A second strategy considers the functionality of objects and suggests that the ways in which objects 'work' might negate a need for their representation.

In the former, some historians have extracted examples of smaller or more mundane objects and demonstrated that the representational contexts in which they were present were those where these objects bore metaphorical or symbolic meaning. Jennine Hurl-Eamon has examined the context of the Foundling Hospital and highlights the situations in which love tokens and objects 'even as crude as pips of fruit' had signifying power.[24] Though not relating

[22] J. Van Horn, 'Samplers, Gentility and the Middling Sort', *Winterthur Portfolio* 40.4 (Winter, 2005), p. 223, pp. 246-247; J. Van Horn, 'The Mask of Civility Portraits of Colonial Women and the Transatlantic Masquerade', *American Art* 23.2 (2009), pp. 10-18.
[23] See chapter 1 of this thesis.
[24] J. Hurl-Eamon, 'Love Tokens: Objects as Memory for Plebeian Women in Early Modern England', *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6 (2011), pp. 181-182.

to an object type, Peter Erickson has considered the 'paradoxical interrelations between visibility and invisibility' when addressing the presence of servants in portraiture, finding an impetus for them to be both 'conspicuous and unobtrusive'.[25] In discussing the distinction between objects and subjects within the genre of early modern portraiture, Erickson demonstrates how the display of smaller objects corresponded to metaphorical or symbolic meaning. Dror Wahrman also extracts meaning from smaller, lesser depicted objects within an eighteenth-century media revolution; combs, letters, quills, sticks of wax and keys, among other objects which 'wear emphemerality on their sleeves'. [26] These objects were material realities for consumers, but their significance emerged as signs of cultural attitudes, behaviours or identities.

In the latter, Graham Harman ascribes to all objects the status of 'tool-being'. 'Tool-being', Harman states, 'does not describe objects insofar as they are handy implements employed for human purposes. Quite the contrary: […] they withdraw from human view into a dark subterranean reality that never becomes present to practical action any more than it does to theoretical awareness'.[27] More explicitly, objects become so routine and so normalized – if not mundane – that they forfeit a cultural presence. Where this approach differs from that described above is in how these objects 'break their silence' – once they become broken or culturally complicated they are 'no longer immersed in their own withdrawn reality'.[28] Cynthia Wall, similarly, discusses objects that escape representation and suggests that the routine and mundane objects of eighteenth-century consumers may not have occupied 'forward' spaces in

[25] P. Erickson, 'Invisibility Speaks: Servants and Portraits in Early Modern Visual Culture', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9.1 (Spring/Summer, 2009), p. 24.
[26] D. Wahrman, *Mr Collier's Letter Racks: A Tale of Art and Illusion at the Threshold of the Modern Information Age,* (Oxford, 2012), p. 49.
[27] G. Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidigger and the Metaphysics of Objects,* (Chicago, 2002), pp. 1-2.
[28] Ibid. pp. 4-5.

homes or elsewhere, and it is difficult to trace representations for 'backstage' objects because it is that 'backstage' which is infrequently represented.[29] Harman and Wall's arguments have some limitations. Harman's insistence that all objects exist in a 'subterranean reality' until broken does not explain the – even seemingly working – plethora of objects that do make it into representation, while Wall's desire to reinvest objects with value may ascribe symbolic meaning to objects that did not have these significances for eighteenth-century consumers. Methodologically this chapter works with objects very closely to combat their relative absence, and suggests that this absence can be useful in reflecting the ways in which consumers learned these goods; leather drinking vessels were understood through possession and consumption, rather than by representation or written instruction.

Lastly, this chapter relies on typological classification, here used in an archaeological sense, as a useful approach to fulfil the demands of an object study which encompasses a breadth and large quantity of material evidence. This is the first point in this thesis where a typological model is relevant, as the object studies of saddles and chairs utilized a relatively limited range of object types: riding saddles and upholstered dining chairs. Although leather drinking vessels survive in a range of forms, Table 6.1 outlines the range of types which have been identified throughout the object-based work involved in this chapter. Although, therefore, these types should be treated as a set of findings, they are introduced here in order to impose a consistent vocabulary against the subsequent discussions of objects to follow. To develop 'types', historical archaeologists have built on the earliest models proposed by V.A. Gorodzov and A.D. Krieger. Gorodzov's 'theory of typological method' was proposed in 1933. Here,

[29] C. Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century*, (Chicago, 2006), pp. 108-111.

Gorodzov defined a practice of subdividing material objects into categories, groups, orders and types, in turn leading to:

> clarification of the action of the yet undiscovered new principles involved in the development of industrial phenomena and the discovery of their real significance and meaning by classification. At the basis of this classification is placed the type which is understood as a collection of objects similar in function, material and form.[30]

Gorodzov therefore proposed a practical model, but did not link the practice of classification to its impact for assessing material evidence. Krieger's 'typological concept' model, proposed in 1944, made this link explicit by suggesting that the purpose of type is to demonstrate 'culture complexes'.[31] 'The purpose of a type in archaeology', Krieger argued, 'must be to provide an organizational tool which will enable the investigator to group specimens into bodies which have demonstrable historical meaning in terms of behaviour patterns'.[32]

As Hugh Willmott acknowledges, typologies do not paint a complete picture. At the most basic level, even well thought through typologies may struggle to hold water when transferred between different cultural boundaries.[33] Despite this, Willmott argues in favour of such typologies when aimed to answer specific research questions.[34] For this chapter the purpose of a typology – of early modern leather drinking vessels – is twofold. First, it assists in managing material evidence and provides a definitive framework of object types that cuts across the

[30] V.A. Gorodzov, 'The Typological Method in Archaeology', *American Anthropologist,* New Series 35.1 (January-March, 1933), p. 98.
[31] A.D. Krieger, 'The Typological Concept', *American Antiquity* 9.3 (January, 1944), p. 271.
[32] Ibid. p. 272.
[33] H.B. Willmott, *Tudor and early Stuart vessel glass: an archaeological study of forms and patterns of consumption in England, 1500-1640,* PhD Thesis submitted to Durham University, (1999), pp. 31-32.
[34] Ibid, p. 33.

inconsistent classifications of museum curatorship. Secondly, it responds to the question of the significance of leather to the consumption of drinking vessels as an object category by showing that coherence can be found in the real range of object types leather was used to make. Finally, creating a typology of drinking vessels in this way serves as a methodological tool of analysis facilitating comparisons between objects which, if different in precise form or decoration, nevertheless adhere to a recognizable type.

Table 6.1 signposts the typological classifications that result from and are used in this chapter. In response to Krieger's desires for demonstrable historical meaning, these different types achieve this in two ways: first, by grouping objects around mutual types of consuming, and second by grouping objects around mutual forms and processes of making.

Models of typological classification from early archaeology, themselves borrowed from the anthropologists, ethnographers and collectors of a generation prior, usefully facilitate the demands of historical material culture. In the 1991, Thomas Schlereth made clear his desire that material culture research be based on aggregate samples of multiple objects rather than reading out from one or two key object studies.[35] For Schlereth, it is only through aggregates that material culture research can 'explore various, serendipitous, random insights generated by systematic object research'.[36] In so suggesting, Schlereth moved away from the previously established models of object research proposed by E. McClung Fleming, Jules David Prown and Robert Elliot in 1974, 1982 and 1986 respectively, as described in the introduction to this thesis.[37] These models – perhaps most notably Prown's 'description – deduction – speculation'

[35] T.J. Schlereth, 'Material Culture or Material Life? Discipline or Field? Theory or Method?' in G.L. Pocius (ed.), *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture,* (Newfoundland, 1991), p. 240.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Schlereth, 'Material Culture or Material Life?', p. 237.

technique – were well-suited to individual object case studies. Their method could be turned less readily to assemblages of object types, however, and can be criticised for making general statements from an object which may or may not be exceptional. However, by adopting the strategies of early archaeologists and generating object ‘typologies’ which represent the material range of object types, this chapter demonstrates how these techniques can be applied to individual objects within a more substantive evidentiary base.

Object 'type' or form	Defining characteristics	Variations
Costrel	Horizontal barrel-shaped bottle with single, small, neck and mouth; made of three pieces of leather – one for the body, wrapped to form a cylinder, and two to complete the sides. These objects have a wide base and the neck is located in the top and centre of the vessel.	Variations in size, decoration and construction; some costrels are stamped or painted; some have additional layers of leather reinforcing the seams between individual pieces.
Blackjack	Tankard or jug-shaped drinking vessel used either for drinking or serving; typically constructed from three pieces of leather – one piece wrapped to form a cylinder, another to create a base and another for a handle; the top is left open to serve or drink from.	Wide variation in size between those used for drinking and those used for serving; some painted and some with metal fittings or embellishments; some with metal rims and/or bases.
Tankard	As above	Narrower range of sizes, but otherwise similar variations as blackjacks.
Novelty flask or bottle	Stoppered flasks with single necks and mouths; body shaped into recognisable shape by moulding the leather; typically comprise two or three pieces of leather.	Variety in range of shapes, size and volume; shapes range from household and domestic objects such as books, knives and pistols to impressions of bodies and faces.
Bottle	Form comprising a body with tapered neck and one mouth; made from up to three pieces of leather, one or two for the body and one for the base	Variety in size and decoration; decorations range from painting to punching, stamping or embossing; variation in the proportions of the vessel and shape.
Jug	Not extant in large number; similar to blackjacks but distinguishable by a flared lip and more pointed dip in the rim for pouring.	As above.

Table 6.1: Typological classifications of leather drinking vessels.

Representational Contexts for Leather Drinking Vessels

This section uses eighteenth-century sources including literary texts and forms of visual culture identified through digital corpora to establish the representational contexts for leather drinking vessels. Even drawing on a wider range of source types than Baker's classical text, this section suggests that the recording of these objects by a balladeer, authors and engravers alike was clearly an unusual occurrence. Nevertheless, scattered references to these objects can still enable them to be placed in broadly indicative contexts. This section argues that leather drinking vessels were the tools of sociable encounters, and their albeit limited presence in the historical record documents their use within more ritualistic forms of dining. They were also more often associated with beer consumption, which in turn generates an image of a context: the tavern or alehouse, and male encounters.

Ballads were a 'multi-media format that transcended any tidy division between 'print' and 'oral' transmission'.[38] Generally taken by historians to be as indicative of the cultural attitudes of relatively humble consumers as well as the more elite, these sources have been used to understand how a range of subject matter was described within a communal environment.[39] *A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel* – introduced above – is evidence of this format turned to understanding popular attitudes towards one particular object type. Wade's ballad is an important starting point in part because it provides a broader commentary upon, first, the desirable qualities of leather drinking vessels; second, upon desirable strengths and weaknesses in different drinking vessels and; third, the association between drinking vessels made of particular materials and particular types of drink. This ballad provides an opportunity to situate

[38] M. Hailwood, 'Popular culture' in L. Sangha and J. Willis (eds), *Understanding Early modern Primary Sources,* (Oxford, 2016), p. 213.
[39] Ibid, p. 215.

leather drinking vessels among those made of others, particularly from the perspective of consumers.

At the earliest, the *English Broadside Ballad Archive* places the ballad as authored by John Wade in 1678, but reprints were circulated in the eighteenth century and produced as late as 1769 – this was a ballad which stood the test of time.[40] In terms of the particular perceived strengths of leather drinking vessels this source points to, there are at least nine separate references. Leather bottles are prized, and their creator revered, by the author of the ballad for a number of reasons: leather bottles were seen as enduring, strong and capable of wear and tear, able to hold liquid without easy spillage, and more 'rudimental', therefore less likely to be stolen in comparison to silver. In particular, the durability of leather drinking vessels is highlighted as the author emphasizes the repeated use of these objects by a range of tradesmen: field workers, sith-men, hay-makers, leaders, laders, pitchers, reapers, hedgers, ditchers, finders and rakers. Furthermore, leather bottles were seen as mobile goods which were also comforting and personal objects owned over a longer time period:

> And if his Liquor be almost gone,
> His Bottel he will part with to none.
> But says, My Bottel is but small,
> One Drop I will not part withal:
> You must go drink at some Spring or Well,
> For I will keep my Leather Bottel.

