Once a staple to everyday life, cigarette smoking has been pushed to the fringes of North American society, both physically and psychologically. Cigarette cartons are hidden behind opaque plastic curtains on convenience store shelves, and most public buildings have a minimum distance one must stand away from windows and doorways to smoke. Even the substitutes for smoking – e-cigarettes and vaporizers – are age restricted and covered in health warnings. Public cigarette smoking, and smoking in general, can be viewed as a vice of society's working-classes.

As Daniel J. Robinson points out in his work *Cigarette Nation: Business, Health, and Canadian Smokers, 1930—1975*, the cigarette was front-and-centre for people of all socio-economic backgrounds for a long time. After the Second World War, even as medical studies established a correlation between cigarette smoking and various diseases, smoking rates continued to climb across Canada. This is the central thrust of Robinson's research: how were cigarettes, and the cigarette industry, able to not only maintain production as mounting medical evidence pointed to the detrimental effects of smoking, but actually continue to grow as businesses? Robinson's answer and overall argument that cigarettes as an item of material culture became "socially powerful and culturally iconic" sheds light on consumer power (8). However, the argument is not as impactful as the methodological approach he used to complete this work. To this end, Robinson's approach should be a guide for those who intend to study the culture of everyday objects, such as cigarettes or denim jeans.

Robinson presents an interesting challenge for his research. Borrowing from Daniel Miller's term, "the humility of things," Robinson seeks to trace the history of a cultural item, the cigarette, that is rarely discussed in historical sources but is clearly visible in photographs of many historical figures. "Cigarettes permeated the quotidian canvasses of mid-twentieth-century social life," he writes, "very much in plain view if seldom discerned or analyzed by researchers dealing with interesting topics" (5—6). The cigarette has not been written about, mainly because it was such a common item that scholars did not even consider it an item worthy of study.

This is Robinson's greatest strength. Using newspaper advertisements to compliment survey data and government records, Robinson develops a convincing narrative about how cigarette smoking developed as a business during the twentieth century in Canada. His second chapter about the significance of the cigarette during the Second World War was probably the most persuasive in setting up its postwar prominence. Using the letters sent home from soldiers fighting overseas and the fundraising campaigns on the Homefront, Robinson demonstrates the power the cigarette had on the lives of Canadians. This is enhanced by his third chapter about early postwar Canada when the soldiers came home, as smoking became the "quintessential modern habit," associated with cosmopolitanism and modernity (81).

Although the methodological approach to cigarette smoking was enlightening, the strength it

provided in chapters one to three did not continue through the rest of the work. This is not to say that they were any less important, but the narrative developed in part two was not as compelling as part one. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this was the kind of sources that Robinson was able to find that related to how tobacco companies smeared medical science journals for publishing works recommending against consuming cigarettes. Here, Robinson draws on government documents, newspaper articles, advertising campaigns, and memos between tobacco companies and the federal government to demonstrate the length that Canadian tobacco firms went to protect their business. To his credit, Robinson shows how tobacco companies used every tool at their disposal to try and persuade the federal government against any kind of limitations to their products, but, through no fault of Robinson, this source base is not as vibrant as the war letters or newspaper stories from part one. Consequently, part one tells the story of how cigarettes became cultural symbols of modernity meant to help Canadian citizens cope with the realities of the twentieth century, while part two reads as a macro-level, top-down history on how tobacco companies fought to maintain that position. Although this transition in the cultural life of the cigarette is important, part two does not have as clear a direction as part one. It is not until the conclusion, which I will not spoil here, that the motivations for writing this book become clear.

Despite this minor criticism, Robinson's work can be used as a methodological model to help researchers who are doing projects on other commodities or consumer goods that would also fall under "the humility of things." One example that comes to mind is sugar, and the food sciences more broadly. Although Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* stands as the paramount example of the commodification of sugar a parallel study to *Cigarette Nation* regarding sugar – or cholesterol or saturated and trans fats – and its health implications could be written in the same manner. In short, Robinson's *Cigarette Nation* is an excellent example of seeing the unspoken but ever-present aspects of material culture.

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