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*Evocative Objects: A Reading of Resonant Things and Material Encounters
in Victorian Writers' Houses/Museums*

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition, and that it contains no material previously submitted for the award of any other degree. The work reported in this thesis has been executed by myself, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.



Aislinn P. Hunter

Abstract

This thesis is a study of resonant things in Victorian writers' houses/museums – a reading of those material objects that seem especially fit to presence the writer to whom they once belonged. Through the study of a selection of autographic objects in the houses/museums of Victorian writers, this thesis considers the following questions: What is resonance? How do things presence the absent individual with whom they are associated? Why do some categories of things – objects seemingly 'imbued with a lasting sediment of their owners' (Pascoe 3) – seem especially fit for the task of presencing, and how have we described or understood this phenomenon through narrative?

Through a reading of things, categories of things, images, novels, life writing, cultural and critical theory and the house/museum space, this thesis will examine the relationship between presencing things, material metonymy, and remembrance. It will suggest that certain categories of things have qualities that allow them to serve as remembrancers, standing-in-for and eliciting a sense of the absent individual with whom they were once connected.

Chapter one lays the ground for this reading of resonant things by contextualizing writers' houses/museums as sites of literary pilgrimage and introducing and defining some of the key concepts and terms employed in this study such as autographic object, authenticity, contiguity and resonance. Chapter two moves inside the writer's house/museum in order to demonstrate how things can 'world' via a reading of Marion Harland's late nineteenth-century description of a tour of the Carlyle's House alongside Martin Heidegger's concept of worlding. Chapters three, four, five, and six look at different types of museum things, beginning with hair – the object most closely associated with the writer's body – and then moving on to clothing, writerly tools such as desks and chairs, and ending with handwriting. Through assessing the particular qualities of each categorical thing alongside the concepts we meet these things with and the way that encounters with these things have been described in a variety of narratives, a number of the dynamics contributing to affective encounters with writerly things are uncovered. These dynamics or factors include: autographic ascription, authenticity, contiguity, metonymical fitness, equipmentality, and stasis/conspicuousness.

Ultimately this thesis argues that certain things have a particular fitness for the task of evoking or presencing the absent individual for whom they stand, and that in doing so everyday objects undergo a metamorphosis: ceasing to be everyday tools fit for a specific task (for wearing, for sitting, for writing with) and becoming instead tools for remembrance – evocative things that presence both the absent individual with whom they are associated and the world they inhabited in their lifetime.

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Introduction

On the fifth of July 1850, Charlotte Brontë signed her name in the guest book at Sir Walter Scott's former home, Abbotsford. Scott had been dead some eighteen years by then and the author's house – already a tourist destination in his lifetime – had become a site of pilgrimage. Brontë's visit followed Charles Dickens's visit to Abbotsford by some nine years and both long preceded my first visit to Abbotsford in 2011. What was fascinating to me then was not just that I was standing in Scott's house amongst myriad objects of both personal and historical significance (Scott himself being quite the collector of relics) but also the fact that I was very likely standing in the same rooms Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens had stood in – all of us thinking about Scott and sensing Scott through his things, through the objects that had survived him.

As a writer I have always been drawn to the life-stories of literary figures and to the museums that hope to exemplify, amplify or encapsulate elements of their biography. This thesis was born from a kind of two-fold noticing: first, my sense over a period of heightened museum-going of the intense affective responses I had upon beholding particular objects, and second, from a growing awareness of the types of things that not only generated an affective state, but which seemed to figure prominently in all of the writers' museums I visited: object categories like locks of hair, clothing, furniture, writing implements, and handwriting – things that appeared again and again across collections. My curiosity about these 'writerly things' led me to what was then the burgeoning field of thing theory and into an enquiry as to the nature of resonance. Why, I wondered, did certain objects seem particularly fit for

the task of evoking a sense of the absent writer's presence – that felt-connection between the past and the present, the dead writer and the person encountering their things?

Whether Charlotte Brontë did not write much about her visit to Abbotsford or whether those particular letters have not survived the intervening one and a half centuries is unknown. In a letter to her friend Laetitia Wheelwright describing her trip to Scotland (in the company of her publisher George Smith) Brontë describes Edinburgh as a 'vivid page of history' and adds 'as to Melrose and Abbotsford the very names possess music and magic' (Wilcocks).

Where Abbotsford evoked something magical for Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens might be said to have felt the opposite. In his correspondence a far less effusive recollection of what he saw at Abbotsford survives. In a letter written in 1851 to his friend Mrs Watson, Dickens recounts his perception of one object in particular:

When I was at Abbotsford I saw in a vile glass case the last clothes Scott wore. Among them an old white hat, which seemed to be tumbled and bent and broken by the uneasy, purposeless wandering, hither and thither, of his heavy head. It so embodied Lockhart's [his biographer's] pathetic description of him when he tried to write, and laid down his pen and cried, that it associated itself in my mind with broken powers and mental weakness from that hour. (Dickens, *Letters* 254-255)

Here, Dickens is describing an instance in which something as simple as a hat 'bent and broken' by the author's use comes to *embody* biographical events attributed to the author while he was alive (specifically Scott trying to write in his last months and laying down his pen to cry). For Dickens the hat's material aspects correspond so strongly with Lockhart's description of Scott trying to write that the hat and the narrative it suggests (both in terms of action and emotion) become infused 'from that

hour' (255). In provoking and evoking recollections of Scott and an event in Scott's life the hat in the glass case becomes, madeleine-like,¹ an object of association – a metonymical thing that brings to presence both historical events (Scott's last months, his failing health) and the absent individual to whom the hat was once – and still is – ascribed.

This thesis is a study of the ways in which a writer's things evoke the absent writer in the Victorian writer's house/museum setting: encounters not wholly unlike the one Dickens described at Abbotsford wherein a thing comes to stand for an absent individual, presencing them (despite death and the lapse of time) in such a way that they or their historical lives are cognized, sensed or felt. Where affective encounters with things have, at times, been positioned within the realm of the sentimental² this thesis maintains that resonant or affective encounters with things are the result of an interplay between the concepts we meet things with (this is Sir Walter Scott's chair, a chair is for sitting) *and* the thing's particular qualities. Through an analysis of four of the central categories of things in the writer's house/museum (locks of hair, clothing, writer's tools and handwriting) and narratives of encounter that describe *how* we experience things, I have identified six dynamics

¹ See Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (60-63) for his famous description of the provocation of involuntary memory brought on by the taste of a madeleine biscuit. This narrative is also interesting for the narrator's suggestion that the way material objects hold memory seems to correlate to a belief in animism:

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and thus effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognized them, the spell is broken. Delivered by us, they have overcome death, and return to share our life. And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object... (59).

Here Proust is distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary memory, the latter manifested in the case suggested here via the provocation of things: '[t]hen they start and tremble...' (59). Once memory is evoked via the object the narrator suggests that the individual with whom the object is connected returns 'to share our life' – which suggests that they are presented in the form of affective remembrance.

² For direct statements about sentiment and objects see Hood who suggests that '[m]any collectors are motivated by the emotion generated by objects and the connection that objects make with the past. Collectors relish the sentimental feeling one can get from having and holding something from another time' (199, see also *xi, xvi*). See also Woolf 'Haworth' on literary pilgrimages; Lutz 130, Trubek 8, Tamen 'Review' 543, Connor *Paraphernalia 2*, and Hallam and Hockey who affirm that while memory objects and personal mementos provide 'an important resource for personal meaning making, [they] might be trivialized as merely "sentimental." For instance, they may be coded as disparate fragments residing in a "female" domain of excessive emotion and irrational, possessive impulses' (19).

that contribute to a thing's ability to provoke and evoke presence: autographic ascription, authenticity, contiguity, metonymical fitness, equipmentality and stasis. While each of the categories of things studied here – and each thing itself – brings its own particular mode of presentation or giving-forth to an encounter, these six essential qualities come consistently to the fore in our encounters with things that presence the absent writer with whom they are connected.

Contexts and Framework

My proposition that things in the Victorian writer's house/museum can provoke and evoke a sense of encounter with the absent writer with whom they were once connected locates this thesis in the intersection between literary studies, cultural memory studies and material culture studies. Accordingly three different kinds of discourse have informed this work: literary narratives and narratives of encounter, studies on mourning and memory, and material culture studies or 'thing theory'. Although these three fields of enquiry involve complex formations that will only be fully explored as the thesis progresses, I would like to briefly present some of the key ideas, arguments and scholars related to this enquiry in order to make clear the terrain from which my own arguments emerge and to which this thesis aims to contribute.

Memory Sites and Meaningful Objects

Literary narratives and narratives of encounter comprise the largest category of work considered in this thesis, a category that includes readings from the life writing, creative work and biographies of the authors whose houses are featured here; texts focusing on encounters within the writer's house/museum setting; the textual ephemera associated with the museums this thesis considers (guide books, visitor comments, Society publications, news articles, museum signage, installations etc.), and the houses/museums themselves.

There are two critical anthologies that engage directly with the idea of literary tourism as a mode of meaningful encounter and literary houses as sites of contact. Harald Hendrix's *Writers' Houses and the Making of Memory* (2008) links literary tourism to the dynamics of memory and material presence. In stating that literary pilgrimages to writers' houses are about contact and 'the communication between readers and writers, mediated through the house and the objects it contains' (237) Hendrix foregrounds writers' houses as sites of communication and remembrance. Reading writers' houses as mnemonic devices for the living authors this anthology considers meaning-making through readings of the house as both a private / personal space and as a public monument / site of remembrance, a transition that moves the house and its contents from its personal relations into the sphere 'of collective and cultural memory' (5) which is to say a location in which aspects of the past abide and are made accessible to visitors.

Through emphasizing aspects of the phenomenology of reading Mike Robinson and Hans Christian Anderson's *Literature and Tourism: Explorations of Tourism, Writers and Writing* (2002) posits that literature can provide a special kind of access for the house/museum visitor who has been a reader of the author's work. Their

suggestion that the writer's house may have served as a repository for the author themselves – 'of memories linked to objects or spaces, as an archive which documents a person's intellectual and emotional biography' (5) – nuances readings of the visitor's investment in being 'where the author's pen physically touched paper' (15). The authentic nature of such encounters and the 'tangible connections' that writers' houses provide (15) is contrasted by a reading of the literary souvenir as an object that may have 'very little connection' to the authors (65) – a reading of things-in-museums that foregrounds the role of contiguity between visitors and things.

While both Hendrix and Robinson/Anderson's texts are narratives *about* encounter they are also narratives *of* encounter in that how they frame their analyses is informative. For example, in stating that houses offer 'tangible connections' to the writer (Robinson 15) or that some of the souvenir objects have 'very little connection' to the writers (65), the use of the word 'connection' becomes informative, affirming my reading of the role of contiguity (of touching or of being proximate to a touched place or space) in affective encounters. In a similar fashion Simon Goldhill's 2011 literary travelogue *Freud's Couch, Scott's Buttocks, Brontë's Grave*, a contemporary reading of Victorian literary destinations and the objects found within them, offers a dual reading: what is expressed through narrative and what is said through figures of speech. Both a literary history and a first-person account of (mostly failed) encounters with sites of literary pilgrimage, Goldhill's book skeptically deconstructs the relationship between the physical material left behind and the visitor's expectations of it. Anne Trubek's *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers Houses* (2011) similarly deconstructs cultural expectations of affect in writers houses against her own narrative of encounter, a book that demonstrates via

Trubek's lack of resonant experiences (and the occasional meaningful one) that there are dominant narratives and tropes that frame – and appear to be determinate in – resonant encounters with literary things.

Judith Pascoe's 2006 *The Hummingbird Cabinet: A Rare and Curious History of Romantic Collectors* traces the developing interest in collecting objects that seem to be 'imbued with a lasting sediment of their owners' (3) in the Romantic era. Her reading of collecting as a way of fashioning identity before the rise of the Victorian museum, and of literary artifacts as connected to material longing grounds the Victorian fascination with literary artifacts in the Romantic cult of the genius. Pascoe's reading of what she terms 'authenticating narratives' (narratives that support or invent provenance) offers an insight into how our relationship with things can be shaped by the biographies imposed on them.

Working in the field of cultural memory studies, Ann Rigney, in her 2008 essay 'Abbotsford: Dislocation and Cultural Remembrance' and more expansively in her book *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (2012) investigates Sir Walter Scott's construction of Abbotsford as a site of memory. Rigney analyzes Abbotsford as 'the material embodiment of the writer's life' with 'a memorial layering' (*Abbotsford* 81), an analysis that is expanded upon in her 2012 reading of Scott's own forgotten status and the contemporary vacancies of Scott as a referent (i.e. streets called 'Waverly' where the word does not signify Scott to the street's inhabitants). Addressing issues of literary canonization and Scott's own complicity in creating a memory site of his home, Rigney challenges the reading of writers' sites as happened-upon or intact repositories of meaning by reading both Abbotsford and

Scott's monuments as mediated and constructed things subject to the transient nature of cultural memory.

In addition to work that foregrounds the writer's house/museum, studies on memory and mourning – especially related to the keeping and preserving of things as a mode of commemoration or as a means of maintaining a sense of contact with the dead – have informed this study. Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey's *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (2001) examines material culture as a mediating force in our relationship with the dead and suggests that an exterior scaffolding for memory is possible and can be found, among other cases, in museums (33).³ Challenging notions of the pastness of the dead and the ways the dead might be manifest in material objects, they read material objects as part of a system of recall and examine the ways in which death and memory are spatialized.