[40] John Wade, *A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottell,* Magdalene College, Oxford, Pepys Ballads 4.237, British Library Roxburghe Collection numbers 2.257 and 3.432-433 and Huntington Library, Miscellaneous 289781.

They were objects which provided some kind of heat insulation or protection from the elements and, finally, understood as somewhat utilitarian in their ability to be repurposed, as the extract in Figure 6.1 suggests. In short, this ballad illustrates a range of qualities of leather drinking vessels which suggest that they were functional goods, and the presence of these qualities in a popular and accessible format in suggests that functionality had cultural significance for consumers of leather. This is made clearer still by the faults of alternative drinking vessels, such as wooden cans, black pots and glass flagons: 'rivals' to the leather bottle which were fragile and spilled drinks.[41] Glass flagons are associated with beer, ale or wine, black pots with broth and cans of wood with ale. Leather bottles, meanwhile, are consistently linked with beer: either 'household beer', 'ale, nut brown' or plain 'beer' (See Appendix 2).

This ballad suggests first, that leather objects did not exist in isolation, and, second, that the function of leather bottles was beer consumption. On the first point, this ballad demonstrates that leather was one of a number of materials which could be used to craft drinking vessels. The qualities which Wade praised in leather, indeed, were only possible by exploiting the weaknesses of others. On the second point, this ballad suggests that leather was more closely associated with beer-drinking, and therefore these objects be placed within the context of alcohol consumption. The focus on beer and fleeting references to other beverages, considering Fox's analysis, would limit the subjects of the text to the 'poorest sort'; the some 41% of the population who spent 7.5% of their yearly outgoings on this type of drink.[42]

Two further forms of representational source – visual depictions and literary texts produced within the same timeframe as were cheap prints of Wade's ballad – reinforce the place of

[41] Baker, *Black Jacks and Leather Bottells,* Ch. 2.
[42] Fox, 'Food, Drink and Social Distinction', p. 169.

leather drinking vessels within multi-material contexts and the association between these objects and beer drinking. Where visual and literary representations move beyond these suggestions is by situating leather drinking vessels with a range of environments which suggest that a range of social audiences had access to these objects. In short, even if leather drinking vessels were associated with one type of drink, this consumption could still function across a broad social range.

Figure 6.2: T.G. Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, (London, 1748) Frontispiece. Image (c) the Trustees of the British Museum.

There appears to be only a single representation of a leather costrel in its contemporary context available in modern repositories: a print serving as a frontispiece to the second volume of Tobias George Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random,* dating from 1748 (Figure

6.2).[43] The image contains six men in front of the hearth of a tavern. On the right-hand side of the frame, a younger-looking man swigs from a large leather costrel, which he supports with both hands. Although it is not possible to identify what is being drunk, this image situates a leather drinking vessel – and here specifically here the form of a leather costrel – both within a tavern and amongst a range of other material vessels: the tankards and bowls that line the shelf above the hearth, and are held by the cluster of gentlemen at the back of the scene. The discarded pipe lying on the floor by the hearth and use of an upturned barrel as a chair may also suggest that the environment being presented here is rough-and-ready, as would the simplistic wooden shutter in the window frame to the right of the scene and the peeling broadsheet on the front of the chimney. In addition to the representation of a space in which this object is being consumed, this image also suggests how leather costrels needed to be used to drink fluids. This costrel is being directly swilled from by the drinker, rather than used to serve drink into a smaller cup, even in spite of the dimensions of the object. In this case the costrel is evidently large and quite heavy, as the man in question is using one hand to support the weight of vessel – perhaps facilitated by its round, bellied shape – while the other guides the neck and spout to his mouth.

Further environments for the consumption of leather drinking vessels are suggested by representations of blackjacks and tankards. Blackjacks were formally similar to tankards although typically larger and also shaped for the pouring of beverages into smaller drinking vessels. A larger blackjack is visible in plate 6 of the anonymously published *The modern harlot's progress, or adventures of Harriet Heedless* (1780), in which the title character sits in a workhouse while being tended to by a doctor and nurse (Figure 6.3).[44] There are a number of

[43] British Museum, object number 1867,0309.1403.
[44] British Museum, 1882,0909.6.

different vessels evident in the room: one character uses a wineglass, a teapot, cups and other crockery sit on the shelf atop the hearth, while in the centre of the scene a character in a blue jacket and yellow breeches dispenses a liquid into a tankard from a large leather blackjack. The liquid is faintly brown-coloured, suggesting this representation is of beer. This image differs from the representation provided by *Roderick Random* in a number of ways, including both the genders represented and what historians may infer of the social rank of those in the image. One very important difference, however, is in the spatial structures or cultures presented by the two artists. While *Roderick Random* displays drinking vessels as used in a space in which drinking was the norm, *Harriet Heedless* represents the use of these objects in a space not designed to facilitate drinking. This, in turn, speaks to the representation of such objects provided by Wade's ballad. To be used in a range of circumstances these drinking vessels would need to be mobile, and possess the necessary physical properties to survive the physical demands of transit.

A third environment, and third social audience for leather drinking vessel, is suggested by an image by George Cruikshank – *View at the Old Hats* – which features a mix of men and women assembled outside a tavern (Figure 6.4). A man in hunting garb beneath the sign for the Old Hats is holding a light-coloured tankard to drink, whilst seated at a table in the right of the image a man is holding a dark tankard in one hand and a tobacco pipe in the other. Its tone and shape would correspond to a leather tankard, and it evidently a different object to that made of glass held by the man on the left. Moreover, the tankard held by this figure closely corresponds to a representation of a tankard, bar the metal fittings, in the upper right-hand side of a trade card for Thomas Dobson of London (Figure 6.5, below). As in the tavern-setting of *Roderick Random*, above, it is not possible to identify what this man is drinking, but this image can be used to identify a further representational context for leather drinking vessels. In this example, while the consumer of the leather drinking vessel being represented is male – as indeed is the primary consumer of the leather objects represented in Figures 6.2 and 6.3 – both male and female consumers frequent the more middling tavern than as depicted by Smollett, and this is a more distinctively consumer setting than the workhouse. One important constant across the three, however, is that the leather vessels presented are only one of a number of drinking vessels in the respective scenes. Given the three different natures of these environments, this suggests that the association between materials and drinks functioned across social and spatial boundaries.

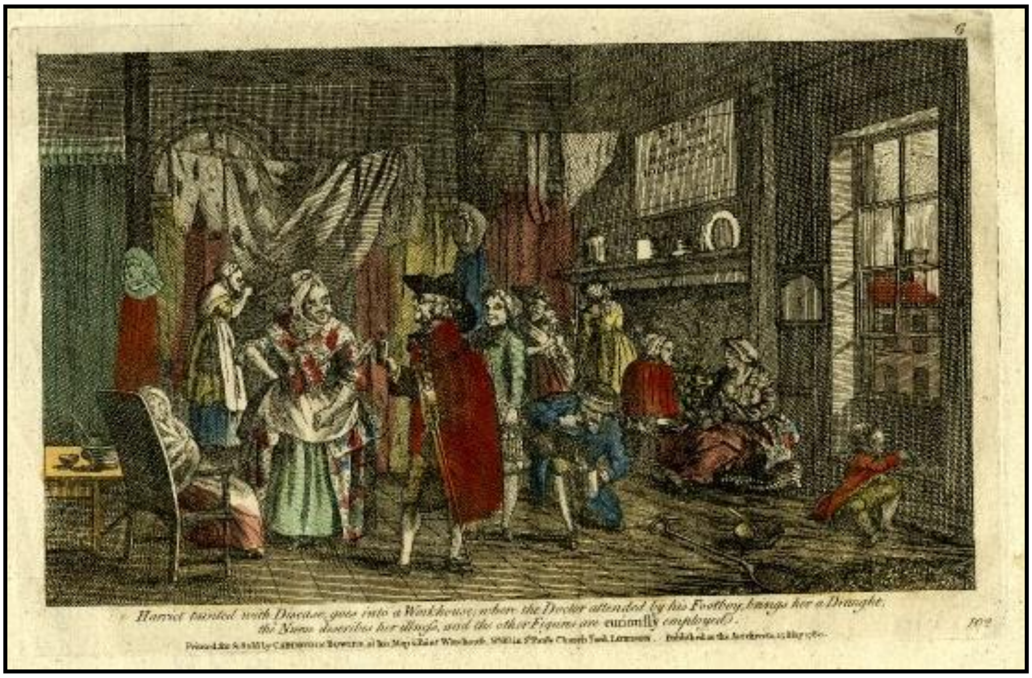

Figure 6.3: The modern harlot's progress, plate 6. British Museum object number 1882,0909.6. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 6.4: G. Cruikshank, View at the Old Hats, (London, 1813). Lewis Walpole Library call number 813.08.13.01.

Figure 6.5: Anon. Trade card for Thomas Dobson, (London, c. 1733-1769). Lewis Walpole Library call number 66 733 Al325 Folio.

The last visual representation which will be considered here is the trade card for Thomas Dobson, a London-based leather pipe and bucket maker. This is a useful source for dating leather blackjacks to the mid-eighteenth century and therefore justifying statements of continuity, but also presents these objects to consumers in more functional terms, even including an ornate leather jug alongside buckets, piping and basic machinery. By comparison, the three other images of leather drinking vessels demonstrate their use for personal consumption in a range of environs: as objects in use in given contexts. While the three other visual representations use motifs to connect these drinking vessels to types of consumers, Dobson's trade card is more directly descriptive. *Harriet Heedless*, *Roderick Random* and *View at the Old Hats* all represent these objects as used by men within very different social circumstances: the poor inhabitants of a workhouse set against the relatively more refined – although nevertheless mixed – consumers who frequented the Old Hats. Comparing these more imaginative representations to Dobson's trade card also suggests an association between these objects and men. It reads 'Thomas Dobson, Leather Pipe & Bucket Maker, No. 427 Oxford Street, near Soho Square […] where Gentlemen, Merchants, Captains, & others may be supplied with any quantity for home consumption or exportation'.