In Margaret Gibson's *Objects Of The Dead: Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life* (2008) contemporary grief practices in relation to the objects the dead leave behind are examined through both cultural texts and interviews with the bereaved. Gibson interrogates the way the belongings of the dead come to take on powerful meanings. Describing objects of the dead as memory traces, themes of absence and presence and material connection are developed. Reading death relations through Philippe Ariès's argument that concepts of death and the afterlife since the nineteenth century have focused on reunification (Gibson 163) Gibson foregrounds the desire for connection and reconnection that the living often harbour for the dead.⁴

³ The idea of things as a kind of external cognitive scaffolding is also found in John Sutton's 'Porous Memory and the Cognitive Life of Things' an analysis that troubles the tradition of confining memory to the body and which points (more directly than in Hallam and Hockey's book) in the direction of theories which extend the boundaries of thought (and memory) into the world. For an overview of texts that have integrated thing theory and distributed cognition theory see Sutton's 'Material Agency, Skills and History: Distributed Cognition and the Archeology of Memory' in *Material Agency* (2008) (37-55 esp pgs 44-47).

⁴ Philippe Ariès reading of the shifts in attitudes toward death in *Western Attitudes Towards Death from the Middle Ages to the Present* has also informed this thesis, in particular his suggestion that the dominant death narrative in the eighteenth century

Bridging anthropological readings of magic and contemporary readings of material resonance, Gibson argues that '[w]hile the body relics of contemporary secular societies are not about supernatural power, they can contain, and continue, notional ideas of magic and the idea that, in a body fragment or an object that has touched a body, one is drawing close to an aura or essence' (169). Linking the universal theme of bereavement through 'things' and ideas of the cult of celebrity she affirms the role of contact/contiguity in encounters with autographic things: '[t]he culture of celebrity relics is interesting because of its continuation of the belief in an immaterial essence materialized and enduring in a body fragment or an object that has had contact with a body' (169). Gibson's notion of essence is expanded upon in this thesis through readings of sympathetic magic in Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), Marcel Mauss's *A General Theory of Magic* (1902) and – shifting disciplines to contemporary cognitive psychology – Bruce Hood's *Supersense: Why We Believe in the Unbelievable* (2009).

Bruce Hood's contemporary reading of supernatural beliefs including what he describes as 'our physicalizing of the spiritual' and our tendency to believe that 'objects and locations...give us a deeper sense of continuity with the past' (34) is grounded in his assertion that affective encounters with things – i.e. why we want to hold Einstein's pen but won't wear the murderer Fred West's cardigan – is a natural aspect of our mind's design. His reading of sympathetic magic positions it within mental and social structures as a practice that creates or disrupts social cohesion. He argues that such social structures include our need to make and maintain physical

underwent a transition wherein one became 'less concerned with his own death than with *la mort de toi*, the death of the other person' (56). Ariès work provides a unique context within which to read the death narratives of Victorian authors, for example through his reading of the 'romantic death' – which Ariès finds in the Brontë family (58) – and his attention to the development of commemorative sites.

contact with others – a reading of contiguity he contrasts through considerations of recent studies in disgust and traditional notions of the taboo. Rather than debunking the concept of an essence in things he examines *why* psychological essentialism, vitalistic reasoning and sympathetic magic are useful in cultural relations (161). While Hood refutes the possibility of an essence in things (he defines essence as ‘an underlying, invisible property that defines the true nature of something’ (24)) he does acknowledge that ‘[o]bjects are tangible, physical links with the past that can instantly transport us back to earlier days through a sense of connectedness’ (199). Hood’s concept of psychological essentialism as the ‘driver’ of our relations with (un-essenced) things will be challenged in this thesis through the assertion that things have their own essential qualities that come to the fore in our encounters with them – a reading of meaningful material encounters that falls under the domain of ‘thing theory’, one of the descriptors for material culture studies post-1990.

Thinking through Things

In ‘Thing Theory’ – Bill Brown’s introductory essay to his *Critical Inquiry* 2001 special issue *Things* – Brown raises the question as to whether or not a theory of ‘things’ – ‘the entifiable that is unspecifiable’ – is possible (5). Building on what he described in a 1998 essay as ‘the recent interest in a newly materialist knowledge of culture’ (*How* 960) Brown challenges the false dialectic between object and thing (*Thing* 3-6) and suggests that one of the ways to theorize things in their complexity is through a revision of the order of relations between subjects and objects. In his description of the way the ‘thingness of things’ begins to presence itself through

objects Brown hints at a Heideggerean phenomenology of encounter, one where things might be best understood not by staring at them and re-objectifying them but by beginning with the work things perform and how that work informs subject-object relations in specific contexts (*Thing* 5-7). Through troubling the subject/object dialectic in terms of the question of whether we determine things or things determine us, Brown proposes a reading of things and subject-object (or object-subject) relations that might begin with things and the role things play in our lives as materials with their own biographies and potential disclosures – a methodology that is prefigured in his 1999 essay ‘The Secret Life of Things: Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism’ when he reads Virginia Woolf’s short story ‘Solid Objects’ not for what it discloses about subject-object relations (what the broken bits of glass and china in the story say about human subjects) but for what the broken bits of glass and china in the story – as things that act on, provoke, and inform Woolf’s protagonist – reveal about the world in which the story was written. Brown calls this reading of things in literature a ‘materialist phenomenology’ – a phenomenology that ‘asks both *how*, in history (how, in one cultural formation), human subjects and material objects constitute one another, and *what* remains outside the regularities of that constitution that can disrupt the cultural memory...’ – in Brown’s case, the cultural memory of modernity and modernism (*Secret* 5). This question of co-constitution – of how things and people constitute one another – is one of the central themes in ‘thing theory’ and the search for meanings and things (and meanings *in* things) in the margins is one of the ways a materialist phenomenology can operate. By bringing these marginal or, more correctly, marginalized things to the fore, dominant narratives are expanded upon or confounded (*Secret* 5).

Where Brown's material interests tend to be situated around modernist things and modernist or contemporary texts and art, Elaine Freedgood's foregrounding of things focuses on the Victorian era. In *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006) Freedgood also unseats the hierarchy of subject over thing by rescuing some of the things in Victorian novels (*Jane Eyre*'s mahogany furniture among them) from being read as extended signs reflective of the characters to which they are ascribed. By enlivening the history of a number of objects in Victorian novels and revealing their cultural relations (for example the part mahogany played in the slave trade) Freedgood reaffirms some of their status as 'highly consequential in the world in which the text was produced' (2). Unlike Brown, whose interests in modernist and contemporary 'things' locates many of his objects within commodity cultures (see especially 'How to Do Things with Things (A Toy Story)') for Freedgood, Victorian things have the potential to be read outside dominant commodity narratives. Freedgood suggests that literary-critical readings of Victorian realism that focus on commodification are:

...often more symptomatic of our own immersion in commodity culture than of the critical dictates or demands of realism itself—especially in its mid-nineteenth-century form. We imagine that the realist novel 'thinks' about things the way that we do, or that we have learned commodity thinking from the novel and its representational traditions. We then fail to discern a culture that may have preceded commodity culture: what I call 'thing culture.' (142)

Freedgood's assertion that Victorian things might have circulated through Victorian culture in a way that did not foreground their commodity status reflects the ways in which the writers considered in this thesis tended to write about things (even in their pursuit of them as in the case of Thomas Carlyle's bathing cap) and locates this enquiry into the resonant power of things in a culture that had yet to wrestle with the decay of aura posited by Walter Benjamin in 'The Work of Art in the Age of

Mechanical Reproduction’ (1936) (a reading of the authentic and mimetic that has an affinity with Mary Douglas’s analysis of the allographic (reproduced) and autographic (original) in her 1994 essay ‘The Genuine Article’ discussed in chapter one).

Although practitioners of ‘thing theory’ vary in terms of the extent to which they, as individuals, might *ascribe* agency to things, and how, having ascribed agency they *describe* the agency they give (or find in) things, contemporary investigations in thing theory tend to begin with, or arrive at, the notion that things can and do prod us, inform us, and contribute to our sense of self (Riggins 1994; Miller 2010; Brown 1998, 1999, 2001; Connor 2011, 2012; Hudek 2014).⁵ Questions as to whether or not things ‘speak’ and, if so, whether or not such ‘speaking’ is anything more than a kind of ventriloquism, or interpretation (Tamen 2001) tend to address not a literal speaking – unless under the rubric of Victorian It-Narratives (Freedgood 2010) or Bill Brown’s reading of the Charlie McCarthy (ventriloquist) dummy (1998) – but, rather, an anxiety about giving too much power to things. As Sherry Turkle notes in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* ‘[t]he acknowledgement of the power of objects has not come easy’ (6). In ‘Can the Sofa Speak? A Look at Thing Theory’ (2005) John Plotz marginalizes the question of whether or not things can speak by suggesting that thing theory is best situated in less regimental zones of enquiry (109-110). He states: ‘Thing theory highlights, or ought to highlight, approaches to the margins – of language, of cognition, of material substance’ (110).

⁵ For example, in Dan Miller’s *Stuff*, a material culture reading (largely through an anthropological lens) of community engagements with a number of material objects including clothing, houses and mobile phones, Miller describes his interest in challenging ‘our common-sense opposition between the person and the thing, the animate and inanimate, the subject and the object’ (5) eventually stating that ‘[i]t is now clear that in material culture we are concerned at least as much with how things make people as the other way around’ (42).

The recent emphasis in critical discourse on questions of agency, subject/object dialectics, and whether or not things ‘speak’, while vital, has helped identify a gap in material culture discourse. As Bill Brown states in a footnote in ‘How to Do Things with Things (A Toy Story)’: ‘The following pages, which do not ask the Heideggerean question (about how the thing things, and how it things the world), address not the “nature of things” but the “culture of things”...’ (936). This thesis is concerned with exactly that omission – with *how* things world and with what that worlding encounter *is like*. By demonstrating that the things this thesis focuses on – locks of hair, clothing, writerly equipment and handwriting – have qualities that make them particularly fit for the task of provoking memory and evoking the absent writer with whom they are associated I am ascribing a significant amount of agency to things. Rather than objects that simply respond to a receptive human subject, I demonstrate that the things considered here *provoke*, that as with Proust’s madeleine, encounters with things can conjure involuntary memories, abstract associations and felt presences. By privileging the language and narratives of encounter I demonstrate that a thing’s ability to provoke and ‘world’ is as connected to the thing as it is to us.

Heidegger’s Things

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is a central figure in the philosophy of things. His most sustained considerations about things and the ‘thingliness’ of things can be found in his seminal work *Being and Time* (published in 1927), in *What Is A Thing?* (based on a lecture held in the winter semester of 1935/1936 at the University of Freiburg, and published in English in 1967) and his essays ‘The Origin of the Work

of Art', 'The Thing', and 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (based on lectures given in 1935, 1950, and 1951 respectively and assembled in 1971 in *Poetry, Language, Thought*). Heidegger's work informs this thesis in four ways: 1) through his suggestion that things are never fully revealed to us in our encounters with them but that aspects of a thing and its relations can be brought to the fore in certain kinds of encounter;⁶ 2) through providing an analysis of encounters with things that demonstrates that environments are comprised of relations, a reading of settings that informs the reading of a thing in a writer's house/museum as always already in a context; 3) through his concept of tool use which informs the changed assignment of things on display in a writer's house/museum, how, for example, Charles Dickens's desk and chair transition from things used for writing with to things used for remembering with; and 4) through his concept of 'worlding' which places beings and things in an inseparable and (potentially resonant) relation.

Point four – Heidegger's concept of 'worlding' – is the most amorphous of the ideas applied in this thesis. The concept, explored in Heidegger's 1919 lecture course but explicated more fully in his mid-century lectures, is developed in chapter two but warrants an introduction here. In this thesis I read Heidegger's concept of worlding as an experience of integration in which human subjects and worldly objects inform and constitute each other. Worlding is, as chapter two will explore, the sensuous way

⁶ In *What is a Thing?* Heidegger emphasizes the subjective nature of our encounters with things and references the elusive nature of things as entities we cannot know and which always have aspects that are hidden from our view: '... we are individual subjects and egos, and what we represent and mean are only subjective pictures which we carry around in us; we never reach the things themselves' (11-12). Heidegger suggests that things stand in different truths and that the way to proceed in an investigation of those truths is through everyday encounters (14). Largely consumed with a reading of Kant's concept of the thing in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, *What is a Thing?* is nonetheless valuable for Heidegger's assertion that the dynamic that exists between us and things is mutually constitutive. As Eugene Gendlin states in his summary analysis:

Heidegger is not saying that a thing is something subjective. 'What a "this" is does not depend upon our caprice and our pleasure.' What it is does depend upon us, but 'it also equally depends upon the things' (26, 20; also 243, 188). This 'between' is not as though first we and things could have existed separately and then interacted. Rather, what a person is is always already a having things given, and a thing is already something that encounters. (Gendlin 258)

Here Gendlin is affirming that in a Heideggerean reading of things, things have their own way of standing-forth, a way that is not determined by us but by a relation (always already in play) between us and things – a suggestion furthered by the concept of worlding wherein things stand forth in meaningful relations.

things bring concrete and abstract relations to the fore – a mode of encounter that is heightened at particular times and through particular things – for the later Heidegger, especially through works of visual and literary art. In ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ Heidegger states:

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. (*PLT* 43)

Here Heidegger dismisses any potential correlation between ‘world’ as a concept and the referential noun ‘world’ which might be taken as what’s around us: ‘the mere collection of the countable and uncountable...’ (43). World here is neither noun nor verb (the world, worlding) but the whole of our existence in relation to all that exists and the ways in which that existing occurs and unfolds. World is not locatable in a venue but is the fabric from which our encounters, thoughts, and identities are sewn. Worlding, as this thesis employs it, is the set of relations that comes to the fore from things and beings together in an unfragmented way in the writer’s house/museum. It is the palpable and affective sense of the past in the present, of the material and incorporeal/abstract together; it is ‘atmosphere’ and encounter. As Heidegger suggests above, it is more than material tangibles and the concepts we meet things with but rather a condition of existence, of being in and amongst the concrete and abstract, the sayable and the unsayable. Günter Figal suggests in his reading of Heidegger’s concept of ‘world’ that world is, in essence, experiential:

World is the context of things in which they are ‘meaningful,’ which means: in which they have a *meaning* and are thereby in some way *important* for the one experiencing, and for their life... which means: there are not first things which are then meaningful in each experience in a secondary sense, but rather things exist as meaningful. Meaningfulness is the way things exist. (5)

World in this reading is not some ‘out there’ encounter that is separate from the one encountering, it is not a place or a location, but the always-already meaningful way we move through existence, an encounter shaped by our concerns and dealings.