Turning to the category of literary sources, again although limited, affirms the presence of leather drinking vessels across social boundaries. In chapter six of *The Motto: or, history of Bill Woodcock* (1795), the eponymous lead character describes to the reader his conviviality with a shipmate named Walker on the top-deck of a ship. Although the chapter closes with the two characters embroiled in a shipwreck off the Kent coast, the opening passages of this chapter make some neat characterisations of leather blackjacks which – over a century after the reported first publication date of Wade's ballad – reinforce some of those same key physical properties which contemporaries enjoyed. Having met with Walker and discussed 'his adventures on shore, or rather in London, among the girls at the playhouses [and] taverns', Bill is shocked as the ship heels over and a 'pile of sea biscuits, the quarter master's lanthorn, and a black jack filled with swipes [were] overturned by the motion of the ship, and nearly emptied amongst the victuals'.[45] In the following moments, Walker, 'going to the liquor case, made himself a drop of slip, with what remained in the black jack' and Bill complains in vain at the 'uncleanliness' of Walker's food.[46] Tellingly, Walker retorts '"Lord what does it signify, what won't poison, will fatten; there's little difference Bill […] between being aboard a ship, and ashore drinking tea with the ladies'.[47] This scene of dining and homosociability aboard a ship closes as the two men exchange a toast, although Bill 'did not much like the beverage'.[48] Similarly, *The true history of the life and sudden death of old John Overs* (1744) ties a link between blackjacks and beer.[49] Upon news of the demise of their master, Overs' servants are motivated to celebration: 'one ran into the Kitchen, and breaking up the Cup-board Door, brought out a brown Loaf, a second fecht out the Essex-Cheese, a third drew a black Jack of the Four-Shilling Beer, and so began to eat and drink by no Allowance'.[50]

These brief references to blackjacks in two literary sources in some ways reflect what has already been gleaned from visual depictions. First, and similar to other sources, Bill and Walker's encounter situates leather drinking vessels within sociability as a shared practice. Secondly, the concordance between leather drinking vessels and alcoholic drinks such as beer – here including 'slip' and 'swipes' – further suggests that leather bottles were tethered to particular types of beverage. This, by association, places these objects within a more specific

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[45] G. Brewer, *The Motto: or, history of Bill Woodcock*, (London, 1795), pp. 132-133.
[46] Ibid. p. 134.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Anon, *The true history of the life and sudden death of old John Overs*, (London, 1744).
[50] Ibid, pp. 18-19.

type of sociability: the toast, lewd male story-telling and a less straightforwardly civilized environment. The scenes in which Walker and Bill exchange tales of London playhouses are very different from the more refined and domesticated practice of tea-drinking. Thirdly, the actions of the servants of John Overs in the final source contribute towards understanding the social basis for these objects. The source specifically names the comestibles which the servants take from the cupboard – including the 'four-shilling' beer. In so doing this source indicates that although blackjacks were associated with beer, this category could include a range of quality. On the one hand, blackjacks were used by Walker and Bill to drink 'slip' and 'swipes', but on the other John Overs stored beer of considerably more value, and used blackjacks in its consumption. In short, if leather costrels, blackjacks and tankards maintained their association with one type of drink, this did not negate their use across a range of social audiences; this mirrors access to this material more widely, and across a wider range of object types.

In summary, this set of representational sources is relatively small in number and limited in range: a single ballad, a trade card, two references to leather drinking vessels in literary texts and three images which include leather drinking vessels. Although representations of leather bottles across different source types are limited, there are some consistent findings. First, leather has a closer association with beer rather than with any particular class or social identity – equally, therefore, concentrating on the objects used in the act of consumption therefore can be used to suggest that beer was as cross-class as the drinking vessels used to consume this beverage. This analysis of representational sources cuts across the association between material and social rank and points to function. Secondly, leather vessels were active in sociability, with the only visual and literary references to leather blackjacks specifically pointing to largely masculine environments. Finally, identifying examples of leather drinking vessels within broader representations of sociability emphasises that this was a category of goods comprising multiple materials. This underlines that drinking, as a shared experience, was also a multi-material one. This had implications for consumers, their practices of buying and of maintenance.

These sources were identified using keyword-searching in collection databases, which relies on the detail of the respective catalogues. However, as both generic terms – such as ‘tankard’, ‘bottle’, ‘drinking’, ‘alehouse’, ‘tavern’ and ‘public house’ – as well as leather-specific terminology were used, yielding only the results presented here, this provokes questions about the meaning that can be ascribed to their representation. There were some cultural representations made of leather drinking vessels, but they were relatively limited in scope and certainly did not compare to the volume or range observable in other representations of drink-related objects or drink-related sociability. Drawing on the scholars who have worked on absence previously, explored above, provides one explanation: that the functional nature of leather drinking vessels, coupled with the ubiquity of the behaviour they were involved in, resulted in limited opportunities for these objects to present distinctive meaning, and hence a lesser function in the representational record. However, that drinking vessels made of other materials were frequently present in representations of drink-related sociability suggests that even this ubiquitous behaviour had a cultural presence. This contextualizes the more limited role of leather within representations and suggests that these leather drinking vessels were not absent, but were not frequently represented through cultural forms nor closely linked with behaviours or settings that were typically represented in this way. This, in turn, suggests that leather drinking vessels were used within more private, solitary or intimate forms of drink consumption in comparison to organised or culturally-expected drinking in public places, and methodologically stresses that when assessing particular object types there is need for a greater reliance on what can be found from material evidence.

Objects

The discord between quantities of representations and quantities of material evidence does not detract from analysing these objects but instead generates different methodologies with which to examine the consumption of these goods. Despite the paucity of representational sources, as discussed above, there is a significant bank of material examples of contemporary leather drinking vessels which deserve attention. This section will review surviving collections briefly, but ultimately settle on one remarkable collection: the National Leather Collection in Northampton. This chapter uses the 27 contemporary English objects held there, making comparisons to other collections where relevant.

Figure 6.6: Leather blackjack sold at auction, inscribed 'Captain Gromio Pendarves 1765 of Stratton in Cornwall'. Image © Sothebys.

Collections

In contrast to the generally brief references – visual and literary – to the range of leather drinking vessels in representational sources, the material record is far stronger. There are few major British collections which do not contain some form of this object. The V&A, British Museum, Museum of London and National Trust all have examples of these objects, as do more local heritage institutions such as the Birmingham Museums Collections Centre and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. These examples readily available to study in museum collections can be compared to those sold through private collectors' markets through past auction catalogues; unsurprisingly, the most well-maintained editions within this latter category are provided by Christies and Sothebys, with 32 documented sales available in the online collection. One in particular demonstrates the collectors' market for these objects: a large, silver-mounted leather blackjack with an engraved border, and dated to 1765 by the engraving on the rim (Figure 6.6).[51]

The most significant collection of these objects is held by the National Leather Collection (NLC), however. When the Collection was formed in 1946 the first objects purchased by the founder, John W. Waterer, were, indeed, early modern leather blackjacks, purportedly purchased by Waterer himself from a London flea market. The Collection was also the base for Baker's research, and Baker's original notes are held by their reference library. This chapter has used all available seventeenth- and eighteenth-century objects from the NLC and will structure the material analysis around these objects, drawing occasionally on comparisons from other collections. Choosing to focus on the most substantive collection limits the material

[51] http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2005/the-adler-collection-european-sculpture-works-of-art-early-furniture-l05230/lot.205.html; http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=5815337&lid=1. Accessed May 22nd 2018.

source base to a manageable size whilst also capturing a range of objects and answering Schlereth's call for aggregates, addressed above.

Cuir bouilli

The first important feature of these objects to note is the *cuir bouilli* which was used to make them. The material, whilst tangibly and visibly still leather by nature of its follicle-laden surface, underwent a specific manufacturing process which rendered it hard, more brittle and inflexible, without sacrificing its strength – matching at closest the material properties of wood. What sets this hard material apart from other forms of leather is firstly its ability to be moulded and shaped into a range of forms and surface textures, and secondly its ability to be re-shaped and re-used by application of further heat and chemical material. As a material, therefore, *cuir bouilli* encompasses extremes of leather's inherent material properties: the tensile strength of the material – caused by a microscopic network of overlapping collagen fibrils – is consolidated a turned to a more solid form through chemical treatment, and its propensity for surface level embellishment further enriched by the ability of *cuir bouilli* to hold moulded shapes for a sustained period. Despite their hardy exterior, *cuir bouilli* objects retain both the thin and light properties of leather split-skins. This combination of qualities is somewhat unique – which makes its use in a range of object-applications unsurprising. Edward Cheshire, for example, explores the example of *cuir bouilli* armour. The lightness of the material, its strength and ability to hold a moulded shape – here, the shape of a soldier's chest – made *cuir bouilli* an ideal choice for armour.[52]

[52] E. Cheshire, 'Cuir bouilli armour', in S. Harris and A.J. Veldmeijer (eds), *Why Leather? The Material and Cultural Dimension of Leather*, (Leiden, 2014), pp. 41-42.

Cheshire draws on modern archaeologists who suggest that *cuir bouilli* was manufactured by enriching the leather skin with heated materials such as wax or rosin, but ultimately argues that contemporary material is too scant to make any definite conclusions about the manufacture of the material.[53] Other sources and scholars have sought to explain the manufacture of this material, however. The *OED* defines *cuir bouilli* as leather which has been 'boiled or soaked in hot water, and, when soft, moulded or pressed into any required form; on becoming dry and hard it retains the form given to it, and offers considerable resistance to cuts, blows, etc'.[54] Although this provides some detail, other processes of manufacture are possible. The leather can be wetted and pressed into a warm mould and dried until rigid, placed in hot water and dried over a wooden form or wetted, then exposed to a heat source and subsequently dried into the desired shape.[55] Lucy Trench provides the most detailed explanation of the historical manufacture of *cuir bouilli*: the leather is soaked in cold water for up to twelve hours to saturate the fibres, then dried until damp but not exuding water. In this flexible and stretchy state the leather can be crafted into a range of shapes, and so long as it is dried correctly – between thirty-five and fifty degrees Celsius – it takes on a strong and rigid exterior.[56] The full *OED* entry provides evidence of the term's use from as early as 1386, but shows no evidence of use or changing meaning between 1513 and 1880, suggesting some degree of continuity. Waterer's earlier explanation of cuir bouilli manufacture agrees with Trench's description.[57]

Cuir bouilli was not an obviously common term in texts published in the period, but an early modern English context can be provided by using the loose English translation: 'boiled leather'.

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[53] Ibid.
[54] "cuir-bouilli, n.". OED Online. June 2017. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45608?redirectedFrom=cuir+bouilli (accessed July 08, 2017).
[55] B. Pouliot, *Assessing the skin: characterizing the animal source, processing method, and deterioration of museum and library objects,* Winterthur Library TS967 A51a 2007; M. Kite and R. Thomson, *The Conservation of Leather and Related Materials,* (Oxford, 2006), p. 96.
[56] L. Trench, *Materials and Techniques in the Decorative Arts,* (London, 2000), p. 105.
[57] J. Waterer, 'Leathercraft' in H. Osborne (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts,* (Oxford, 1985), p. 542.

The term ‘boiled leather’, which also featured only in a limited number texts, nevertheless provides fragmentary evidence which help to illustrate the connotations of the material, its more wide-ranging functions and the production of leather drinking vessels. In the first, metaphorical uses of ‘boiled leather’ present the material as something particularly tough. On describing the antagonist of a fictional story one text reads ‘though this creature had a human figure, it could not be said to be a man, because its head was of wood, its eyes of emerald, its beard of moss, its hair of wire, its ears of cork, its teeth of boiled leather[…]’, and on describing a patient a medical tract describes his symptoms as ‘he ‘breath[ing] with great difficulty and expectorated a tough, yellow substance, which he compared to boiled leather’.[58] Textual recognition of the tough qualities of *cuir bouilli* was mirrored in the range of other documented functions of the material. At the largest F. Grose and J. Strutt describe moveable towers covered in boiled leather to protect them from fire, and T. Hinderwell the boats of Edward III.[59] A range of smaller objects are also described, however, from armour to daggers and writing materials.[60]

Cuir bouilli was used to make leather drinking vessels and informed the both material and cultural engagement with these objects, therefore. In terms of printed texts, however, the manufacture of *cuir bouilli* as a material was not as widely discussed as the more general tanning processes explored in chapter 1 of this thesis, suggesting that there was less public knowledge of this material available. In fact, there are only three explicit references to the manufacture of this material in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. The first are similar

[58] M. Degbacobub, *Princess Coquedouf and Prince Bonbon,* (London, 1796), p. 20; J. Leake, *A dissertation on the properties and efficacy of the Lisbon diet-drink, and its extract, in the cure of the venereal disease and scurvy,* (London, 1790), p. 141-142.
[59] F. Grose, *The antiquities of England and Wales,* (London, 1773), p. 18; J. Strutt, *A compleat view of the manners, customs, arms, habits, &c. of the inhabitant of England,* (London, 1774), p. 29; T. Hinderwell, *The history and antiquities of Scarborough and the vicinity: with views and plans,* (York, 1798), p. 151.
[60] C. de Warnery, *Remarks on cavalry,* (London, 1798), p. 119; F. Rabelais, *The works of Francis Rabelais,* (London, 1784), p. 145; B. Godfrey, *A Treasure of Useful Discoveries,* (Dublin, 1760), p. 81 and p. 106.

notes in two texts: *A new and complete dictionary of arts and sciences* (1763) and the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* (1797). These both described bottles which were made of boiled leather and manufactured by the case-makers.[61] The *Annals of Agriculture, and other useful arts* (1785), meanwhile, points to 'felt-mongers' as one of the groups of craftspeople manufacturing cuir bouilli, commenting that 'the liquor left by the felt-mongers in which they have boiled the leather […] is very full of oil, and is of a very unctuous nature'.[62] Objects such as the trade card above also suggest that trunk-makers were responsible for the manufacture of *cuir bouilli* objects through the inclusion of a leather bucket and jug – objects also commonly made using this material – in the decorative top border of the card.

Pulling these references together demonstrates that while it is possible to historically situate the applications of *cuir bouilli* through more than the material record, what consumers may have understood of its production and physical qualities are more difficult to identify. The limited sources available suggest that the manufacture of *cuir bouilli* was fragmented across other crafts already working with leather, and for the purposes of a material analysis of objects this is significant as it explains both the historical context of the material and provides one explanation for where there is scope for any discrete variation between individual objects. More importantly, the other recorded applications of *cuir bouilli* can be used to make suggestions about the shared qualities across different objects and, accordingly, which important values of the material were perceived to be most important to the function of leather drinking vessels. As the other recorded objects here, ranging from boats to daggers, would all be required to be strong and hard wearing, this suggests that manufacturers – although this is only a group who can be discussed vaguely – chose *cuir bouilli* to make drinking vessels for the same reason.

[61] The Society of Arts, *A new and complete dictionary of arts and sciences,* (1763); Colin MacFarquhar, *Encyclopedia Britannica,* (1797).
[62] A. Young, *Annals of agriculture, and other useful arts,* (London, 1785), p. 48.

Unlike saddles and leather-upholstered chairs, in the case of leather drinking vessels the dearth of documentary evidence means that a general life-cycle approach is not particularly fruitful. Instead, the section below will analyse these objects through two significant dimensions: their physical form and their surface. As highlighted above, this close reading of the objects draws conclusions about their manufacture, consumption and meaning which would not be possible through a straightforward analysis of documentary source types.

The Physical Form of Drinking Vessels

The qualities of *cuir bouilli* were exploited by contemporary producers to manufacture drinking vessels in a range of types. This section will analyse these objects on the basis of their size, shape and construction: a style of analysis which makes suggestions about the coherence of contemporary object types and suggests scope for regulation in leather-bottle making despite the relative lack of documentary evidence to support this. While Baker classically suggested that 'these bottles were not turned out gross to one mechanical pattern, but each had much character of its own', drawing primarily on material evidence, this section demonstrates that variations between individual objects within a given type should be considered micro-variations, rather than significant differences which equate to individual artistic output.[63]

[63] Baker, *Blackjacks and Leather Bottells,* p. 35.

Figure 6.7: V&A object number W30-1939, a characteristic leather costrel.

Costrels were strikingly consistent objects in their form. The basic form of leather costrels comprised a round bottle with a flattened base and a narrow neck and mouth located at the top, central both to the overall width and depth of the object. Running left to right, along the proper front of the object, there is a raised beam either side of the neck into which straps could be thread for carrying. The neck and mouth of the costrel is capped by a tapered wooden stopper. In all, these objects were constructed from three individual pieces of leather. The first – a far larger piece which forms the main body of the costrel, the neck and the reinforced beam for the handles – is wrapped back on itself to create a deep tube. The second and third pieces of leather used to create this object type are two matching discs. These were inserted into the holes at either end of the deep tube created by the first piece. Once these three pieces had been stitched together – in some cases with additional layers of reinforcing leather in the seams – the object forms a sealed vessel. Despite a different visible form, this object type shared qualities of being strong and lightweight with other contemporary leather drinking vessels.[64]

One of the most notable consistencies across different examples of leather costrels is their dimensions. Costrels exist in a real range of sizes. They are, however, all broadly 'square': there is generally only a very small degree of difference between the height, width and depth of surviving examples of costrels. One held by NLC, for example, is 21cm in height and 19cm in both width and depth.[65] Another is 13cm in height and 12cm in width and depth, and a third 23cm in height and 22cm in width and depth.[66] A further set of three corresponding objects which will be discussed in full below also follow the same pattern: the smallest is 10cm in height, width and depth, the medium-sized object is 17cm in height and 16cm in width and depth and the largest is 19cm in height and 16cm in width and depth. These are just a few examples, but nevertheless a dominant pattern emerges. These measurements show firstly that there was a continuous range of sizes of costrels available to consumers, rather than a fixed scale of gradations, but within this continuous range the dimensions were all broadly similar. Costrels, in short, had a clearly-defined form.

[64] B. Wills and A. Watts, 'Why wineskins? The exploration of a relationship between wine and skin containers', in S. Harris and A.J. Veldmeijer (eds), *Why Leather? The material and cultural dimensions of leather*, (Leiden, 2014), p. 123.
[65] National Leather Collection, object Y206.
[66] National Leather Collection, objects Y203 and DI.1963.

Figure 6.8: V&A, object 429-1895 top view.

These differences in the dimensions of the above examples may be expressed as micro-variations between different objects which corresponded to the same form. Degrees of formal micro-variation between different examples of costrels are also evident through the layering of leather in the individual seams. Some objects, such as a costrel held by the V&A (Figure 6.7), have an additional layer of leather reinforcing the neck of the bottle, but the most dominant variation here is that the seams between individual pattern pieces have reinforced by the addition of additional layers of leather. In the NLC, this ranges from objects with no reinforcement around the seam to objects with up to six layers of leather. There is no rational pattern to the extent of reinforcement in any individual case: it does not correlate to the volume of the costrel, nor is there any apparent relationship between the number of layers comprising the seam and the nature of decoration on the surface of the costrel, or a basic pattern of change over time. An additional form of layering is shown by a significant cut across the proper front of one of the larger costrels held by the NLC. This object shows that under the leather outer there is another solid layer: this object was double-layered (Figure 6.9).[67]

Figure 6.9: NLC, Northampton. Object DI.1963, close-up.

Although Baker suggests that the production of leather bottles in the eighteenth century was limited to small-scale, artisanal production rather than an industry of scale, these examples of bottles would suggest he is incorrect to generalise that bottles possessed great individual character and were not 'turned out' to a repeated pattern. If the artisanal nature of production afforded makers some flexibility, there was nevertheless a standard and expected form of this object which seemed to limit the scope of their individual character – even if this expected form was not as prescriptive as the standardization of glass measures, for example. Beyond

[67] National Leather Collection, object DI.1963.

shedding some light on industrial practices, the example provided by these costrels has value for existing material culture by showing the formal range – and, accordingly, range of production processes – implicit within even relatively narrowly-defined object types: here, leather costrels.

Blackjacks and tankards generally follow one pattern in their construction: in varying degrees of size, strength and extents of embellishment, they comprise a cylindrical vessel, a solid base and a handle for the consumer. Generally, blackjacks are in a better state of survival and illustrate a greater range of variations than costrels. All of these drinking vessels are made of the same *cuir bouilli* as the costrels, forming the basis of the main vessel, the base of the cup and more often than not the handle of the vessel. Similarly to costrels there is variation within this object type beyond the more basic identifiers of decoration and size, as the handles are reinforced and some comprise several layers of leather, stitched together. The bases of some blackjacks are reinforced with wood and, most notably, these objects rely to a far greater extent on an interplay between different materials. While costrels, for example, use simply a *cuir bouilli* base with a wooden stopper and thread stitching, blackjacks and tankards regularly also use metal structurally and decoratively either for the rim, the base or both. Isolated examples further demonstrate that metal was used as a cartouche to embellish the side of the blackjack body and in one example to create a solid body of the blackjack which was fully covered in *cuir bouilli*.[68] Accordingly, by narrowing his focus to leather bottles and paying relatively little attention to blackjacks, Baker lost an opportunity to make the argument for the individualised character of objects within an object study that would far more convincingly support his case for individual artistry. Conversely to the material evidence of costrels, blackjacks display a greater degree of shape and decoration.

[68] National Leather Collection objects E23, E25, E27, MLX.128, 386,54, 574,57 and 1469,67.

Figure 6.10: NLC, Northampton. Object 1469,67.

Briefly examining some blackjacks in the NLC reinforces the formal range in this object type.[69] The object above (Figure 6.10) measures 18cm in height and 8cm in diameter. The body of the vessel is made of a single piece of wrapped leather and the handle at least three or four separate layers. The handle is curved, although the topmost internal angle forms a right angle towards the rim of the blackjack. Examining the inside of the vessel, there are clear lines of stitching either side of the seam that connects the two ends of the single piece of leather that forms the main body of the vessel. The final element of the object is a metal rim, which sits separately on top of the leather body and overlaps with the handle. It is not immediately clear how the metal lip and leather body are attached. The piece of metal on top of the handle is decorated

[69] See also National Leather Collection objects 638,57 and Y199, and Birmingham Museum Collections Centre 87'41.

with an inset rectangle which is shallow cross-hatched. The top of the metal rim flares outwards and is tapered to become incredibly thin to the top, and the metal border which rests on top of the leather body is also decorated. The base of this separate metal rim has a crimped edge and a basic half moon pattern with a small dimple is repeated around the entire perimeter. The inside of the blackjack has a lining which is now dull and powdery, while the outside is covered in a black oil-paint similarly to the previously examined costrels.

Figure 6.11: Four of the larger blackjacks at the National Leather Collection in storage.

The meaning of these descriptions of blackjacks is to demonstrate that within one object type there was a great variation in terms of size and scale – up to and including some of the largest objects held by the NLC (Figure 6.11). Further examples of both types will be examined in the section to follow, and these descriptions underline this finding. Costrels and blackjacks alike are extant in a continuous range of sizes, and this is meaningful in a period in which there were both legal and moral tensions regarding the volume of drink consumers could, or should, consume. Read in conjunction with the representations above, this lack of consistency in volume across different material examples suggests that these objects were used outside of settings in which the quantities of liquid being served were either formally regulated, or subject to informal but significant forms of judgement.[70] To go one further, this lends an important association to the use of leather by consumers – if predominantly male – within drinking material culture, as the lack of regulated volume of leather vessels would facilitate greater freedom of choice, even permitting excess, within the more intimate environments this chapter has suggested these objects were used in. The importance of this finding is to suggest that leather drinking vessels bore meaning as the tools of solitary or more private drinking, because they refused a regulated pattern of the volume of liquid they could contain. For material culture studies more broadly, both costrels and blackjacks demonstrate the importance of using aggregate studies of objects to assess their meaning to consumers, and on a practical level leather was significant to the consumption of these objects by facilitating specific micro-variations.

Personalisation and Surface in Leather Drinking Vessels

A second category of analysis for leather drinking vessels is their surface-level embellishments, and this was a further site in which both the personal significances of these objects were realized and material literacies rehearsed. Here this chapter will argue that these surfaces were significant, because they enabled consumers to personalise and own their goods. The most common object type which shows evidence of personalisation and traces of their owners are leather costrels.

[70] Clark, *The English Alehouse*, pp. 180-186.

Figure 6.12: Three costrels at NLC, Northampton. Object numbers (left to right): 3,46, 54,47 and 58,48.