In order to take a first step in delineating a shape for what it is for things to ‘world’ in the context of this thesis I will turn briefly to Heidegger’s jug analogy in ‘The Thing’ – an analogy that takes a thinging thing (a jug) and explicates how it expands a set of (already unified) relations – a description that reflects Heidegger’s use of thinging and worlding things (like art and bridges and temples) in other lectures.

In ‘The Thing’ Heidegger notes that a jug is an object with a physical form but *also* a vessel (a thing with-which to hold, carry liquid). While this vessel is made (by the potter) the vessel aspect of it belongs to the jug in the form of its void. (Heidegger points out that we cannot *make* the void that gives the jug its being as a vessel but can only fashion the parts of the jug that illustrate the void, such as the jug’s sides and bottom.) Made, the jug stands forth doubly: in its being made *and* as a thing that now shows aspects of itself (such as its holding, giving/pouring qualities). In the pouring of water or wine from the jug Heidegger expresses a version of worlding: how the pouring may be a gift, how nature dwells in what is poured (the rock in the spring that gives the water in the jug its taste), how the celebration or ritual for which the pouring occurs creates further sets of relations between people, things, ideas, beliefs and so forth which are integrated in their ‘onefoldedness’ – relations that, in this lecture, Heidegger describes as a gathering (a word, that Heidegger likes to note, is connected to the German word for thing) (*PLT* 163-180).

In Heidegger's work worlding is often described as an integrated state or heightened kind of awareness borne from a sense of the inseparable relations between beings and things. In 'The Thing' he states that things can have a worlding being (178) and that through being present to things or concerned with the thing's worlding being the world is brought near (178-179). This is a nearness I attribute to encounters with resonant things in the writer's house/museum setting. If encountering Emily Brontë's cracked and repaired Christening mug (Fig. 1, below) resonates a sense of Emily, or of the moment the cup may have broken, of its repair, her childhood or her writing life, then I am suggesting that the thing *worlds*. In worlding, the idea of a barrier between the past and present and Emily and the viewer is elided in that the thing brings whole sets of relations to the fore. To repeat, as Heidegger expressed it: things can have a worlding being (178) and through being present to things or through being concerned with the thing's worlding being the world, in the form of sets of relations, is brought near (178-179).



Fig. 1. Emily Brontë's Christening Mug © Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth (Dinsdale, Laycock and Akhurst 12).

Approaching Things

The terms used in the study of resonant or meaningful things that connect individuals with the absent/dead and the past are as varied as things themselves. Described as ‘relics’ (Lutz 2011), ‘significant objects’ (Sellers 2013), ‘beloved objects’ (K. Brown 1998), ‘melancholy objects’ or ‘objects of the dead’ (Gibson 2004, 2009), ‘memory objects’ (Ash 1996; Hallam and Hockey 2001; Sutton 2002), ‘evocative objects’ (Turkle 2007), ‘linking objects’ and ‘nostalgic objects’ (Akhtar 2005), ‘resonant objects’ (Pascoe 2006), ‘cultural artifacts’ (Greenblatt 1990), ‘memorabilia’ and ‘fetishes’ (Hood 2009), ‘personalia’ (Hardwick 1968), or ‘objects of the last moment’ (Körte 2004) things of all sorts have moved to the forefront of critical studies and thought.

Although there were a number of paths available to me in the study of resonant things, including a deconstruction of the problems of subject/object relations and the question of agency, the clearest framework for this investigation was provided by a reading of material encounters. If affective encounters are difficult to relay, if it is the case that there ‘might be called a general lack of practice in articulating an affective response’ (de Bolla 16) and if, – as Eugene Gendlin suggests in his analysis of Heidegger’s *What is a Thing?* – ‘what we are as humans and how we constitute situations and things is always partly and irreducibly linguistic’ (284) then a reading of such encounters through how they are described opens up both the space of the encounter and the degree of attention allotted to the dynamics that occur within it.

This thesis is therefore a study of the structure of experience of affective encounters with writerly things, a study that foregrounds how language helps reveal

structures of consciousness and intuited aspects of material things in those encounters. The word 'phenomenology' when used in relation to this work is intended to signify both a reading of the structure of encounter with phenomena and an analysis of the properties of an affective state via description. A formal engagement with the history and structure of phenomenology as a method (i.e. its evolution from Husserl on) lies outside the domain of this thesis.

In terms of my methodology I am asserting that affective or resonant encounters with things in the writer's house/museum are not wholly determined by individuals but by individuals and things together. Having identified a gap in recent thing theory discourse as to *how* things world I have employed narratives of encounter as a means of illuminating some of the dynamics involved in resonant encounters with things. The six dynamics I have identified as fundamental to worlding encounters in writers' houses/museums are autographic ascription, authenticity, contiguity, metonymical fitness, equipmentality and stasis. My assertion that these six dynamics are fundamental to resonant encounters with things in the writer's house/museum is supported through readings of four of the central object categories in writers' houses/museums: hair, clothing, writer's tools and handwriting. In analyzing these dynamics and these objects I suggest that a fundamental aspect of an encounter with things in writers' houses/museums is the metamorphosis of a thing from its original tool-use (a chair to sit in, a pen to write with) to a new kind of tool-use: for remembering with. As resonant or affective encounters with things are largely unquantifiable this thesis marries concrete approaches to the subject (in the form of anthropological, scientific or linguistic theory) to Heidegger's phenomenological and existential philosophy. This thesis, as such, is not a deconstruction of resonant

encounters with things (as if such encounters could be anatomized) but a bringing to the fore of some of the previously undisclosed yet fundamental dynamics in such encounters.

Ultimately this thesis is ground in narrative. If the writer's house/museum is a resonant location because it was the very place where a writer or writers once lived it seems fitting that the ways in which those writers saw and described things in their literary work and life-writing should figure prominently in the investigation of the resonant power of things. In this way Victorian writers' narratives about hair, clothing, furniture / writing implements and handwriting have proven to be indispensable in the analysis of the dynamics of encounter in the Victorian writer's house/museum.

Chapter one contextualizes this investigation of resonant encounters with writerly things through an analysis of the writer's house as a site of encounter thereby grounding this study of things in real-world contexts. Chapter one then introduces and defines four of the key concepts employed in this thesis – autographic objects (via Mary Douglas), authenticity (via Anne Trubek and Judith Pascoe), contiguity (via George Lakoff and Mark Johnson) and resonance (via Stephen Greenblatt) – definitions that lay the ground for chapter two's analysis of Heidegger's 'worlding' concept.

Chapter two explores some of the phenomenological aspects of encounters with writerly things. Employing Marion Harland's late-nineteenth-century description of a visit to the Carlyle's House alongside Martin Heidegger's concept of 'worlding' and Charlotte Brontë's fictional account of an environmental experience with things in her novel *Villette*, this chapter will assert that house/museum settings have the ability

to effectively gather and exhibit (or ‘world’) a powerful sense of both the absent writer and the absent writer’s life – an encounter that is generated through things. By drawing parallels between Heidegger’s philosophical reading of thingly encounters and worlding and Harland’s Victorian narrative this chapter seeks to unsettle any potential perceptions of resonant encounters in the writer’s house/museum as wholly subjective or isolatable in order to position resonant experiences as a kind of encounter brought about by individuals and environments *together*.

Chapters three, four, five, and six look at specific categories of things found in the museums: hair, clothing, writerly tools and handwriting in order to support this thesis’s argument that resonant encounters with things involve many of the same dynamics. Chapter three focuses on contiguity by reading hair and locks of hair as a material vestige of the writer’s body, a reading supported by Victorian narratives in which hair is conceived of as a vital and connecting fragment. Artefacts from the Wordsworth Trust collection support the idea that hair was employed as a remembrancer and that hair was believed to be both symbolic and actualizing, an idea developed by an analysis of Edmund Leach’s essay ‘Magical Hair’ and readings of hair binding narratives in *Wuthering Heights* and *Villette*.

Chapter four focuses on clothes and metonymy while reaffirming the power of contiguity. Beginning with a reading of a caricature of a pair of Thomas Carlyle’s trousers and proceeding through a reading of how the Carlyles wrote about clothing, the equipmental nature of clothing and its metonymical properties will be demonstrated. Latter parts of this chapter will assert that empty or unoccupied clothes were especially fit for presenting the absent wearer, and that as a material

remain clothes have the ability to act as archives of both bodily and historical knowledge.

Chapter five considers the power of writerly tools especially desks, chairs, and writing implements. This chapter suggests that as *actual tools* used in the production of these writers' works these objects are especially meaningful as a remembrancer in the context of the writer's house/museum. Employing Heidegger's definitions of equipment alongside a reading of Charles Dickens's desk and chair, this chapter considers the effects of stasis on tools – suggesting that displaying writerly objects brings to the fore a new modulation of readiness-to-hand, one that is conducive to evocation or remembrance.

Chapter six analyzes writers' handwriting. Reading fragments of Charlotte Brontë's writing as worlding marks (marks that signal both thought and a now-absent bodily self) this chapter concerns itself with the 'magical value' of the written words and the event or instance of inscription. As the material trace of the writer and their thoughts in the form of a mark or marks on paper this chapter equates the fundamental material aspect of the mark with an event of being. Returning to the concept of 'worlding' this chapter affirms the ability of even the slightest mark ascribed to the writer to provoke a sense of encounter.

Overall this thesis argues that resonant encounters are made by beings and things together: by the concepts we meet things with and the thing's own mode of showing forth, and that certain things are especially fit for the task of evoking / provoking a sense of the absent individual for whom they stand. Through identifying some of the fundamental dynamics of resonant encounters with a writer's things, and through

reading narratives of encounters with things, this thesis hopes to demonstrate that ‘things’ are fundamental tools for evocation and remembrance.

Resonance Matters

There is no formulaic answer to the question of how resonance is created or affective experiences ‘work’. In his introduction in *Art Matters* – Peter de Bolla’s examination of affective experiences in relation to art – de Bolla states broadly ‘my task is to arrive at a better understanding of what it is to be moved profoundly by a work of art’ (3). Echoing de Bolla’s aim, the task of this thesis is to arrive at a better understanding of resonant encounters with writerly things and to discover what dynamics seem most essential in these encounters. Through illuminating some of the factors involved in those encounters and through analyzing how those encounters have been (and continue to be) described, it is hoped that I have not only made a case for the validity and usefulness of meaningful things but that I have also demonstrated the vital role things themselves play in the process of meaning-making and recollection.

There is, of course, a danger in attempting to speak collectively or generally about something that is always experienced individually. My aim in this thesis is not to be ‘right’ for everyone; it is not to establish rules or a set of absolute conditions within which affective experiences of meaningful things must be ground, rather it is to build a platform from which future considerations of the affective experience of autographic objects or evocative things might depart, and to reveal through both material and narrative readings some of the foundational elements of such

encounters. I assert that the larger dynamics of affective encounters with museal things has remained under-examined, hampered perhaps by the subjective nature of affective encounters. As one museum visitor commented in the late eighteenth century:

If I see wonders which I do not understand, they are no wonders to me. Should a piece of withered paper lie on the floor, I should, without regard, shuffle it from under my feet. But if I am told it is a letter written by Edward the Sixth, that information sets a value on the piece, it becomes a choice *morceau* of antiquity, and I seize it with rapture. (Vergo 9)

Here the museum visitor's rapture-inducing object is rendered rapturous because it has been given a context, one that may mean little to a subsequent visitor for whom Edward the Sixth (and the history he exemplifies) means nothing. Similarly, the Brontë Parsonage may evoke, as one visitor wrote 'the presence of the Brontë family' while another visitor might simply appreciate the museum's 'lack of gimmicks' (BPM visitor comments 2011, 2009). This illustrates some of the problems of subjectivity but it also points to the value of gathering subjectivities in the form of narratives that can be read alongside each other.