Firstly, examples of costrels from the NLC illustrate ways in which the ‘permanent’ or ‘fixed’ decoration created by producers coexisted alongside the more impermanent, sporadic and ad hoc personalisation created by the consumers of goods at a fixed point in time – features of these objects today which materialize the life cycle of these goods. A set of three corresponding costrels (Figure 6.12) make a neat set for comparison. These three costrels, while all matching in general form, are in three distinct sizes. The smallest of the set (Figure 6.12, left) has no major distinguishing marks beyond a black outer coating or staining of a shiny oil paint, and this would perhaps set it apart from objects of this type without any covering or embellishment at all – such as one example at Calke Abbey in Derbyshire – but generally there is a paucity of extraordinary defining characteristics here.[71] In the largest costrel of this set (Figure 6.12, right) the form and construction matches the other two costrels, but differently to the smallest of the set this large costrel has a series of small star-shaped punches used decoratively across its body, arranged into a tessellating diamond pattern. Here the use of at least three differently-shaped stamps – a star, an indent and initials – are used in conjunction to create a pattern and to add the initials 'E.S.' to the costrel; stamping of this nature can be observed in a number of examples, including another eighteenth-century object at Lytes Cary Manor in Somerset.[72]

The final costrel in this corresponding set – the medium-sized object of the three – shares the same basic form (Figure 6.12, middle). The construction and material are the same, and this costrel has the same outer surface as the first in the set. Its decorative aspects are twofold, however. In the first, there are what appear to be a series of small punches to the main body of the costrel which match those used on the largest costrel. The punches are inconsistent, shallow, and infrequent. The far more noticeable decoration on the surface of this object has been created by a series of scratched designs, which have been applied to the surface of the object through what would appear to be some kind of sharpened stylus or other form of blade. These inscriptions or 'carvings' encompass an eclectic range of figures. The most prominent lettering is a large 'B.B.' on the front of the costrel, but stylised lettering including 'H', 'W', 'I', 'T' and 'G' are all also visible across the panels (Figure 6.13). There are obvious different hands used to create these letter forms: the 'B.B.' is a far shallower indentation, while the 'W' has been carved far deeper into the surface of the leather through repeated stroke actions.

[71] National Trust, object 288913. See http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/288913. Accessed December 14th 2018.
[72] National Trust object 254641, see http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/254641, accessed December 14th 2018.

Figure 6.13: NLC, Northampton, object number 54,47. Side panel, showing some of the inscriptions.

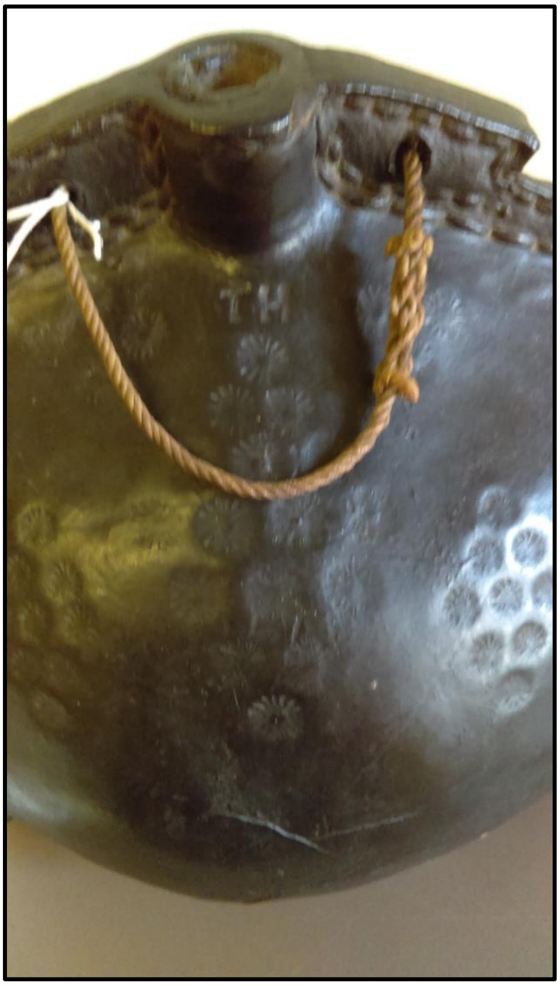

Figure 6.14: NLC, Northampton. Object Y206.

Figure 6.15: NLC, Northampton. Object Y203, side view.

The material practice of inscribing upon the surface of an already initialled object by hand is evident from two further objects in the NLC (Figures 6.14 and 6.15).[73] Similarly to other objects of this type, the costrel is decorated with tessellating diamond patterns formed with star-shaped punches or stamps. Above the diamond patterns, which cover the front and back-facing panels forming the costrel, the initials 'T.H.' have been stamped into the area immediately beneath the neck (Figure 6.14). Although the initials 'T.H.' are clearly contemporary to the costrel's original making, some clearly more modern initials have been inscribed into the side panels of the costrel. These read 'S.L.' and are made with a more

[73] National Leather Collection, objects Y206 and Y203.

modern, more rounded hand. In addition, the newer initials appear to be scalded into the surface of the object, rather than carved or scratched in. Accordingly, the 'S.L.' initials run deeper into the surface of the object. Finally a smaller costrel, approximately 13cm in height and 12cm in depth and width, bears shallower remains of star-shaped punches and initials in the same places. The original initials are harder to read than in other examples of this nature, but the object also shows signs of hand carved newer initials. On each side the panels have been embellished to read 'R.W.' (Figure 6.15), and one of the front-facing panels has a lighter 'T.P.' scratched into its surface. In comparison to the inscribed costrel in Figure 6.13, the objects in Figures 6.14 and 6.15 demonstrate a more ordered manipulation of the object surface. The lack of any stable lettering in the first of these engraved objects presents this object as more of a 'practice piece' than the others, which appear as though they have simply changed hands from the original owner.

The stamping of initials on the neck of the costrels was a permanent mark imprinted at the time of making, and therefore specify the first owner of the object. Subsequent owners were more likely indicated by the carving of their own initials into the sides of the objects. In the former, it is the skill of the producer which materializes the ownership of these goods, while in the latter it was subsequent owners who exercised their material literacy to demonstrate possession. It is unlikely that these stamped marks were made after the leather used to make the bottles had been set as *cuir bouilli*. Andreas Schulze has identified the contemporary means of rendering such 'punchmarks' on the surface of leather as a patterned stamp with a broad handle. This, when hammered onto the surface of the material, left a patterned indent.[74] It seems unlikely that the pattern could be stamped on to the costrel after it had been treated to create *cuir bouilli*

[74] A. Schulze, 'The manufacturing techniques of gilt leather in Europe between 1500 and 1800: written art technological sources and experimental reconstructions', paper given at *Improved conservation strategies for gilt leather – Expert Meeting of the NICAS Gilt Leather Team*, Maastricht, March 2016.

without damaging the structural integrity of the vessel. It is therefore more likely that that stamps were applied either before the patterns were sewn together, or after they were and assembled but before they were treated.

These two practices of decoration therefore represent two very different forms of intervention to the surfaces of these objects. In the former, the stamped initials – alongside other stamps, layers of reinforcement and stitching – are palpable evidence of production processes observable in the object. These objects may hold meaning for consumers through the nature and treatment of their materials, but that meaning was created by another individual. Handmade marks in the surface of the object, however, demonstrate meaning being created through consumption, by the consumer, and in such a way that exposed some of the physical and material properties of *cuir bouilli*: the frayed, fibrous nature of the internal structure of a hide, beneath a glossy surface. As a point of analysis, these decorations physically mark different points in the biographies of these goods, but moreover – and akin to Sara Pennell's analysis of personalised pastry cutters – these marks lend depth to objects which were small and less frequently described.[75] While Pennell finds in pastry cutters an acknowledgement of possession, a register of skill and reflection of domestic responsibilities, and Tara Hamling finds in similarly engraved wooden bowls a more superstitious desire on the part of consumers to prevent themselves from harm, the personalization observable here appears to be less multifaceted but no less significant.[76] In the context of more private forms of drinking behaviour, these marks do represent possession. However, because they are combined with maker-made stamps, they also demonstrate, first, that consumers were aware of the mobility of these goods, and second – as a result – that they had taken ownership of the object from a

[75] S. Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should small things still be forgotten? Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale', in K. Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture,* (2nd edition, Oxford, 2018), p. 235.
[76] Ibid. pp. 230-235; T. Hamling, 'Visual and material sources', in L. Sangha and J. Willis (eds), *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources,* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 129-131.

previous owner and were expressing so materially. This suggests that there was a degree of investment by consumers in these objects.

Figure 6.16: Object 9,26. Birmingham Museum Collections.

Additional examples of handcarving into the surfaces of these objects was also present to commemorate years – though none in these collections show this practice alongside examples of personalisation. The object above (Figure 6.16) is held by the Birmingham Museums Trust, and is one that conforms to the basic principles of costrels. The most notable feature is the year '1770' painted across the proper front in yellow paint. As has been clear in the discussion of the source base, surviving paint on these objects is not common, and it is unclear whether this paintwork on the surface of the object is contemporary to 1770. What is more convincing is the '1770' in contemporary number forms scratched into the surface of the proper right side of the object. Even if the paint was a later addition, therefore, the scratched figures present a more convincing case that this object is of eighteenth-century origin. The same can be said for two costrels sold by auction at Sothebys in 2005: each was engraved with '1728'.[77] Lastly, commemoration of a year is evident in one further example from the NLC.[78] Both sides of the body of the bottle have been heavily decorated with a pointed tool to create patterns made of rows of individual dots, and to mark one side with '1744'.

These stamped and dated objects can be understood in two ways. First, and more straightforwardly, to suggest a long-term relevance of these traditional forms of drinking vessel into a period characterised primarily by change. While Baker's comprehensive study dates these objects to the sixteenth century, and a number of examples contemporary to the seventeenth century are extant in museum collections, this later example suggests not only a continued presence of this object type, but also a form of construction which was limited in its innovations amidst significant changes in consumption.[79] Second, these objects demonstrate that a further way in which consumers made meaning from their leather goods was to use them as commemorative of certain years. While it is unclear why these years were being commemorated – whether they were the years in which these objects were acquired, or markers of important life events – what this simple act does suggest is that the surfaces of bottles were being used to reflect something personal on the part of the consumer.

[77] http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2005/the-adler-collection-european-sculpture-works-of-art-early-furniture-l05230/lot.207.html. Accessed May 22nd 2018.
[78] National Leather Collection, object 174,51.
[79] Baker, *Black Jacks and Leather Bottells.*

One supplementary object type which historians may turn to in order to contextualize these commemorated leather drinking vessels is buckets. Set in contrast to classical eighteenth-century object histories, these fundamentally rudimentary goods are eminently practical, mundane, and equally as absent from the representational record.[80] Nevertheless, surviving artefactual evidence of these hardy *cuir bouilli* objects in present-day collections demonstrates that these were goods invested with more than functional associations. Take, for example, a set of 12 fire buckets held by Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk.[81] These buckets have been broadly dated to the eighteenth century by their curators, and comparisons between the decoration applied to these buckets and other contemporary dated *cuir bouilli* objects, as well as the comparison between these buckets and dated buckets held by other collections, would suggest that this is a fair assessment. These objects, which are broadly matching, comprise a *cuir bouilli* body and base, with rope used both to reinforce the upper rim of the body of the bucket and act as a handle for the user. In a manner which dovetails with examples of embellishment on some contemporary drinking vessels, the surfaces of these buckets have been painted with the white initials 'R.A.K.'. However, there is a clear distinction between these two bodies of evidence as these objects documents consistent decoration across an entire set, rather than isolated examples. This suggests that the practice of personalizing leather goods could relate to institutional or group identities as well as those of individuals, in turn reinforcing that marks of possession also had practical significance.

While there are several physical similarities between buckets and drinking vessels, historians should also address how cultural associations held of these object types were shared and were different. *A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel,* for example, highlights the properties of

[80] F. Trentmann, 'Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices, and Politics', *Journal of British Studies* 48.2 (April, 2009) p. 287.
[81] National Trust object number 1400354.

leather drinking vessels that would be equally valid statements of these functional buckets: their physical strength, durability, and ease of repair. These qualities were at once physical descriptors of *cuir bouilli* and its cultural markers, reinforced through representational sources such as Wade's ballad. Both the apparent longevity of these goods and the nature of their personalisation would suggest that these were also objects owned over a longer time period, and with which workmen would frequently engage. Their lack of apparent material value would also suggest that they share the strength of being unlikely to be stolen. Finally, their physical properties and form also suggest that these goods were mobile. Taken together, the examples of buckets and drinking vessels highlight how *cuir bouilli* found a clear connotation as a material that could transport and be transported. This capacity for mobility can be understood to lend itself to enhancing the personal connection between consumer and object, while the form and purpose of leather drinking vessels as an object type engendered particular intimacy as evidenced by the marks that consumers made by hand.

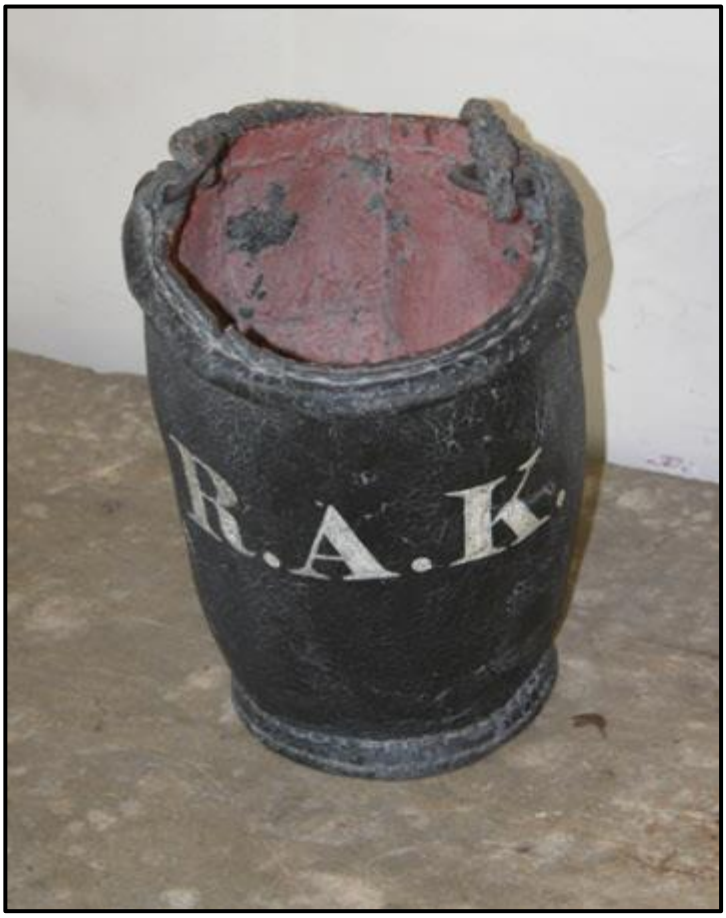

Figure 6.17: National Trust object number 1400354. One example of an eighteenth-century fire bucket, viewed from the proper front. Image © National Trust / Sue James.

Figure 6.18: Costrel, V&A object number 429-1895.

Figure 6.19: Costrel, V&A object number 429-1895. Close up of surface of main body.

Figure 6.20: NLC, Northampton. Object MLX.128, base.

Within the object type of blackjacks, forms of intervention on the object's surface were typically located on the metal bases or lips which framed the leather bodies. One blackjack located at the NLC has a leather body with a metal decorative handle and both a metal-rimmed lip and base. A simple metal cartouche is affixed to the middle of the body of the blackjack, immediately opposite the handle. The engraving here is not immediately obvious, however the underside of the metal base rim has been marked with a series of pointed impressions to read 'HRG to KYB FRIENDE' (Figure 6.20). There are some other similar marks to the underside of the rim, some decorative, and others indeterminable letter-forms. Although neither the giver nor receiver of this object, which can sensibly be identified as a gift from the inscription on its underside, made an engraving on the leather body of the tankard this object nevertheless communicates something of the purpose of inscriptions on marked objects. Here the inscription does literally convey a message and demarcate ownership, but the material form it takes is also meaningful. The message is hidden in a place not immediately visible, or indeed knowable, to consumers other than the direct owner of the object. By stark contrast the engraving and embellishment on the surfaces of the costrels are very obvious to see.

A blackjack housed at Winterthur, (Figure 6.21) which is dated to c.1740-1780 and its place of manufacture identified as Bristol, further complicates this sliding scale.[82] The blackjack is 20cm in height and 11.5cm in width, and its depth is 15cm, which includes a shallow point in the lip to enable fluid to be poured opposite a C-shaped handle.[83] The silvered-metal lip has a cut and engraved leaf-tip border. On the object's proper left side the metal lip is engraved with the initials 'C.W.' and 'S', and on the other 'Ex Dono Amici'; translating to 'Gift of a Friend'.[84] The Bristol blackjack at Winterthur, therefore, is similar to KYB's in the manner of consumption, but rather than containing its intimate meaning to a more secretive location the gifted nature of the Bristol blackjack is more public.

These details across both costrels and blackjacks illuminate the social life of drinking vessels in a way not readily observable in representations, therefore. The handmade inscriptions upon the surface of the costrels share a category of material literacy with the inscription on the underside of KYB's tankard, while the stamped initials embedded into the surfaces of the costrels are comparable to the engraving around the rim of the Bristol blackjack. These marks make statements about the social position of two different but related object types, and these objects suggest a continuum of public and private functions. The costrels use their stamping and engraving to communicate their ownership, but their material form – as suggested by the frontispiece above – was more consistent with solitary and inward-looking imbibing.

[82] Winterthur Object Report, 1992.0011, accessed April 25th 2017.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

Meanwhile, KYB's blackjack uses its private inscription to suggest an intimate and personal meaning contained within the object.

Figure 6.21: Winterthur Museum, object 1992.0011. Image © The Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum.

There are two common and distinct forms of embellishment to the surfaces of objects, therefore: on the one hand the more mechanical stamping both of initials to the neck of the vessel and star-shaped punches to the body of costrels, and on the other the sometimes numerous hand-scratching or hand-carving of letters and initials and dates in a range of positions across both object's surfaces. In tankards both at a more rudimentary and more sophisticated level, engraving to the metal rims could vary between hidden forms of engraving and visible forms, suggesting a range of personal significances which these objects could hold. Carving and stamping are materially different forms and practices, which have an impact both on the nature of personalisation and ownership these embellishments reflect. In the former, the punches and stamps inscribing initials on the necks of costrels make permanent statements of ownership – demarcating the bottle as the personal property of one individual, and suggesting that the objects in question were manufactured for the individual in question. Where costrels with stamped initials have been hard-carved or scratched with a different set of initials this suggests that the object had changed hands between different consumers. These re-marked bottles paint a picture of itinerant objects in a state of changing ownership, and the hand-marks disrupt the story of continuous ownership suggested by the more permanent, stamped initials in the neck of the costrel.

Conclusions

This chapter started by imposing a structure of object types on an aggregate body of material sources. Subsequently, it analysed the relatively low proportions of representation and accounted for the absences created by these sources with close material analysis of a comparably rich proportion of surviving material evidence. In particular, two object types – leather costrels and blackjacks – were assessed in terms of their physical forms and their surface-level decorations. Finding coherence within the typological classifications established throughout the material analysis, this chapter supports Schlereth's assertion that aggregate surveys of objects reveal greater varieties and depths of manufacturing and consuming practices.[85] It further demonstrates methodologically how different object types can be studied both as case studies as well as within categories of goods when connected by function and production.

Within the category of representational sources, this chapter has argued against the historiographical association between the material of drinking vessels and the social prestige

[85] Schlereth, 'Material Culture or Material Life?', p. 240.

conferred upon their consumers. Leather drinking vessels were not the ceramics of the poor, but had a particular role to play in the consumption of specific beverages – a range of qualities of beer – within environs that were more often represented as associated with masculinity. Examining the physical forms of costrels suggests that, to some extent, the manufacture of these objects conformed to normalized object forms. The form of costrels – which are so regular in their construction and dimensions – sits in contrast to the range presented by blackjacks. This was a broader category of goods, and one which enabled a wider range of dimensions and shapes. The practices of making these drinking vessels – as emblematic *cuir bouilli* goods – were likely shared with firebuckets.

Within the section considering decoration, the chapter closely focused on the ways in which two different forms of surface embellishment – stamping and carving – reflected patterns of ownership. Turning to the supplementary object type of buckets, the contemporary repertoire for personalising objects was also shown to include painting. Throughout this material assessment, this chapter has aimed to methodologically work through the challenges levelled at material culture studies by the fragmentary nature of sources – both in documentary and representational forms – and use object studies in their richest sense to address this deficiency. If the absence of sources poses a problem for historians, it also indicates the means through which early modern consumers learned their goods; practically, not representationally. Leather drinking vessels therefore demonstrate how objects were learned through consumption and material knowledge acquired. The more explicit identifying function of marks made on the surface of drinking vessels differentiated these objects from other leather goods, and the use of handmarking suggests that these smaller, more mobile goods were particularly personal, and that the behaviour of drinking established a significant relationship between actor and object.

The findings above suggest some overall conclusions. First, the surfaces of these objects were clearly a significant part of their consumption; this is demonstrated as much by the supplementary object type of buckets as by the main object study of drinking vessels. The choice by consumers to personalise and mark their objects suggest that they carried more than functional significance. It was clearly important that these items were owned. The ability of consumers to personalize these objects was indicative of dexterity and tool-ability, but also suggests contemporary knowledge of what specific materials – here *cuir bouilli* – could tolerate: material literacy. Personalizing one of these vessels was a skilful act. Finally, within the broader chronological context of the consumption, these objects are a valuable example of continuity. They do not exhibit the same change over time in terms of style or design as do chairs and saddles. Leather drinking vessels therefore show that eighteenth-century consumers interacted with fundamentally traditional object types while relying on contemporary understandings of the materials used to produce them.

Conclusion - Materials and Meaning

This thesis recognises that materials were big, objects were small, and that consumption was the site in which these two extremes of scale overlapped. While materials were the physical components which were used to make objects, this thesis seeks that more than physical significance is attached by historians to materials in the context of object consumption: materials were also cultural mediators for the relationship that existed between person and thing. The central argument of this thesis, therefore, is that individual objects were subject to a reciprocal relationship between materials and object types, and that the convergence of these two constitutive elements were essential in how objects were experienced by consumers. For materials, meaning was born of an itinerary that began with production and was marked by sale, use and divestment, while for object types meaning was generated chiefly through consuming acts. Through the part they played in material itineraries, consumers were able to understand the properties of materials and relate these properties to their use of objects. Furthermore, even if leather played a shared function across different object types, this congruence accommodated diversity and particularity of meaning. The language used to describe materials was one thread that tied seemingly discrete episodes of the social life of things together.

The first wider argument for material culture studies presented here is that historians need to consider materials and objects together. This has important implications for the scope of future material or object studies, as if materials so clearly shaped the consumption opportunities offered to consumers, then future object studies need to be defined with greater specificity. Making the case for studying these two aspects of materiality together also has practical or technical significance. Throughout this thesis, object studies have relied to some extent on traditional practices: closely reading and describing objects, using curatorial languages and modes of investigation, relying on museum collection catalogues and their associated apparatus of presentation, and linking these findings back to both the broader material landscape and conservation work performed on materials. While representations and discourses are nevertheless central to this thesis, there is presented here a clear case for restoring curatorial, antiquarian analysis to a respected methodology.