Despite the inherent subjectivity of affective experiences the idea that material objects help connect us to absent people and historical events is widely represented and reflected in cultural and communal narratives. In 2013 when the US pop singer Kelly Clarkson purchased Jane Austen's gold and turquoise ring at an auction at Sotheby's an export ban was placed on the ring and a 'Bring the Ring Home' campaign to keep it in Britain ensued. Eventually an unnamed benefactor and 'Austen fans around the world' raised £152,450 to 'save it for the public in the UK' (L. Bury). No contextualizing narrative about the affective power of beholding a writer's things or the value of the ring (or Austen things) in relation to community

access (or national identity) was necessary in news reports around the sale and campaign (though the fact that the ring was one of only three pieces of known Austen jewellery was regularly cited). Instead, the idea that Austen mattered, and that having access to *her things* mattered, was implicit. The fact that the ring was eventually sold to the Jane Austen Museum for the exact same amount of money it was sold to Clarkson for suggests that the ring holds some sort of value that is not merely fiscal – else the ring as pure commodity would have been sold for the best price without any concern for its whereabouts or ‘life’ after the sale.

The Austen ring narrative is useful because it demonstrates the value of those things whose own thingly biographies have coexisted with the biographies of individuals who become cultural figures. Even now, in an age of ubiquity, it seems that some objects, regardless of their monetary value or our ability to reproduce them, rise above other objects and things of their type. Contemporary newspapers are full of such examples reporting on the sale or auction of objects ranging from Madonna’s bra, the hat worn by Princess Beatrice to the royal wedding, a black Asprey bag once belonging to Margaret Thatcher, to John Lennon’s sunglasses. That these twentieth century examples can be read comfortably alongside the sale of Victoriana – Emily Brontë’s geometry set, Queen Victoria’s underwear, and the chronometer used on the HMS Beagle when Darwin worked on it – implies that the idea of things as conduits between an individual and ‘others’ (and an individual and historical events) is not an uncommon phenomenon and that the value of, and desire for, objects associated with certain people or events is part of a perceptible cultural practice.⁷

⁷ Two contrasting examples may serve to support this point further: 1) in 2010 a \$10 000 reward was offered by Reebok Canada for the return of the stolen stick and gloves worn by the game-winning goal-scorer Sydney Crosby in the Canadian men’s gold

Over the past seven years my research has revealed ample corollaries between the Victorian age and ours, whether it's the penchant for autographs and hair-collecting in the late Romantic and Victorian eras aligned with similar tendencies now (in a 2011 charity auction on e-Bay a lock of the pop-star Justin Bieber's hair netted just over £25,000) or the way we describe a thing's ability to presence – as per the anecdote about Queen Victoria reported by the Hon. George Peel to Harold Nicholson. Peel alleged that on a trip to Italy during her long mourning for Albert, Queen Victoria, sitting in her carriage in the Piazza del Duomo 'stopped the carriage, fumbled in her corsage and drew out a locket' which she then proceeded to hold up to the recently restored façade of the Duomo. 'The Lady-in-Waiting afterwards told Peel that it was a miniature of the Prince Consort' and that she 'thought it would interest him to see how the Duomo looked after being repaired' (Hibbert, *Queen* 434-435).

This ascription of psychical powers to things such as a locket, the idea or *sense* of animate connections between the dead and their things is not confined to the Victorians. In 2010 Prince William suggested a similar sense of feeling when on his engagement to Kate Middleton he gave her the sapphire and diamond ring that had belonged to his late mother Princess Diana, saying in an on-camera interview that the gesture was 'my way of making sure my mother didn't miss out on today' ('Prince').

While the Victorian era forms the locus of this investigation, it should be noted here that the use of resonant objects as a presencer or remembrancer abides in many

medal Olympic hockey game against the US (Reebok 2010). It isn't just that a reward was offered; the theft of the objects illustrates their importance. 2) In 2009 when the wrought iron *Arbeit Macht Frei* (work sets you free) sign was stolen from the concentration camp memorial site Auschwitz a 'nationwide search for [the] symbol of suffering' ensued and a 'state of emergency' was declared in Poland. The theft was called 'an act of war' by the Holocaust museum (Auschwitz BBC) and 'an attack on the remembrance of the Holocaust' (Quinn, *Aushwitz*). This is not to equate two profoundly disparate events – it is simply to illustrate the abiding and cross-cultural value of resonant things. Wrought iron signs and hockey sticks are made from fairly ubiquitous materials that can be procured and shaped or made with relative ease; but as *authentic objects*, objects that have served as witnesses to unique events or individual lives these things are singular and irreplaceable.

cultures and that part of the work I hope to have done is to have established a framework for studies in resonant materiality in any time period or across epochs. Peter de Bolla's study of affect and art and what he calls the 'poetics of wonderment' led him to a feature of affective experiences of art that he calls 'mutism' – the feeling of 'being struck dumb' (3). My thesis, likewise, has looked for those facets of affective encounters with a writer's things that might, echoing De Bolla, be called 'features' of the resonant material encounter, features which I have identified as autographic ascription, authenticity, contiguity, metonymical fitness, equipmentality and stasis – aspects that contribute to the 'fitness' of things to serve as remembrancers.

'Alive! Absolutely ace!' 'It feels as if the family are still here.'

– Brontë Parsonage Museum visitor comments (2009)

While published books and life writing form the majority of sources in this thesis I feel it is important to acknowledge the influence – and power – of the off-hand comment or anecdote as it relates to this field of inquiry. Over the years I have observed hundreds of visitors as they've made their way through the museums that form the locus of this study, I have asked strangers on their way out of the museum what objects impressed them most and why, I have chatted at length with curators about their own sense of the resonant objects in their care. I have learned to acknowledge the degree of trust involved in acts of curation, exhibition and visitation. When one custodian admitted that they wondered what they'd do if they accidentally hoovered up their famous writer's hair, and then said sheepishly that they'd probably replace it with a lock of their own, I saw how fragile, how tenuous the whole enterprise of resonant materiality is. Bruce Hood's experiments with Paul

Rozin's contagion theory demonstrate that we can 'make' an object resonant in the same way that we can make an object taboo – simply by lying about it. When asked to touch a black fountain pen reputedly belonging to Albert Einstein, those in Hood's audience obliged and generally exhibited 'reverence and awe' toward the object (which was not Einstein's pen) (Hood 22). When asked to wear a cardigan that he said belonged to Fred West (the serial killer) volunteers willing to touch the object dwindled significantly and a sense of revulsion was evident, leading Hood to conclude that '[t]he repulsion to the cardigan could reflect a common supernatural belief that invisible essences can contaminate the world and connect us together...' (23).

Seeing the couch where Emily Brontë is alleged to have died is powerful in part because of this sense of an event that echoes over time. As one visitor to the Brontë Parsonage in 2011 wrote: 'I liked being slightly scared by thinking someone died on the sofa'; another, mentioning the front room of the museum, wrote '...[it] gives me a chill to think of the sisters writing in there!' (BPM visitor comments 2011). These anecdotal or jotted responses matter because affective experiences are subjective, and as such are unique clues to a larger shared experience, an experience of the kind that de Bolla describes in *Art Matters* when trying to untangle the similarly ambiguous apprehension of affective art work: an encounter that he acknowledges partakes of a kind of betweenity – part physical, part mental – an experience we don't yet have a way to discuss in everyday terms:

This state of 'in-between-ness,' as it were, part physical and part mental, in the orbit of the emotive yet also clearly articulated or potentially articulatable within the higher orders of mental activity, is one way of describing wonder....

Although the observation that we have very few words, hardly any at all, for talking about *affective* experiences certainly seems accurate, it does not follow that such a lexicon is beyond invention. (3-4)

Being ‘slightly scared’; having ‘a chill’; calling a place ‘Alive’ are ways of describing an encounter with a place and with things that reads as both physical and mental. In each case one has been altered or moved from what might be described as a less engaged or visceral state into a heightened one. This affect is palpable in the museums themselves – through visitor reactions and even, in some cases, their lack of reactions, especially in those cases where visitors move through the environment without deep engagement but then become struck by one particular thing.

The ‘resonant’ objects referenced in this thesis are from collections found in The Brontë Parsonage, Carlyle’s House, The Dickens Museum, Sir Walter Scott’s Abbotsford, William Wordsworth’s Dove Cottage, his Museum and Rydal Mount, Charles Darwin’s Down House and John Ruskin’s Brantwood. A list of these museums along with their locations, the dates they were inhabited by the author(s), the year the house was formally opened to the public, their average annual visitor figures (when confirmed), the context of their ownership (private/Trust) and the most recent year of substantial renovations can be found on Table 1 at the end of this Introduction. The museums are listed chronologically by the date they were occupied by the writer(s), and not in order of reference or importance in this thesis. The Keats House Museum and the Freud Museum have been included on Table 1, as they will be referenced on occasion.

It should be noted that whilst this thesis is grounded in the Victorian era and focuses on Victorian writers and things inhabiting houses (later reformulated as museums) between 1837 and 1901, two of the literary figures discussed here pre-date the era (John Keats died in 1821, and Sir Walter Scott died in 1832), and all the

authors, biographically, span eras (Wordsworth, Dickens, Thomas and Jane Carlyle, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, Charles Darwin and John Ruskin were all born in the Georgian era). Rather than employ the ‘long-nineteenth century’ approach, this thesis intends to focus on the Victorian era as a particular epoch with its own tendencies and trends, in part because of the influence of Queen Victoria on a number of elements in this thesis including the keeping and wearing of locks of hair, and the employment of mementos such as clothing in her mourning. It should also be noted that while the majority of these museums did not open in the Victorian era (see Table 1), many of these locations were already sites of pilgrimage in the Victorian era, and all but Keats’ House, Scott’s Abbotsford and Wordsworth’s Dove Cottage are meant to exemplify or ‘capture’ the Victorian lives of their inhabitants; inhabitants who were influential figures in the Victorian era itself.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson suggest that a culture’s conceptual systems can be revealed through its use of language. They identify some of the dominant metaphors employed in the English language and demonstrate how the words we use (often unknowingly) reflect a range of concepts – from our values (as evidenced by spatial metaphors such as the orientation that ‘up’ is good compared to feeling ‘down’) to our ontological predispositions (evidenced by our use of container metaphors – we are ‘in’ a field even if it is not bounded). In this way Lakoff and Johnson reveal the hidden structures of meaning in everyday language providing a model for this thesis’s assertion that language is a valuable repository for an understanding of resonant encounters with things.

Elaine Freedgood in *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* suggests in her analysis of the vital life of things in Victorian novels that ‘critical cultural archives have been preserved, unsuspected, in the things of realism that have been so little or so lightly read’ (1) an idea that suggests that things (fictional and real) are, like words, valuable archives.

As a writer I have a predisposition to looking at words and things as vital informing entities, to reading things, events and people through how they are described. This is borne from the belief that those descriptions – whether in letters, novels, poems, diaries or comment books – are revealing. While one of the fundamental ways we encounter things tends to be through the concepts we meet them with, sometimes, in our own narratives hidden aspects of things can come to the fore.

Admittedly, the role of the writer as a cultural commentator holds a unique kind of allure for me. Still, it is not a role that I sentimentalize. I do not see the role of ‘the writer’ as ‘mystical’, and the work is not ‘sacred’. I believe that imaginative acts are to be celebrated, especially when deemed successful, but as a practitioner I know that books and careers are the result of complex processes and procedures, and disciplined, often wrenching, work. Having given over a hundred readings and interviews, and having read a drawer’s worth of reviews about my own books I understand how much of a work’s affect and meaning comes from a writer’s subconscious mind even as that same mind works diligently on theme and subtext and the myriad surface elements of a poem, story or novel. In excavating creative and life-writing for what the writing says about the world of things rather than approaching the work as a mere reflection of ideas we already hold about resonance

and material objects, the possibility of new and less pre-fabricated realizations increases. One of the great pleasures of writing is that sometimes your work knows more than you do, which is why Victorian writers – crafting whole worlds through an acuity with language that surpasses the average person's, and cherished in part for their ability to communicate effectively about the beliefs, concerns and cultural tropes of their day – might have more to say about things than we, or even they, might have suspected.

Table 1

Museum	Location	Dates Inhabited By Author(s)	Date Opened to Public	Approx. Number Annual Visitors	Overseer	Recent Renovations
Wordsworth's Dove Cottage	Grasmere, Lake District	1799-1808	1891	50 000 - 70 000	Wordsworth Trust	None reported
Wordsworth's Rydal Mount	Rydal, Lake District	1813-1850	1970	Unconfirmed	Descendants of the author	None reported
Keats House	Hampstead, London	1818-1820	1925	Unconfirmed	City of London / Metropolitan Archives	2007
Brontë Parsonage Museum	Haworth, West Yorkshire	1820-1861 (Patrick) 1820-1855 (Charlotte)	1895 (collection shown in village above Yorkshire Penny Bank) 1928 Parsonage opens	75 000	Brontë Society (founded 1893)	2013
Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford	Borders, near Melrose, Scotland	1824/5-1832	1833	80 000 at peak 25 000 (2004)	Descendants until 2007, now Abbotsford Trust	2012
Carlyle House	24 Cheyne Row, London	1834-1881	1895	Unconfirmed	National Trust	None reported
Charles Dickens Museum	48 Doughty St, London	1837-1839	1925	30 000 - 45 000	Dickens Fellowship 1923, now governed by an independent Trust	2012
Charles Darwin's Down House	Downe Village, Kent	1842-1882	1929, reopened 1998	40 000 - 45 000	English Heritage (from 1998)	1998
John Ruskin's Brantwood	Cumbria, Lake District	1872-1900	1951	30 000	Brantwood Charitable Trust	None reported
Freud Museum	20 Mansfield Gardens, Hampstead, London	Sigmund: 1938-1939; Anna: 1938-1982	1986	Unconfirmed	Trustees	None reported

Chapter One: The Writer's House/Museum

This thesis asserts that certain categories of things in a writer's house/museum are especially fit for the task of provoking and evoking a sense of encounter with the absent individual for whom they have come to stand. Both the nature of this encounter and the 'how' of this encounter – Bill Brown's 'how the thing things, and how it things the world' (*How* 936) must therefore be addressed.

This chapter will begin by establishing the physical ground or setting in which the things central to this thesis are located. Beginning with a brief overview of literary pilgrimages this chapter will contextualize literary tourism historically in order to support the idea that house/museum tourism is a mode of encounter conducive to a special kind of contact with a writer and their work.⁸

As I am arguing that there are six influential elements that structure or figure resonant encounters with a writer's things, those elements must be defined. This chapter looks at three of those elements beginning with autographic ascription (the ascription of a thing to the writer in question i.e. *Emily Brontë's* writing desk, *William Wordsworth's* spectacles, *Thomas Carlyle's* pen) which will be read via Mary Douglas's essay 'The Genuine Article'; authenticity which will be read via Anne Trubek's *A Skeptics Guide to Writers' Houses* and Judith Pascoe's ideas on 'authenticating narratives'; and contiguity – inherent in the first two elements –

⁸ My use of a forward slash between house and museum in this thesis ('house/museum') is due to the fact that some of the sites considered in this thesis call themselves 'houses' and some 'museums' (see Table 1) though it is also intended to signify the indication of a choice (for the visitor) in terms of the perception of the space considered regardless of its formal designation. One can, in this model, see a particular location primarily as a house, or primarily as a museum while simultaneously sensing a strong connection between the abutted designations. While some houses/museums 'feel' or are laid out more like houses and some 'feel' or are laid out more like museums, there is, inevitably, in the larger environment of each site an interplay between the two modes of representation (though not necessarily in an either/or fashion). All of the museums this thesis focuses on were once homes to the writers who form the museum's focus, as such a heightened sense of both the lived and the preserved / displayed life is inevitable. For simplicity's sake as the thesis progresses the term 'house' or the term 'museum' may be used to designate the house/museum setting, instances which will be telling in their own right as they will inevitably reflect perceptual modes of engagement with aspects of the site.

defined here as three different kinds of encounter and read alongside George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*.

Finally, in this chapter, the concept of 'resonance' in relation to meaningful encounters with a writer's things will be established. Informed by etymological readings of the word and Stephen Greenblatt's definition of resonance in his essay 'Resonance and Wonder' this definition will inform subsequent readings of worlding and presence. Once these three aspects of the figural elements of resonant experiences – and the concept of resonance itself – are clarified, a study of worlding things and categories of things related to the writer's house/museum collections can begin.

I – Sites of Encounter

One of the things all writers' houses/museums have in common is the idea of the literary text. The fact of authorship is, after all, the central reason the writer's house/museum exists in the first place. Each of the authors considered in this thesis produced a body of work that garnered readers – and not just in their respective lifetimes, but also across the generations that followed. As Harald Hendrix suggests in *Writers' Houses and the Making of Memory*, writers' houses 'attract readers that feel the need to go beyond their intellectual exchanges with texts and long for some kind of material contact with the author of those texts or the places where they originate' (1). This sense of encounter or communion with a writer through their work – and the desire to further that sense of encounter – is one of the reasons

writers' houses are so popular.⁹ As Mike Robinson asserts in his introduction to

Literature and Tourism:

As creative people, some writers become great sources of inspiration to their readership, who are not content merely to read and collect their works. They may also want to visit the writers' homes, in order to connect with the space where 'great' books came into being, to walk where the writers walked, to see what the writers saw. (xiii)

This suggestion, that a visit to a writer's house can generate a strong sense of connection to a work through contact 'with the space', is one of the reasons to visit a writer's house: to see where a treasured novel was 'born' and to encounter the material world that surrounded or supported its creation. This desire to connect with the world of the book means connecting with the world inhabited by its writer. Visits to writers' houses/museums are therefore also about the writer as a person. If the house or the 'home' is one of the places where we are most ourselves in the world, it follows that it would also be one of the places that holds or contains some trace of that truest self, even in that self's absence. To borrow Gaston Bachelard's phrase from *The Poetics of Space*, such a house is a 'domain of intimacy' (12).¹⁰ In a writer's house/museum this sense of intimacy with the house's former inhabitant is heightened because of the imagined intensity of the creative act: *here* is where the author's great work was written – an idea often supported visually by desks and

⁹ See Table 1 for the average annual visitor numbers for many of the houses/museums considered in this thesis. Note that houses/museums such as Scott's Abbotsford (undergoing an eight million pound renovation and due to reopen in July of 2013) while only attracting around 25 000 visitors in recent years attracted as many as 80 000 people a year at its peak in the late Victorian era (Wade). The Brontë Parsonage attracted 73, 408 visitors in 2012 (Hart) and Dove Cottage averages 70 000 a year while Ruskin's Brantwood and Dickens's House average around 30 000. Dickens's House also recently underwent a substantial 3.1 million pound renovation (in 2012) and expects to see visitor numbers rise to 45 000 in 2013 as a result (Huet). To put these numbers in context, a survey of 1547 museums by the British Tourist Authority in 1990 determined that the average annual attendance of all the museums surveyed was 48 000 though 83% of these attracted less than 50 000 visitors annually (Hooper-Greenhill 61).

¹⁰ In *The Poetics of Space* Bachelard suggests that the domain of intimacy is a domain in which psychic weight is dominant and that domains of intimacy are never repellent (12). This supports notions of the 'here' of the genesis of a great work as being a particularly compelling and potent location. While Bachelard's work on the house as a domain of intimacy and on the power of daydream and reverie *in* houses and *in relation to* houses does not focus on the writer's house in particular, Bachelard does provide a brief description of the 'deep sympathy' that can occur in the writer/reader relationship. In an introduction that focuses in part on poetic images Bachelard suggests that an aspect of 'the joy of reading appears to be the reflection of the joy of writing, as though the reader were the writer's ghost' (xxvi). For more on the sense of cohabitation that can occur between readers and writers see Georges Poulet's 'Phenomenology of Reading' in which Poulet suggests that in the act of reading 'I am thinking the thoughts of another' (1322) '...a thought which manifestly belongs to another mental world, which is being thought in me just as though I did not exist' (1323).

chairs, pens, papers and copies or drafts of the writer's work. As Mike Robinson suggests: 'Writer's homes as focal destinations provide tangible connections between the created and the creator, allowing tourists to engage in a variety of emotional experiences and activities. For literary pilgrims, however we may choose to define them, here lies the potential for intimacy, authenticity... (15).¹¹ In the writer's house/museum some of the most tangible of Robinson's 'tangible connections' are, as this thesis will show, the writer's material things: the quill pen that once connected the writer to the page and which now connects the visitor to a creative act in the past – images of the writer at work (in the form of conjured images or supporting drawings and photographs) which are powerful because they are so intimate – personal yet professional – the individual in the act of becoming the 'writer' they would later be known to be.

Simon Goldhill's 2011 literary travel book *Freud's Couch, Scott's Buttocks, Brontë's Grave* is, in some ways, a mediation on Robinson's use of the word 'potential' as quoted above: 'For literary pilgrims, however we may choose to define them, here lies the *potential* for intimacy, authenticity...' (Robinson 15, emphasis added). An adventure-tale of sorts (Goldhill is described as a 'guide' undertaking a 'pilgrimage' on the book's cover flap) *Freud's Couch, Scott's Buttocks, Brontë's Grave* begins with Goldhill describing himself as someone who is generally inured to the affective power of the very settings he is seeking out:

¹¹ See also Goldhill of his planned itinerary to Scott's, the Brontës', Wordsworth's, Freud's etc. houses: 'Each of these houses fired the imagination of its visitors. Each was taken as a fundamental expression of the writer and the writer's creative works: to visit them was not just an act of curiosity but to uncover an insight into the writer's self, a sign of the writer's self-expression, and to experience an encounter of serious significance for the visitor's self' (15). While I would argue that Goldhill is generalizing the visitor's investment ('serious significance for the visitor's self') to increase the dramatic revelation of his own skepticism (insomuch as I have met, during my research years, many visitors who have gone to a writer's house/museum out of mere curiosity, and on more than one occasion to get out of the rain) his suggestion that one of the fundamental attributes of a visit to a writer's house is the attainment of 'insight into the writer's "self"' supports one of the dominant narratives surrounding literary tourism.

I love books, need books, but I have little interest in authors and their things.... I have never visited a grave, at least not the grave of anyone famous. I have looked at autographs without breaking down.... As I came across stories of people weeping uncontrollably at the sight of Freud's couch, I became more and more baffled by the phenomenon I was about to trace. (15-16)

In tracing the phenomenon of literary tourism, however, Goldhill mistakenly suggests that literary pilgrimages began as a result of the cult of the author and the nineteenth century's 'media revolution' in book production and circulation:

Where very successful books in the eighteenth century had circulated in thousands, in the nineteenth century hundreds of thousands of copies of hot, new novels flooded the market and were eagerly devoured. One consequence of this media revolution is that writers became superstars....

It is not by chance, then, that in the nineteenth century we find a new phenomenon: the tour to visit writers' houses. The birthplace, the grave, the house where the writer lived, or even where the writer was now living – all, for the first time, became sites of pilgrimage. (7-8)

While Goldhill's suggestion that developments in the literary market contributed to the 'phenomenon' of literary pilgrimages – a fact supported by the corresponding *increase* in tourism to writers houses in the Victorian era¹² – he is wrong about the novelty of literary tourism ('new phenomenon' 'for the first time') thereby falsely ascribing the draw of sites of encounter (of making contact with a space and the things that define it) to the contingencies of an era and technological (or 'media')/consumer relations. In his essay 'The Early Modern Invention of Literary Tourism: Petrarch's Houses in France and Italy' Harald Hendrix notes that the poet Petrarch engaged in an early version of literary tourism in the 1340s visiting sites associated with Virgil near Naples (15). He also states that as early as 1544 German

¹² To give a context to what literary tourism looked like in the century: Robert Burns's (1759-1796) birthplace in Alloway was said to be drawing visitors from as far afield as the United States as early as 1817 (Robinson 13). By the 1840s – still during Wordsworth's lifetime – it was believed that Wordsworth (1770-1850) was receiving around 500 visitors a year at his Rydal Mount home (Robinson 13). By the middle of the nineteenth century, Stratford, Shakespeare's birthplace, was welcoming around 3000 visitors annually (M. Rosenthal 35). Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford could be seen as part of an organized tour by the late 1840s, and as Ann Rigney notes, not only was the railway starting to transport people closer to outlying areas where writers lived, railway companies were also publishing books instructing travelers on how to use the railway to get to 'the homes and haunts' of figures such as Scott and Burns (Rigney 'Abbotsford' 84, 85). By the end of the nineteenth century the Brontë Museum (not yet located in the Parsonage) was receiving approximately 3000 visitors annually (Robinson 147). Between July 26, 1895 and April 26, 1896 3,800 visitors were recorded at the newly opened Carlyle House (CH Catalogue 25).

students were said to be recording their visits to Petrarch's house by leaving their signatures on the fireplace in what was believed to be his bedroom (241) (an act that parallels the etching of signatures on the glass of Shakespeare's window or on the walls at what is reputed to be his house in Stratford-upon-Avon – signatures that include Thomas Carlyle's, Charles Dickens's and Sir Walter Scott's). Hendrix states that eventually Petrarch's home in Arquà was turned 'into a commemorative place of worship, making it into the oldest still existing museum dedicated to a poet we know of in Western culture' (23). All of this circa 1546 – centuries before anyone knocked on Wordsworth's door begging for an autograph. In *Literature and Tourism* Mike Robinson supports Hendrix's assertion that sites of encounter with literary figures have a long history, stating that 'personality-based tourism goes back many centuries and accounts for the preservation and/or design of a wide range of sites and attractions, including literary museums' (xvi).

Of course what a house adds to our understanding of an author's books or their life in that house is quite complex. For Ann Rigney, Sir Walter Scott's house was 'the material embodiment of the writer's life' ('Abbotsford' 81), a reading of co-determination supported by Christine Alexander's suggestion in 'Myth and Memory: Reading the Brontë Parsonage' that the children's study in the parsonage contributed to the 'fixing of the writing identity' – an identity that began in the small study's formative space 'before expanding to other parts of the house' (103). As Harald Hendrix notes, this kind of shaping works both ways: 'besides being shaped by writers, houses shape the writers dwelling in them' (4).

Ultimately a house – as an informed and *informing* thing – is a material record: the wear marks on the floor in the turret at Ruskin's Coniston house and the addition

of Carlyle's upstairs study tell us something about the lives lived there – a telling that is made possible by the sense that the house was a *material witness* to the writers' lives, even if what was witnessed (feelings, creative acts and so on) was itself immaterial. As Bachelard notes of houses in general: '...if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace' (6). This abstract sense of the writer dreaming, of the writer at work will be explored further in chapter five through a consideration of the writer's desk and tools, though it is important to note here, at the outset, that the house as a larger entity or enclosure is the location of not only the kind of daydreaming that might lead to a work like *Wuthering Heights* or *Rob Roy* or *Nicholas Nickleby*, but also the location of the kind of daydreaming that informs who one is in a larger sense.



Fig. 2. Emily Brontë's diary paper, 26 June 1837 © The Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth (Dinsdale, White frontispiece).