The second overarching conclusion of this thesis is that studying materials and objects together reflects the consumer experience in the eighteenth century. Materials were capable of enfolding numerous layers of meaning. It was through the comparably quotidian experience of individual objects that consumers were able to access specific meanings of materials, which sat in contrast to their abstract and general properties when conceptualised as cultural ideas and economic commodities. Objects brought materials within the experiences of consumers, and the meanings of materials that consumers were able to access differed depending on the object type in question. What follows is a discussion of the significance of the findings of this thesis, both for the more specific history of leather and, more significantly, broader methodological approaches to the relationship between people and objects.

Findings and Implications: Leather

At their core, each of these chapters relies on objects. Chapter 3 studies leather objects from the perspectives of production and sale, using as corroborating material evidence contemporary examples of bookbindings, trunks, and pocket wallets. Chapter 4 is an object study of saddles, drawing on the supplementary object types of breeches, boots, carriages, and sedan chairs, and it concentrates on this object as representative of a narrow category of what might be described as ‘skin-like’ goods. Chapter 5 addresses the most common leather object type found in the sample of probate inventories: leather-upholstered chairs. It also draws on other items of leather-upholstered furniture – tables and desks – as supplementary object types. Chapter 6 is an object study of leather drinking vessels, drawing on buckets as additional material evidence. The drinking vessels examined in this chapter are all made from *cuir bouilli*, and the types given primary focus are costrels and blackjacks, drawn from a family of goods which also included tankards, jugs, bottles, and novelty flasks.

Across all of these chapters, this thesis underscores that leather was consumed by people of different ranks. Newspaper advertisements demonstrated that leather goods were both available to and used by a range of consumers, and from the perspective of retail had a range of different corresponding price-points. This was also reflected in the language used to describe particular objects: from more expensive saddles presented as skins, to less expensive saddles presented as hides. The primary objects considered in chapters 4 and 5 were representative of a more elite material culture, resulting largely from the – distorting – availability within contemporary museum collections.[1] However, examples of leather drinking vessels demonstrate the use of leather within a less predominantly elite material culture, even if specific examples show that there was still range within this object type. The same can be said of supplementary object types addressed across this thesis, such as postillion boots and buckets, which demonstrate social range in the consumer audience for leather goods. Probate inventories provide a useful balance to the more elite leather-upholstered chairs by demonstrating that there was considerable variety both in the monetary value that was ascribed to these objects by appraisers, as well as a significant range of occupational identities found in the collective consumer base. While none of these object studies claim to address a totally-inclusive social range, therefore,

[1] S. Pennell, 'Mundane materiality, or, should the small things still be forgotten? Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale', in K. Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture*, (2nd edition, Oxford, 2018), p. 225.

a methodological approach which incorporates multiple source types demonstrates that ownership and consumption of these leather goods was socially broader than would be suggested by particular museum collections alone.

Furthermore, while some historians have previously characterized leather as a more masculine material, attention to multiple source types across different object studies in this thesis paints a more varied picture.[2] For saddles, although the existing historiography suggests that the predominant consumers were male, and both available objects and instructive riding texts explored appear to have pertained more to male consumers, there was a role for female characters to ride on horseback in literary texts, and saddles which were specifically marketed to women through newspaper advertisements.[3] This example suggests that it was not the material which played to ideas of a distinctively masculine or feminine material culture, but rather the object type in question. Here, female consumers were encouraged to purchase leather objects, but either through the medium of a side saddle, or specifically 'ladies' saddle'. This pattern continues into the discussion of leather-upholstered chairs.[4] In this object study there were a greater number of probate inventories which attributed ownership of these objects to men, and, indeed, by some margin. However, 18% of these inventories appraised the objects of – predominantly widowed – women, demonstrating that leather chairs were retained after the death of a husband and were part of the fabric of living spaces inhabited by women. Probate inventories attributed to men also placed leather chairs in spaces of food preparation and consumption, and in so doing suggest that these objects were used by women in homes – even if as part of shared activities of dining.

[2] M. McCormack, 'Boots, material culture and Georgian masculinities', *Social History* 42.4 (2017); J. Stobart and M. Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House,* (Oxford, 2016), p. 109 and p. 116.
[3] *Public Advertiser,* 16 May 1755, Issue 6501; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser,* 12 May 1759, Issue 5485.
[4] For a comparison see M. Hellman, 'Interior Motives: Seduction by Decoration in Eighteenth-Century France', in H. Koda, A. Bolton and M. Hellman, *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century,* (New York, 2006).

These object studies therefore collectively demonstrate that leather resisted easy characterization, and as a material category enabled both rank and gender to be performed through a range of object types; it is problematic to tether leather as a material exclusively to either elite or plebeian, feminine or masculine forms of consumption. This reinforces the overall argument made of this thesis, that the meaning and associations of leather depended upon the object type in question. None of these identities were uniquely performed by leather in all circumstances. Instead, leather was one canvas upon which social rank could be performed as easily by those at the lowest levels as well as those at the highest, and upon which gendered identities could be communicated through the choice of object types. Building towards the methodological findings of this thesis, this maps directly onto existing work which use consumed objects as indicative of such identities. In demonstrating that this material did not align particularly with gendered or rank-based identities, this thesis also suggests that general statements about the consumers of goods need to be grounded within the precise contexts of consumption, rather than broad material categories.

Findings and Implications: The Culture of Materials

More significantly, this thesis makes methodological arguments about the relationship between materials and object types. First, these object studies have found that while leather was utilized for some of its inherent functionalities across different object types, the precise meaning for consumers varied depending on the object type in question: leather meant different things in different contexts. Secondly, situating objects within the contexts of their constituent materials, production, sale, and consumption has demonstrated that the meaning of a material was created across its full life-cycle. Taken together, these arguments suggest that there was a reinforcing loop between object types and leather, in which leather provided a set of connotations from which objects at least partially derived their meaning. Through contexts of consumption, such as riding, object types in turn developed their own significance which became reflected in the expectations of the material used to create them. Materials, it has been argued, did not exist only in material form, but existed in cultural ways too and should be considered to possess their own material culture.

This thesis builds upon existing single material studies by scrutinizing the relationship between materials and object types more closely, through what has been here expressed as a reinforcing loop. Because materials were important within the context of consumption, and because the meaning of materials was contingent on context, it is important for future single material studies to situate themselves within the context of object types. This is not to suggest that materials cannot be studied in their own right, but to argue that studying materials through object studies demonstrates the range of practices through which the meanings connected to materials were created. This thesis therefore challenges scholars such as Tim Ingold who argue that studying the materials of materiality should go beyond studying objects which were made from them – in fact this thesis goes so far as to argue it is necessary to do just that in order to realise the variety of meanings contained in individual objects, and the range of practices consumers participated in to access the same. By incorporating both the discourse and representation of such practices, this thesis also demonstrates that materiality was also distinctly cultural.

This relationship between materials and object types suggests that object types played an important role in enabling consumers to make sense of materials. As, for the most part, consumers physically interacted with a material through the auspices of objects, object types were the conduit through which consumers understood the meaning contained within materials which they might have only known in the abstract: as descriptors for objects they might one day purchase, as novel imports, as the output of industry. Material or commodity histories often work at higher levels of scale. Individual object types, by comparison, have typically been explored within more localised and intimate settings of consumption. Appreciating the reinforcing loop between object types and materials illustrates some of the ways in which consumers actively consumed materials, rather than existing as passive participants in more aggregate patterns of consumption. As a result, this thesis also contributes to studies of the consumption of objects by demonstrating that there needs to be real specificity when thinking about both the object types and materials consumed by contemporaries. Leather drinking vessels, for instance, are valuable in demonstrating continuities in eighteenth-century consumption practice that resist the idea of change. This continuity would, to some extent, be concealed by considering 'drinking vessels' more broadly, rather than 'leather drinking vessels' specifically.

This thesis also provokes methodological interventions regarding how 'material culture' as a historiographical category is constructed, providing a model which moves away from the traditional methods of Prown and his contemporaries.[5] Material culture is more multifaceted than comprising 'things' alone. As such, a method that relies on an examination of artefacts following a pre-defined process ignores specific ways in which meaning was created for consumers. Instead, this thesis has dealt with four interlocking factors which can be analysed: objects, object types, materials and culture. Culture, which has been explored in this thesis through a range of representational sources, surrounded objects, defined contexts and governed the conditions in which meaning could be derived from objects by consumers. This culture

[5] T. Schlereth, 'Material Culture or Material Life? Discipline or Field? Theory or Method?' in G.L. Pocius (ed.), *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture,* (St. John's, Newfoundland, 1991), p. 231; J. David Prown, 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio* 17.1 (Spring, 1982), p. 1.

pertained both to materials and object types, where the former was the physical component(s) which made an object, and the latter a form defined essentially by a desired function or need. The specific, artefactual objects that today reside in museum collections, therefore, sat in the middle of this equation, as constructed by a combination of materials and object types, and existing within a given culture. It is within objects, defined in this way, that biographies can be chiefly identified, while life-cycles pertained both to objects and materials.

Assessing these factors relies on a careful consideration of artefactual evidence as well as representational sources, using the analytical tools of early decorative arts scholars in ornament, materials, design, and description. As a category of analysis, and one really only utilized minimally by current historiography, a material focus can be at once specific as well as broad. Materials were economic, social and cultural entities, but also public and private, domestic and exotic, fashionable and functional, traded and retained. By focusing on materials historians are better placed to physically contextualize the material and sensory experience of goods in a range of historical settings – the suppleness of saddles, the polish of chair upholstery, the tough *cuir bouilli* in contrast to the coolness of metal. Such qualities may escape the documentary record, but by directly examining material evidence – coupled with a historical understanding of an object's contemporary cultural contexts – the materials which were used in different object types are shown to be active aspects of past material culture.

Appendix 1 - Selection criteria for Newspaper Advertisements used in Chapter 3

This table outlines newspaper titles available in the Burney Collection featuring 'advertiser' as part of their publication title. Green highlights indicate publications cited in Chapter 3.

Publication title, corresponding to the *Burney Collection Newspapers* (*BCN*)	Print run	Extant in *BCN* (number of issues)	Median year
Albion and Evening Advertiser	26/5/1800-27/12/1800	172	1800
Aurora and Universal Advertiser	12/2/1781-3/3/1781	15	1781
British Mercury and Evening Advertiser	16/11/1780-16/12/1780	27	1780
Champion or Evening Advertiser	27/5/1741-31/8/1742	125	1742
Daily Advertiser	3/2/1731-31/12/1796	3872	1763
Evening Advertiser	26/5/1800-27/12/1800	172	1800
Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser	9/4/1754-26/4/1764	1003	1759
Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser	27/4/1764-2/7/1796	6525	1780
General Advertiser (1744)	12/3/1744-30/11/1752	2648	1748
General Advertiser (1784)	24/11/1784-7/3/1789	235	1787
General Advertiser (1790)	16/8/1790	1	1790
General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer	24/5/1777-6/5/1782	582	1779
London Advertiser and Literary Gazette	4/3/1751-17/4/1751	39	1751
London Daily Advertiser	9/4/1754-26/4/1764	1003	1759
London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette	18/4/1751-23/11/1751	189	1751
London Daily Post and General Advertiser	4/11/1734-10/3/1744	2138	1739
London Morning Advertiser	4/9/1741-4/5/1743	150	1742
Morning Advertiser	24/5/1777-6/5/1782	582	1779

New Morning Post or General Advertiser	12/11/1776-14/12/1776	28	1776
Original Star and Grand Weekly Advertiser	7/5/1788	1	1788
Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer	7/5/1782-11/11/1784	422	1783
Patriot and General Advertiser	3/6/1789-21/10/1789	2	1789
Penny London Morning Advertiser	6/1/1744-10/8/1744	91	1744
Penny London Post or the Morning Advertiser	3/5/1751-14/10/1751	71	1751
Public Advertiser	1/12/1752-24/12/1793	12632	1773
Public Advertiser or Political and Literary Diary	1/12/1752-24/12/1793	12632	1773
Review and Sunday Advertiser	14/8/1791-22/3/1795	3	1793
Star and Evening Advertiser (1788)	3/5/1788-31/12/1800	3198	1794
Stuart's Star and Evening Advertiser	23/2/1789-25/4/1789	54	1789
Universal London Morning Advertiser	23/5/1743-4/1/1744	24	1743
Newcastle Journal or General Advertiser	10/2/1776	1	1776
Chester Chronicle and General Advertiser	1/10/1779-19/5/1784	14	1782
Liverpool General Advertiser	18/4/1777-13/8/1779	8	1778
Manchester Gazette and Weekly Advertiser	16/4/1796	1	1796
Manchester Mercury and Harrop's General Advertiser	16/11/1779	1	1779
Schofield's Middlewich Journal or Cheshire Advertiser	5/10/1756-17/5/1757	32	1757
Sussex Weekly Advertiser or Lewes Journal	3/7/1797-17/7/1797	2	1797
Bristol Oracle and Country Advertiser	8/9/1744	1	1744
Salisbury and Winchester Journal and General Advertiser	14/11/1796	1	1796
Salisbury Journal or Weekly Advertiser	14/11/1796	1	1796

Appendix 2 - Text transcription of A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel

Full citation: J. Wade, *A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel*, (1678), Magdalene College, Oxford, Pepys Library, Ballads 4.237 (*English Broadside Ballad Archive* 21897, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/21897/xml. Accessed September 13th 2018)

A [Pleas]ant New Song, in Praise of a [L]eather Bottel.

Showing how Glasses and Pots are laid aside,

And Flaggons and Noginss they cannot abide,

And let all-Wives do what they can,

'Tis for the Praise and use of Man:

And this you may very well be sure.

The Leather-bottel will longest endure.

And I wish in Heaven his Soul may awell,

That first devised the Leather-Bottel.

To the Tune of, The Bottle-makers Delight.

God above that made all things,

the Heaven, thy Earth and all therein,

The Ships that on the Sea do Swim,

to keep Enemies out that none comes in:

And let them do all what they can

'tis for the use and praise of man;

And I wish in heaven his Soul may dwell,

That first devised the Leather-Bottle.

Then what do you say to these Cans of Wood
in faith they err and cannot be good,
For when a man he doth them send
to be filled with Ale, as he doth intend,
The Bearer falleth by the way,
and on the ground the Liquor doth lay,
And then the bearer begins to ban,
and swers it is long of the Wooden Can: Then I wish, etc.

But had it been in the Leather Bottel,
although he had fallen, yet all had been well:
And I wish, etc.

Then what do you say to these Glasses fine,
yes, they shall have no praise of mine,
For when a Company they are set,
for to be merry as we are met:
Then if you chance to touch the Brim,
down falls the Liquor and all therein:
If your Table cloath be never so fine,
there lies your Beer, Ale or Wine.
It may be for a small abuse,
a Young-man may his Service lose?
But had it been in the Leather Bottle

and the stopple had been in, then all had been well,

The second part, to the same tune.

Then what do you say to these black pots three?
true they shall have no praise of me,
For when a man and his wife falls at strife,
as many hath done in faith in their life;
They lay their hands on the Pot both,
and loath they are to lose their Broth,
The one tugs, the other hill,
betwixt them both the Liquor doth spill:
But they shall answer another day,
for casting their Liquor so vainly away,
But had it been in the Leather Bottle,
the one might have tug'd the other held,
And they might have tug'd till their heart did ake,
and yet this Liquor no harm would take.
Then I wish, etc.

Then what do you say to the silver Flaggons fine?
true, they shall have no praise of mine?
For when a Lord he doth them Send,
to be filled with Wine, as he doth intend:
The man with the Flagon doth run away,

because it is silver most gallant and gay,
O then the Lord begins to ban,
and swears he hath lost both Flaggon and man,
There's never a Lords Serving-man or Groom,
but with his Leather Bottle may come:
Then I wish, etc.

A Leather Bottle is good,
far better then Glasses or Cans of Wood;
For when a man is at work in the Field,
poor Glasses and Pots to comfort will yield:
Then a good Leather Bottle standing him by,
he may drink always when he is a dry,
It will revive the spirits, and comfort the brain,
wherefore let none this Bottle refrain:
For I wish, etc.

Also the honest Sith-man too,
he knew not very well what to do,
But for his Bottle standing then neer,
that is filled with [Good and Cold] Beer;
At dinner he sits him down to eat,
with good Cheese, and Bread and Meat,
Then his Bottle he shakes [it] amain,
and drinks, and sets it down again;

Saying, good Bottle stand my friend,
and hold it out till this day doth end:
For I wish, etc.

Likewise the merry Hay-makers they,
when as they are turning their Hay,
In Summer weather, when it is warm,
a good Bottle full then will do them no harm
And at Noon-tide they sit them down,
to drink in their Bottles of Ale Nut-brown;
Then the Lads and the Lasses begins to tattle,
what should we do but for this Bottle,
They could not work if this Bottle were done,
for the day is so hot with the heat of the Sun:
Then I wish, etc.

Also the Loader, Lader, and the Pitcher.
the Reaper, Hedger and the Ditcher:
The Binder, and Raker and all
about the Bottles ears do fall,
And if his Liquor be almost gone,
his Bottle he will part to none.
But saying my Bottle is but small,
one drop I will not part withal,
You must go drink at some Spring or Well,

for I will keep my Leather-Bottel:

Then I wish, etc.

Thus you may hear a Leather Bottle,

when as it is filled with liquor full well

Though the substance of it be small,

yet the Name of a thing is all:

There's never a Lord, Earl or Knight,

but in a Bottle doth take delight,

For when he is Hunting of the Deer,

he often doth wish for a Bottle of Beer,

Likewise the man that works at the Wood,

a Bottle of Beer doth oft do him good:

Then I wish, etc.

Then when his Bottle it doth grow old

and will good liquor no longer hold,

Out of the side you may take a Clout,

will mend your Shooes, when they are out,

Else take it and hang it upon a Pin,

it will serve to put many odd trifles in:

As Linges, Aules, and Candle, ends,

for young [?]ers must have such things.

Then I wish his Soul in heaven may dwell,

That first devis'd the Leather Bottle.

Bibliography

Primary material:

Objects, ordered by repository

Description	Date of production	Collection	Collection catalogue number
Cuir bouilli costrel with painted decoration	1770	Birmingham Museum Trust Museum Collection Centre	9,26
Set of six Russia leather-upholstered chairs	c.1680	Geffrye Museum of the Home	265/2011.1-6
Threshing flail	Eighteenth century	Museum of English Rural Life	68/596
Leather case for sheep shears	1785	Museum of English Rural Life	65/104
Pair of children's leather shoes	Eighteenth century	Museum of English Rural Life	52/345/1
Large baby house	c.1760	Museum of London	37.13/1
Miniature leather chairs; baby house furnishing	c.1740-1800	Museum of London	37.13/16, 37.13/17, 37.13/83, 37.13/84, 37.13/85, 37.13/86
Embroidered pocket wallet	1687	National Leather Collection	1319.65
Embroidered pocket wallet	1702	National Leather Collection	1311.65
Quilted leather Somerset saddle	c.1800	National Leather Collection	398,55

Quilted doe and pig skin side saddle, bequest of Major W.P. Wilton	c.1860	National Leather Collection	832,59
Quilted pig skin side saddle, bequest of Major W.P. Wilton	c.1840	National Leather Collection	834,59
Quilted pig skin side saddle	c.1850	National Leather Collection	1942,75
Notepaper with written verse found inside a leather bottle (10137,2014)	Unknown	National Leather Collection	10150,2014
Cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	Y206
Cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	Y203
Cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	DI.1963
Cuir bouilli blackjack	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	638,57
Cuir bouilli blackjack	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	Y199
Metal-rimmed cuir bouilli tankard	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	1469,67
Metal-rimmed cuir bouilli tankard	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	117,49
Collection of larger cuir bouilli drinking vessels	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	1472,67. 1-46, E2, 1473,67. Y198
Small cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	3,46

Cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	54,47
Large cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	58,48
Cuir bouilli bottle with carrying strap	1744	National Leather Collection	174,51
Cuir bouilli tankard with metal rim, base and cartouche	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Leather Collection	MLX.128
Map drawn on vellum	1725	National Trust – Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire	NT 652631
Leather-fronted medicine case	Eighteenth century	National Trust – Keddleston Hall, Derbyshire	NT 109109
Leather-bound book	1713	National Trust – Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire	NT 3151101
Leather-bound book	1776	National Trust – Sunnycroft, Shropshire	NT 3230680
Leather-fronted coffer	1735	National Trust – Durham Massey, Cheshire	NT 930599
Set of leather-fronted travelling trunks	c.1727	National Trust – Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire	NT 1127784
Sheepskin leather boots	c.1787-1833	National Trust – Smallhythe Place, Kent	NT 1118774
Postillion boots	Eighteenth century	National Trust – Snowshill Wade	NT 1350732

		Costume Collection, Gloucestershire	
Buckskin breeches	c.1770-1799	National Trust – Snowshill Wade Costume Collection, Gloucestershire	NT 1348890
Leather-fronted sedan chair	c.1783-1805	National Trust – Snowshill Manor and Garden, Gloucestershire	NT 1332879
Leather-fronted sedan chair	c.1764-1769	National Trust – Saltram, Devon	NT 872068
Set of six Hepplewhite or Sheraton-style dining chairs with leather-upholstered seats	c.1760-1820	National Trust – Bradley Manor, Devon	NT 830788.1-6
Leather-topped rent table	c.1770	National Trust – A La Ronde, Devon	NT 1312296
Bureau with leather inlay	c.1730	National Trust – Trerice, Cornwall	NT 336835
Leather-upholstered hall porter's chair	c.1770	National Trust – Snowshill Manor and Garden, Gloucestershire	NT 1331871
Cuir bouilli fire bucket	Eighteenth century	National Trust – Felbrigg, Norfolk	NT 1400354
Small, plain leather costrel	1703	National Trust – Calke Abbey, Derbyshire	NT 288913

Series of embossed leather wall panels	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	National Trust – Dyrham, Gloucestershire	NT 453483
Brown cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth century	National Trust – Lytes Cary Manor, Somerset	NT 254641
Set of six Chippendale -style reupholstered dining chairs	c.1750	National Trust – Rufford Old Hall, Lancashire	NT 783947.1-6
Leather screen	c.1700-1730	National Trust – Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire	NT 652777
Side saddle upholstered with green velvet	c.1550	Shakespeare Birthplace Trust	1993-31/950
Embossed and painted leather panel	c.1740-1749	V&A	1653-1871
Embossed and painted leather panel	c.1740-1770	V&A	475-1869
Riding saddle, reupholstered with modern red velvet	c.1640	V&A	78A-1893
Riding saddle with yellow velvet seat	c.1650-1700	V&A	T.184-1914
Leather-covered trunk with fleur-de-lis motif	c.1700	V&A	113:2-1908
Carved wood horse harness	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	V&A	1634-1888:A
Pair of wooden hames	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	V&A	W32A-1921, W32B-1921

Yellow velvet saddle cloth	c.1650-1700	V&A	T.184A-1914
Set of six mahogany leather-upholstered chairs	1783	V&A	W.71-1940, W.72-1940, W.73-1940, W.74-1940, W.75-1940, W.76-1940
Cuir bouilli blackjack with remnants of painted coat of arms	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	V&A	90-1891
Cuir bouilli costrel	Seventeenth to eighteenth century	V&A	429-1895
Cuir bouilli blackjack with metal rim and engraving	c.1740-1780	Winterthur	1992.0011

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Anon (ed.), *All the histories and novels written by the late ingenious Mrs Benn*, (London, 1705).

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