Emily Brontë's diary paper of the twenty-sixth of June 1837 (Fig. 2, above) is evidence of the way a writer's house shelters the daydreaming writer in that it replicates in both text and image the writer as a daydreaming individual in an environing world. The text tells us, among other things, that Anne is writing a poem, that Charlotte is working in Aunt's room and Branwell is reading to her, and that Tabby is in the kitchen. The sketch shows both Emily and Anne at work on a book and paper-strewn table against the backdrop of the drawing room. This is everyday life, it a record of the daydream both in the form of the reading going on upstairs, and the writing downstairs, but also in the form of Emily's own thinking, for as the diary paper (written with the intention that it will be read four years later) notes, the girls themselves are wondering about the future. On the lower part of the paper Emily has written: 'I wonder where we shall be and how we shall be and what kind of a day it will be then'.

Writers' houses/museums as such contain (and are containers of) these daydreams, daydreams of the sort that make art and constitute human beings. This is one of the main draws for the literary tourist – the house as a site that has the potential to bring the visitor into a special kind of contact with the writer *and* the writer's influential environs. All writers' houses have this in common – they are sites of encounter that are both personal and professional, that locate and embody both the human being and the cultural figure they would come to be.

II - The Autographic Object

One of the first factors to structure the experience of the writer's house/museum is the knowledge that one is entering a house or museum ascribed to a particular individual or set of individuals. In entering the house/museum and paying the fee a visitor is bringing whatever degree or kind of knowledge they have about the author(s) and books in question to their meeting with the author's domestic/museum site and things. In this way the conceptual aspect of the writer's house/museum – of the house/museum as *belonging to* or *being about* the Brontës or the Carlyles – is one of the most prevalent and immediate informing structures of the writer's house/museum experience. Of equal importance for this thesis is the fact that the things within the house/museum also tend to be read through the lens of the individual(s) to whom they were once ascribed. A reading of autographic objects as a determinate factor in resonant encounters with a writer's things is therefore useful – not because resonant encounters with things *depend* on the autographic designation (far from it, one can have a resonant encounter with a fake, prop, or replica; with a plastic bag billowing in a church graveyard, with any 'thing' at all) but because autographic ascription *orients* the resonant encounter and the worlding experience (the sense of connection, of access to the past described in chapter two) to a particular time, place and human being.

Haworth Parsonage was home to members of the Brontë family from 1820 to 1861. It contains the largest collection of Brontë-related material in the world including furniture, books, manuscripts, letters, and drawings as well as hundreds of personal items – from Charlotte's wedding bonnet, Emily's Christening mug, Anne's Biblical sampler, to locks of all the family members' hair. Over seven million visitors have

been to see the museum's collections over the course of its eighty-five year history (Dinsdale, Laycock, Akhurst 5); and the museum currently admits around 75,000 visitors a year (73,408 in 2012) (Hart). The Parsonage Museum is exceptional for the sheer volume of authentic things both on display and in storage, which is to say that while it does supplement its collection with reproductions or objects 'of the sort' that the Brontës owned, by and large the artefacts found in the house belonged to the Brontë family.¹³ The curators also diligently distinguish between those objects with certain provenance and those with ambiguous or unverifiable provenance i.e. 'Bonnet worn by Charlotte' versus a dress '*said* to have been worn by Charlotte' (Dinsdale and White 29, emphasis added). As stated in the souvenir guide to the museum: 'The Brontë Parsonage Museum seeks to separate myth from reality and to present the known facts about the family' (Dinsdale and White 5) and '[t]he majority of the rooms in the original Brontë part of the house are set out in as close an approximation as possible to their appearance in the Brontës' day, and most of the objects and furniture on display actually belonged to the family' (12). These objects – ones that 'actually belonged' to the Brontë family and which therefore constituted part of the Brontë family's domestic world – are 'autographic' objects: objects that have been raised to a special status through their association with, and ascription, to the family.

In her essay 'The Genuine Article' (published in *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*) the anthropologist Mary Douglas begins her consideration of the semiotics of objects and gift systems by referring to Nelson

¹³ In those cases where they do use reproductions, as with the beds (none are originals as very little of the bedroom furniture has survived) they have based the bed designs on sketches made by the children (one by Branwell and one by Charlotte) and had the furniture made locally (Dinsdale and White 32). The implications of this move, and particularly the implication of the sacrosanct or higher / more authentic value of the 'locally made' might be read as a way of positioning the furniture in as close a relation as possible to the original beds, as if some form of contiguity is possible via geographical proximity.

Goodman's investigation into the distinction between 'autographic' and 'allographic' entities in *Ways of Worldmaking* and *Languages of Art*. She notes that we only ask if something is a genuine or authentic object if it is the type of thing wherein its continuous history (what I refer to elsewhere as 'the thing's biography') would be a factor in its authenticity (12). For these 'autographic' objects (she later uses a Stradivarius violin as an example) 'the idea of authenticity is somehow central to their value'. An 'allographic' object on the other hand has a value that 'does not depend on its historic uniqueness' (12). Citing Goodman's comparison of paintings and photographs as singular and multiple symbol systems, Douglas notes that Goodman uses paintings (as unrepeatable entities) to signify the autographic, whereas photographs (as reiterations from a negative) – and not unique as such – are deemed 'allographic' (12). For Douglas, in her examination of the classification and flow of material objects, 'autographic objects' in keeping with Goodman's broader distinction, become those things that are considered authentic or genuine – 'the genuine article' (11) / the real thing – objects arising out of a particular history, whereas an 'allographic object' is one regarded largely as a type, one that 'does not require uniqueness, nor guaranteed continuity from the time it issued from its maker's hands' (12).

Douglas's reading of Goodman's terms is useful because she recognizes the ascriptional component of the two categories, describing, for example, how cultures with different relationships to art forms such as painting and music might undertake 'a collective decision about the kind of prestige and the amount of originality allowed to the various stages of production' a perception that may contribute to the assignation of what kind of object a painting or piece of music is (13-14). Douglas, in

applying the idea of the autographic to things, then draws a rather humorous analogy around a ‘pot of blue woad’. Here, the continuous and unbroken history of possession (having had the pot of woad handed down in the family versus buying it at the flea market) ‘rescues it from the anonymous miscellany... and turns it into an autographic product’ (16). Ultimately, Douglas states ‘[t]he autographic object cannot be separated entirely from people as can the other kind’ (17).

Douglas’s essay (which proceeds to consider autographic objects in relation to gift systems and the flow of gifts in the Wik-Mungkan community) and her assertion that an autographic object can be socially or culturally determined provides this thesis with a useful departure point for a consideration of two different categories of things in writers’ houses/museums. Building on Douglas and Goodman’s key distinctions I call objects that are deemed unique and irreplaceable due to their association with the absent writer ‘autographic’ and objects that are comparatively generic and replaceable (a ‘prop’ hat ‘of the type’ worn by Darwin) ‘allographic’. It is important to point out that even though Goodman’s example of autographic and allographic things in relation to art forms and aesthetics (a painting versus photographs) raises issues of origin and production (related in Goodman’s case to the number of ‘stages’ involved in an art form) (Douglas 19; Goodman, *Languages* 113-115) in the case of the writer’s house/museum the *production* (or reproduction) / origin of an object and the role of production in its classification is not a central concern – which is to say that whether Wordsworth’s chair was unique and therefore of a generally unrepeated kind or type (as the chair designed for Freud was) versus made amongst hundreds of ‘like’ models, matters less for my purposes than the *ascription* of autographic status

to a chair because of its connection with an individual ('*Wordsworth's chair*' or '*Dickens's chair*').

In my use of 'autographic' what constitutes autographic status is the belief that part or all of the object's 'life' parallels the life of the person with whom the object is associated; a shared biography usually supported by some form of provenance. This is to read what Douglas refers to as 'historical continuity' in a new way in that, for my purposes, the continuity of these objects' biographies generally either *proceeds from* the moment the object became associated with the figure whose relationship to it rendered it autographic (i.e. from the moment the chair became Wordsworth's or Dickens's) or refers to a period of unbroken ownership (i.e. a workbox that was Charlotte Brontë's when she was alive, but which may have passed through other hands either before or after her period of ownership). Thus, in this reading of the allographic / autographic distinction William Wordsworth's rather typical chair was arguably allographic until it became unique in status as *his*, just as Charlotte Brontë's workbox was arguably allographic until it was deemed irreplaceable through its connection with her. Anne Brontë's pebbles, gathered in Scarborough, were likewise allographic (exchangeable with other pebbles) until they were presented as 'her' collection. Emily Brontë's Christening mug on the other hand (a relatively plain white china cup with 'Emily Jane Brontë' inscribed in gilt cursive around the centre) was arguably autographic almost from the beginning of its 'life' (figuratively and literally), unless such mugs were made blank, sold as such, and inscribed later.

It is important to note here that things as such do not always remain categorically the same: allographic and autographic objects as Douglas employs the idea can transition *perceptually* from one kind to another (14). Such transitions can be (and

often are) readily experienced in the museums themselves when an object (such as a top hat or a sofa) is associated with a literary figure through the context of a museum and is only, after the initial encounter, signed as, or signaled to be a 'replica' or 'of the type' – at which point the viewer might subconsciously change their sense of the thing's category, ascribing a generic, repeatable quality (allographic) to something that minutes before was regarded as resonant and unique (autographic). As section four of this chapter will show contiguity is often the determining factor in such shifts – the visitor thinking they are looking at a synchronous object that connects them to the individual and era to which they believed it was ascribed, only to discover that it is remote either in terms of time (a replica) or space (not connected to the individual or location / brought in).

In relation to the kinds of resonance this thesis is concerned with, the transition of an object's status from allographic / indefinite (*a sofa, or a hat*) to autographic / definite '*the sofa Emily Brontë died on*' or '*the bonnet worn by Charlotte Brontë on her wedding day*' will almost always be ascriptional, meaning it will inevitably be determined by, or ascertained by the viewer – usually via an authenticating narrative from an authoritative source such as a tour guide, guidebook, museum sign or other such text, though the museum setting itself can imply autographic status. This is not to say that the object is not in actuality dual: a chair or a dress may still be of a reproducible or generic type (not highly individuated from others made in tandem with it; made from one plan or model) and hence still a carrier of allographic traits even as it is deemed autographic, rather it is to suggest that as soon as it is given autographic status (in our case because of its association with a particular figure whose own biography makes the object and *its biography* matter) our sense of its

significance renders it autographic (and irreplaceable) and its uniqueness or lack of uniqueness as a ‘made thing’ becomes, by and large, secondary to its association with a ‘famous’ person. Thus, the association between a thing and a person (or, more correctly: *the* thing and *the* person) is one of the most obvious contributors to the resonance or aura of the things considered in this thesis. Again, as Douglas suggests, ‘[t]he autographic object cannot be separated entirely from people as can the other kind’ (17). Here, however, the person is not ‘the maker’ as in Douglas’s example of a Stradivarius violin, but the person with whom the object lived.

This is not to say that a thing’s autographic status or its evocativeness is something wholly conjured by the viewer. While Douglas acknowledges the role of the community in making something autographic through the ‘readiness of the public to confer authority’ and the ‘decision taking in the community of users about the distribution of prestige and reward’ (14) I would argue that *two* significant factors play into the ascription of autographic status to resonant things: 1) community agreement in the form of provenance or authenticating narratives (narratives that affirm the thing’s association with an individual and which are related to what Douglas calls ‘continuous context’ or ‘continuous history’) (16); and 2) the fitness of the thing to be seen as autographic. This is to read Douglas’s original assertion that communities make things autographic as a part of a larger dynamic, and to suggest (and as Douglas does glancingly in the latter part of her essay when considering exchange or gift rituals) that things also make communities or, in this case, that certain things demand autographic status even as we go about ascribing it.¹⁴

Narratives of encounter in this thesis demonstrate that just as certain types of objects

¹⁴ It is possible, of course, to insist that every object is inherently autographic, with its own genuine history, life story and identity, which is to see something more encompassing than ‘production’ as determinant of autographic ascription – a suggestion of infinite individuation consistent with Heidegger’s observation in *What is a Thing?* that every thing is ‘this thing here’ or ‘this particular one’ occupying its own location and set apart from other such things (11; 14-26).

have a fitness to the task of presencing absent individuals, so too, do they have an autographic nature; that, in fact, an autographic nature is one of the factors that contributes, as chapters three to six will show, to the use of certain types of things as remembrancers.

III – Authenticity

Tied to the issue of a thing's autographic status is the perception of the thing as authentic. In the writer's house/museum the concept of authenticity is predominantly based on contiguity – the notion or sense that the thing in question actually lived alongside or had contact with the writer for whom it has come to stand. Accordingly 'authentic' objects in writers' houses/museums tend to be understood as those objects that have been declared autographic by ascription and which are contiguous to the writer and their lifetime. They are objects that seem to have retained, on the whole, a sense of integrity, so that even if the object has been modified or changed (as some of the houses/museums themselves were) what is essential in the thing remains. Authentic objects furthermore, are objects that cannot be replaced, objects whose histories matter.

Authenticity as such is signaled in many ways in the house/museum. First of all through the encultured context of the museum setting itself and any number of already-formed, generalized concepts of a 'museum' – concepts that might include 1) the belief that the objects contained within such structures have some kind of value (whether cultural, historical, artistic or monetary); 2) the belief that the objects have been procured, selected, or curated by a collective with specialized knowledge – and

more specifically by a collective that believes said objects have relevance or value for the larger (visiting) collective; 3) a belief that the house/museum as a museum of sorts (versus a shop) deals in objects that have a special status which warrants their protection or conservation; and finally 4) a belief that the museum space as such is unique, marked off from other spaces not only architecturally (by doors, walls, locks and limits on access) but also by the process of admittance or ‘going in’. This is not to suggest that house/museum visitors are not actively creating their own experiences of these museums, or that concepts of ‘museums’ do not vary significantly, it is simply to suggest that, in Britain, those sites of encounter deemed ‘museums’ might carry within their very ascription a sense of ‘authentic’ encounter. As Sarah Tetley and Bill Bramwell note in ‘Tourists and the Cultural Construction of Haworth’s Literary Landscape’:

Too much tourism research has assumed that people are not in active negotiation with their material and symbolic environment, but are passively shaped by it. It is contended here that when people visit a literary destination they make their own sense and value, their own knowledge, albeit negotiated within a myriad of influences. (157)

The writer’s house/museum designation is one of these myriad influences. More overt signs that might influence a visitor’s sense of the authentic within the house/museum setting tend to come in one of three forms: *verbal* (via tour guides, staff, curators, audio guides); *textual* (guidebooks, signs, interpretative panels, labels, articles or books on the site)¹⁵ or *contextual* (this includes the use of display cases, pedestals, spot lights, roped barriers, alarms, monitors or guards and so on). As Anne Trubek notes in her book *A Skeptic’s Guide to Writers’ Houses*: ‘We were allowed to

¹⁵ In *Museums and their Visitors*, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill divides textual encounters in museums into text that orientates or gives practical information, and knowledge-based text ‘concerned with specific subject matters’ (124). She divides the latter category further into text experienced within the museum space and ‘text that may form part of this experience, but which have the potential to be read in another place at another time i.e. leaflets, guides, catalogues, teachers’ packs and books’ (125). The work of the writers themselves, biographies, articles and so forth would obviously contribute significantly to one’s sense of authentic encounter in the house/museum as these narratives would fill-in or contextualize aspects of both the writers’ lives and the spaces they inhabited.

sit on the furniture' (48) a permission in a house/museum visit context that signaled that the furniture was not the real thing.

Verbal and *textual* narratives in a house/museum are some of the most direct ways to establish a sense of authenticity for the visitor – the sense that the things one is encountering are 'real'; that they lived with the writer in question. These assertions or testimonies whether coming in the form of a label ('Memorial Ring with Lock of Sir Walter Scott's Hair' as at Abbotsford); a guidebook ('A painting of the Wordsworths' dog Pepper, a gift to the family from Sir Walter Scott' (Dove Cottage 1)); or a guided tour are all overt indicators of what is real or of value. Such indicators assert which objects have been in contact with the writer(s) while also serving as subliminal pointers to what matters most in the setting.

While context plays a vital role in affective or resonant experience, context can sometimes be misleading, especially in those cases where objects that are perceived to have life stories that parallel the writer's turn out to be anachronistic or allographic (such as the *chaise longue* in the Keats' Museum which is unrelated to Keats but located where his *chaise longue* once was). As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill notes in *Museums and their Visitors*:

Although museums and galleries are fundamentally concerned with objects, these objects are always contextualized by words. Museums are in fact perhaps as much concerned with words as they are with objects, although in many ways, because of the focus on the material object, the words have become invisible. (115)

It is partly for this reason – the way words contextualize and direct readings of, and encounters with, material things – that textual and verbal narratives matter, for not only do such 'authenticating narratives' establish or confirm aspects of an object's

life history or provenance when the context is not clear, they also confer autographic status through their assertion of synchrony.

In *The Hummingbird Cabinet: A Rare and Curious History of Romantic Collectors*, Judith Pascoe examines the growing interest in collecting and collections in the Romantic era, an activity that included the acquisition and display of literary artefacts and artefacts associated with historical personalities. In discussing artefacts related to Napoleon she raises the issue of the authenticating narrative, describing how both texts and individuals can support the case for authenticity, as when Napoleon's carriage went on display in tandem with Napoleon's former coach driver, Jean Hornn, whose presence served to support the carriage's authenticity (98-100). Pascoe notes that '[w]here there is a Napoleonic teapot or tongue scraper there is an authenticating narrative ready to lash itself to history' narratives that seek to corroborate or prove through a 'mixture of hard fact and innuendo' that something (she uses a piece of intestine reputed to be Napoleon's as one example) is what a purveyor says it is (100).

Using Napoleonic artefacts as an example of the sorts of things needing authenticating narratives (other chapters focused on collections related to Shelley and Queen Charlotte), Pascoe notes that '[a]s the moment of acquisition of a particular object recedes further and further into the distant past, the conscientious collector or curator strives ever harder to tease out the bits of corroborating evidence that will definitively confirm the object's unique status' (100).

The writers' museums considered in this thesis are, of course, full of such authenticating narratives, narratives that strive to provide 'corroborating evidence' that confirm 'the object's unique status' – evidence that might be outwardly visible

in the form of those museum texts intended to guide or inform the public (such as the one describing the provenance of the horse hair sofa at the Parsonage) but which would also exist in the more private form of a museum's catalogue data-base and archival files; files that document the facts of an object's life-story in as much detail as possible.

Pascoe, for her part, is less interested in the use of authenticating narratives for institutional purposes, and focuses instead on the kinds of authenticating stories traded amongst collectors, ones that are likely to be imbued with half-truths or misrepresentations; stories that can mix 'hard fact and innuendo' or be bolstered by tangential associations (100-101). While Pascoe's use of the idea of an authenticating story is interesting – in part because it forefronts the role of anecdote and personal accounts in establishing or 'faking' provenance – the role of authenticating narratives isn't analyzed at length in the book. While she does describe some of the ways authenticating narratives can be delivered (as in Jean Hornn's physical testimony of the authenticity of Napoleon's carriage as its former coach) the *effect* of authenticating narratives on the apprehension of objects, or the various forms that authenticating narratives can take (verbal, textual, contextual i.e. as testimony, anecdote, text, display label, etc.) aren't considered. Still, Pascoe's arguments – that the trade in relics represented a kind of 'material longing' (3), that the Romantics had a preoccupation with authenticity (see esp. 23), and that narratives play a role in establishing the credible or documentable continuous history of an authentic collectible (see esp. 100) are useful because they suggest that many of the dynamics of Victorian resonant encounters with things were already established before the Victorian era. In much the same way that visitors to the Dickens Museum today have

sometimes managed to pinch a bit of Dickens's desk leather for themselves, so too did visitors help themselves to bits of Napoleon's carriage in the form of its interior lining (109). But where many of the relics Pascoe studies float freely through the world from one collector to another or one special display to another, the objects in this thesis tend to be grounded in a location that itself imbues the things under its roof with an air of the authentic. With this in mind a reading of authenticity that is grounded in the setting of the writer's house/museum is prudent.

Anne Trubek's *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses*, published in 2011, deals with the question of authenticity and settings repeatedly. Although it is a book about an American woman's trips to the houses of American writers (Whitman, Twain, Poe, Emerson etc.) – visits that are, therefore, occurring in a significantly different cultural, political and socio-economical environment¹⁶ – Trubek's attention to the question of authenticity affirms the role of both the setting and the autographic things within it in enhancing one's sense of resonance. Trubek's book is also valuable because her deconstruction of encounters with things that fail to resonate reveals a set of assumptions about what *ought to happen* or what she believes a visitor expects to experience in these spaces of encounter. Which is to say that even as she refutes

¹⁶ Trubek's literary travelogue offers something most of the literary travelogues set in the UK do not: clearly articulated examples of how the locations and houses fail to resonate. This kind of criticism provides a useful framework for considering the slippage that can occur in houses stuffed with the questionable or inauthentic. That said, it should be noted that Trubek's concerns go beyond the literary: she frequently delves into considerations of American identity and of the socio-economic environments the writers' houses are set in, for example, of Mark Twain's Hannibal she notes: 'Hannibal was not like my fantasy of it or of our mythic depictions of small-town America' (36) (see also 15,29,35,36,47,76,135,142). This is likely due in part to Trubek's assertion that writers' houses/museums 'are not timeless gems tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the world. They are complicated and complicating parts of the landscape of the present' (69) a statement that seems less true for the writers' museums considered in this thesis, all of which contribute to local economies and all of which are valued cultural markers in their respective landscapes; landscapes that are generally associated with or congruently identified with the writers who lived there. Trubek, for the most part, seems focused on the kind of incongruities that might impede any sense of an authentic experience i.e. the jail adjacent Whitman's home, the replica cabin at Walden Pond, a Hemingway museum house that she notes 'contains few actual Hemingway possessions. Like Key West, the Hemingway house is sincerely fake' (71). Congruency is exceptional enough that she notes it when she finds it i.e. 'The house's aura of New England aristocracy gives it a grace that sits well with Emersonianism... The museum fits the museumed...' (50). For contrasting examples in British house/museum culture one has to look no further than the travel sections of major newspapers to see that in the UK 'literary landscapes' do exist conceptually and that writers' house/museum tourism is not uncommon or exceptional.

the accessibility of the dead author in these (mostly failed) settings she is acknowledging a set of expectations around a museum visitor's sense of encounter with some aspect of the once-living author, especially that of a sense of connection or nearness that might approximate intimacy, and of objects as evocative/worlding forces. Her very refusals 'I felt no spirit, no ghosts, and no aura' (21) actually acknowledge the dominant narrative, which is to say the kind of affective experiences that can and do happen in museums that get it right.

For Trubek – a self-described skeptic who sees writers' houses as attempting 'to do the impossible: to make physical – to make real – acts of literary imagination' – the literary pilgrimage (and the 'astoundingly sincere' curators) provoke 'a knee-jerk cynicism' (5). Accordingly, her trips to a number of American writers' houses are predominantly disappointing. But it is not her overt cynicism that is revealing (Simon Goldhill's UK literary travelogue of the same year is also written from a somewhat cynical standpoint), rather what Trubek's book demonstrates more than any other first-person account on the topic is how a discrepancy in the house/museum setting between the authentic and the inauthentic can affect the experience.

The first house Trubek writes about (and the first one she visited) was Walt Whitman's. In relation to Whitman's house in Camden – 'this desolate city' (21) – she writes: 'I felt no spirit, no ghosts, and no aura. His boot-soles did nothing for me. I could not conjure up any lines, imagine him composing on the right armrest of his rocking chair, or even speculate on American indifference to its native voices, then or now' (21). This is one of the reoccurring themes in the book: the ways in which the houses *fail* to properly or convincingly evoke the dead writer or the relations (world) that come with the writer's life and things, and the ways in which even

relatively convincing depictions actually strike false notes or offer simplified narratives. Of the Twain house in Hartford she writes: '[h]is house museums cannot get him right.... Their misreadings are poignant' (41). But it isn't just the Hartford museum that gets it wrong, she also criticizes the trend of 'false historical markers' – narratives that commemorate events from fictional works i.e. a sign on a street in Mark Twain's Hannibal, Missouri that states: 'This was the home of Becky Thatcher, Tom Sawyer's first sweetheart' – which is impossible, given that Becky was a fictional character of Twain's (34). Of this confabulation she states: 'When writers' houses veer over the line into trying to fictionalize fiction, as it were, without any awareness they are so doing, they become overly sincere. They take the concept of historic preservation too literally and too far, and end up preserving fiction alongside fact...' (33).

This inconsistent terrain, one in which the authentic is often met by, or superseded by, the inauthentic, is one of the factors that most obviously elides with, or seems to contribute to, Trubek's flat experiences of writers' houses. This is supported by the fact that the words 'replica' or 'fake' appear numerous times in her book. Of Emerson's museum she writes: 'The room we were in was a replica, with a replica of the circular table, at which Emerson wrote.... Replica bookshelves line the entire far wall, and replica wheat-looking wallpaper pops from behind the fireplace' (48). Of Thoreau's replica cabin (built in 1985): 'I never went to the replica house' (54). Of Hawthorne's house: 'In the Sky Parlour is the standard writers' house fake manuscript on top of the standing desk that Hawthorne used' (64) – a description that seems to imply that the fake manuscript (or the fact of its fakeness on top of the desk) mars any possible sense of an authentic encounter with the real standing desk.

Interestingly, Trubek also, in the Emerson chapter, uses an inverse term for replica – ‘nonreplicated’ – a term that echoes one of the autographic/allographic distinctions raised by Douglas (in that autographic things are not replicas) – but which also, strangely seems to deny authenticity even as it asserts it. For example: ‘The Emerson family still owns the place, and they keep some of his nonreplicated stuff here: his walking sticks, his dressing gown, and his hat, which sits on a peg in the foyer’ (48-49). It is this cluster of *nonreplicated* stuff, this ‘authentic’ stuff sitting in an authentic context that she ultimately finds affective: ‘I stared long and hard at Emerson's hat on that peg, and, I must admit, felt chills’ (49).

These distinctions – between the effects of replicated versus non-replicated things on the author – is useful because embedded within these experiences is a sense of both affect (chills) and affective absence (I felt no...) and the role of the authenticating narrative in the encounters. Fake things often appear ‘fake’ – but replicas usually need to be distinguished for us, as was the case in the Emerson house where Trubek went on a guided tour. In those environments where fake and replica and ‘real’ are mixed (especially those that favour fakes and replicas) settings become problematic: the sense of a setting’s pastness, of past events, and of residual presence is interrupted; narratives that might begin in the imagination – ‘this is where X happened’ – are broken up. Of course, settings are made of things and the things themselves contribute to the visitor’s sense of encounter. As Trubek asserts: ‘sometimes the things a writer's house proffers fail to align with our romantic images of the author. At Emily Dickinson’s house, the bedside chamber pot smashes many a hoped-for reverie’ (108). This ‘smashing’ prevents the object from worlding, though in this case the break comes from the perception of the thing’s lack of fitness in

relation to the expected cultural and biographical narratives. Here the thing evokes the author but the contiguity is of the wrong sort, bordering on the taboo and therefore interrupting a sense of encounter with the individual with whom it is associated.¹⁷

In the end, Trubek's most resonant experience occurs in the Dayton, Ohio house of the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). In the chapter on Dunbar's house she describes how:

On the day Paul died, [his mother] Matilda closed the door to Paul's study. She never let anyone inside for the thirty years she lived in the house afterward.... All the dishes and all the furnishings throughout the house are original, down, hauntingly, to Paul's toothbrush and mug in the upstairs bathroom, and Matilda's needle and thread. Paul's funeral flowers are still in the house, and they were the first things Matilda looked at in the morning and last thing at night.

In her will, Matilda left directions for how to preserve Paul's effects.... So Paul's bedroom looks exactly as it did in 1906. (122)

For Trubek the setting is 'not reconstructed, not set up "as if he were living here today"' (122) it is an authentic place that has not been interfered with or filled with false things as so many of her other houses had been. Dunbar's toothbrush and mug facilitate a sense of everydayness, of the lived life. She states, unskeptically: 'I love the Paul Laurence Dunbar House in Dayton, Ohio. I love it because it is full of just the longing that I am seeking in these small museums' (123). For Trubek the preservation of the house without intervention (its contiguity), and the act of memorialization and the sense of vigil that preservation signifies provide the unbroken narrative she is looking for. She notes that she 'can trace a direct line from the house' to those people (among them Matilda Dunbar – Paul's mother) with

¹⁷ In her article 'I want to see Emily Dickinson's chamber pot' Laura Miller argues for the positive humility in the chamber pot. She states: 'For me, it's the mundanity that gives most writers' houses their charm. I don't much care if all the objects are authentic, especially if the originals were pretty generic and undistinguished to begin with. In a way, the humbler, the better – and nothing is humbler than the interchangeable'. For Miller the 'thrill' comes from the work created in the space, the idea that '[m]asterpieces can happen anywhere' and that while 'Dickinson may have been incandescently brilliant and gifted' she needed a chamber pot like everyone else (L. Miller). Interestingly here Miller seems to resign herself – 'I don't much care' – to allographic copies of allographic things, which implies that she still values the sense of an accurate and authentic atmosphere.

whom she associates it (123). This direct line exists because the setting is authentic, because her experience of the house/museum wasn't broken up by, or marred by fakes, replicas, or false ascriptions to fictional events (as in the Twain case). Trubek's own narrative of encounter supports this, as noted earlier she describes how 'all the furnishings throughout the house are original, down, *hauntingly*, to Paul's toothbrush and mug...' (122 emphasis added). To be haunted is to feel a presence; a presence evoked in this case by a setting that exudes authenticity; a setting enlivened by the resonant effect of autographic things; things that lived alongside the writer.

IV – Contiguity

As one of the dominant factors in resonant encounters with a writer's things contiguity will be discussed in various ways throughout this thesis. Still, a brief analysis of what is conceptualized by contiguity is necessary as it informs the concept of encounter.

Contiguity as narratives of encounter in this thesis suggest, is both about touch and being touched, meaning it is about both the physical and affective aspects of contact or nearness. Contiguity should thusly be understood in three ways: 1) as the 'condition of touching or being in contact' (OED) – a definition that foregrounds actual physical touch; 2) contiguity as an instance of proximity or nearness, a contact that might, for example, be predominantly visual but palpable in a bodily sense as in '[c]lose proximity, without actual contact' (OED) and 3) as contact in an abstracted sense: contiguity as inhabitation; as immersion in an environment or atmosphere in which a sense of correspondence (of being in contact with 'X') comes to the fore.

This last definition is intended to encompass the feeling of being in proximity to, or in contact with, the *site* of a past event or past events, such as the place where the great novel was written, or where the author's death occurred, as per a visitor's comments in the guest book at the Parsonage in 2011: 'I liked being slightly scared by thinking someone died on the sofa'.

As later chapters will show, one of the reasons human beings tend to utilize material objects as remembrancers is because the idea of contact or contiguity makes them especially fit for the task of evocation. In many cases remembrancers bear the marks or trace of contact or cohabitation with the person with whom they were most deeply associated. This sense of material marking – evident, for example, in Dickens's description of Scott's hat, or in the worn spot on the floor at Brantwood where John Ruskin liked to stand and look out at Coniston's waters – can create a special sense of access to a person or an event locatable as having occurred *there*.

Contiguity: cases one and two

Writers' houses/museums tend to discourage physically touching the objects. While some of the museums in this study allow a greater degree of access to the things themselves – you can touch Sir Walter Scott's desk and chair, and Thomas Carlyle's for example – others limit access to things through the use of closed displays such as cabinets or cases, or via barriers such as stanchions and ropes. Darwin's and Freud's studies, filled with hundreds of original – and pocketable – objects, are, unlike the former examples, made inaccessible. (Dickens's desk in the first floor study of his museum was, until recently, wholly accessible: wedged up against a wall without a

barrier to protect it so that not only could one touch it or its chair if one wished, but the likelihood existed that in moving around other visitors one might bump up against it – as I did. A stanchion with cables was recently added to protect it.)

Ultimately, all of the museums considered here offer varying (and sometimes changing) degrees of access, some foregrounding the ‘house’ aspect of the house/museum and some the museal. In the renovated Dickens Museum, there are booklets instead of barriers in the rooms, each text establishing the context or aspects of the provenance of the various pieces, under which a notice reads ‘Please do not touch. Even clean hands will damage these special objects’.¹⁸ The taboo on touching in the writer’s house/museum is therefore twofold: in touching the things there is the potential for the things to become worn or effaced, but also implied in the taboo is the sense that these objects have retained some sense of contiguity with the author, that they were last (or mostly) held or touched by the writers in question. Especially in the case of those objects set off in displays and made remote through cases, stanchions etc. there is the intimation that some manifestation of the author’s hand on the thing remains. These aspects of contiguity – touching and proximity to the trace of touch – foreground the first and second definition of contiguity: contiguity as physical touch and contiguity as an instance of proximity or nearness to that contact. In this analysis contiguity in the *second sense* (nearness) presences the author’s body in its contiguous – or physical – *first sense* in the form the author’s relations with the object in question.

¹⁸ These signs are useful reminders but what is most striking in an immersion environment is how much the objects *ask* to be touched. I am not particularly affectively invested in Dickens but I found the age and wear of his Rosewood table very moving. It dates back to the 1820s and is leather-topped and cracked and worn and once resided in Dickens’s library. The desire to touch the table was overwhelming, as was the case with Scott’s chair and Carlyle’s desk and Jane Carlyle’s screen all of which were marked by use and time.

The ability of the untouchable (once-touched) thing to presence the author suggests that being close to the object and visually apprehending it may almost be preferable to an environment where everyone is allowed to handle it. In its remove there is a sense that what one is observing is the object seemingly preserved *as it was* in relation to the author her or himself. In touching something anyone can touch there is a sense of layered contact on or over the thing, the veiling or effacement of its connection with the individual with whom it was most profoundly associated.

In this way some of the most powerful contiguous encounters in a writer's house/museum are based on being proximate to or close to the object *as it was* but not actually touching it.¹⁹ In such instances the power of contiguity lies in the historical biography of the thing and its bodily/material encounters with the now-absent author; encounters preserved by the thing's removal from circulation.

Virginia Woolf's encounter with Charlotte Brontë's things in the pre-Parsonage Brontë Museum supports this suggestion of the power of proximity and demonstrates that one can feel a sense of touch – in the form of *being touched* – without physically handling the object. In an article describing a visit to Haworth published in *The Guardian* in 1904 (an article that was not sentimental – Woolf called the museum a 'pallid and inanimate collection of objects') Woolf (then Virginia Stephen, though the article was uncredited) described looking at Charlotte's shoes and dress under glass, stating:

But the most touching case – so touching that one hardly feels reverent in one's gaze – is that which contains the little personal relics of the dead woman. The natural fate of such things is to die before the body that wore them, and because these, trifling and transient though they are, have survived, Charlotte Brontë the woman comes to life, and one forgets the chiefly memorable fact

¹⁹ It is interesting that in actually getting to touch these untouchable things (as I have sometimes been able to do in my research) one tends to have a powerful and direct sense of contact with the individual with whom they are associated. Logically I know Charlotte's wedding bonnet has been held, moved, transported, cleaned and so forth by dozens if not hundreds of individuals but its autographic ascription overwhelms the abstract others who have likely touched it and makes me feel connected to *her*.

that she was a great writer. Her shoes and her thin muslin dress have outlived her. (Woolf *Haworth*)

It is not uncommon that the word ‘touching’ – Woolf’s ‘the most touching case – so touching’ – is used for those experiences that seem to move us or connect us, even when no physical touching occurs or is allowed. This is the power of an encounter with authentic things, even at a slight remove. As things that mark Charlotte’s absence and as things that were marked by her (for Woolf, marking Brontë more as a woman than as a writer), Charlotte’s shoes and dress bring a figure ‘to life’.

Woolf’s ‘touching,’ her feeling touched, is contiguity based on an instance of proximity or nearness. In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By* the authors identify descriptions of this kind as a special case of metaphor, asserting that our everyday conceptual system is fundamentally metaphoric in nature and that this conceptual system and our varying articulations of concepts such as ‘up is good’ or ‘argument is war’ help to reveal our perceptions of everyday realities (3). This theory has significant ramifications in that, as the authors suggest, ‘communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting’ (3) which implies that *what* we say has direct correlations to *how we think* conceptually. The authors suggest that within the words we use is our concept of what we are discussing, which implies that when we say we were ‘touched’ by something in those cases where no physical touch occurred, we are describing (metaphorically) not what the situation *was like* (a simile) but rather, how *it was* for us: as if contact was made. Lakoff and Johnson’s reading of conceptual metaphors in this case provides a clue as to how affective encounters with resonant objects might be read: as a form of contact.

Lakoff and Johnson identify two special cases of metaphor that are applicable to Woolf's narrative and others in this thesis like it. They are: 1) 'seeing is touching; eyes are limbs' and 2) 'emotional effect is physical contact' (50). Their examples of 'seeing is touching; eyes are limbs' include: 'I can't *take my eyes off* her. He sits with his eyes *glued to* the TV. Her eyes *picked out* every detail of the pattern. Their eyes *met...*'. Examples of 'emotional effect is physical contact' include: 'I was *struck* by his sincerity. That really *made an impression* on me. He *made his mark on* the world. I was *touched* by his remark' (50). Touch in this way – being 'touched' – is not always a physical act but rather, an affective encounter figured through metaphor – an analysis that enlarges the concept of 'contiguity' in resonant encounters.

Contiguity: case three

What does it mean when visitors to a writer's house/museum leave comments describing the house/museum as 'atmospheric' – a word that appears numerous times in the Parsonage visitor's comment book: 'Very atmospheric'; 'Atmospheric and deeply moving'; 'Loved the atmosphere'; 'Fascinating, authentic, atmospheric; can feel the presence'; 'Atmospheric, authentic and spiritual'.²⁰ Here 'atmospheric' likely refers to the tone or 'feel' of the house/museum setting and the abstract way the things within it signal – or are felt to be imbued with – a sense of time, place, and person for the visitor.²¹ Returning to Margaret Gibson's *Objects of the Dead* – her

²⁰ From the Brontë Museum Visitor Comments Summary: April 2010, April 2011, March 2011, July 2011 and July 2011 respectively.

²¹ Rebecca Chesney's 'The Brontë Weather Project' undertaken during a yearlong residency at Haworth (from Sept 2011) plays conceptually with ideas around weather, atmosphere and resonance. Chesney had locals collect weather data every day for a year and compared those patterns to descriptions in the Brontë novels. Rather than just examining the weather of the past, she

study of objects related to death and commemoration – Gibson notes that ‘[e]ven without the presence of grief, objects can “create an atmosphere of vague solicitation” such that we become aware of living in and amidst things that have histories beyond present knowledge and the powers of recollection’ (183). This ‘atmosphere of vague solicitation’ wherein objects exude a sense of pastness, of their own biographies and stories, relates to the idea of contiguity in the third (abstract) sense: contiguity as inhabiting, as immersion in an environment or atmosphere in which a sense of correspondence (being in contact with ‘X’) comes to the fore. The question, however, of what one is inhabiting becomes problematic: The space where she wrote? The room where he slept? The house where they lived? All of these are possible, both in their concrete delineation but also in a larger more abstracted sense – the kind that infuses Wordsworth and the Lakes, the Brontës and the moors.

In *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson also suggest that one of the metaphors that informs our conceptual life is the container metaphor. They state:

We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus we also view them as containers with an inside and an outside. Rooms and houses are obvious containers. Moving from room to room is moving from one container to another, that is, moving *out of* one room and *into* another. We even give solid objects this orientation, as when we break a rock open to see what’s inside it. We impose this orientation on our natural environment as well.... But even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container, we impose boundaries—marking off territory so that it has an inside and a bounding surface—whether a wall, a fence, or an abstract line or plane. There are few human instincts more basic than territoriality. (29)²²

sought correspondences between past weather and contemporary weather in the same location. The implication in much of her work is that the atmosphere in Haworth now is connected to the atmosphere of Haworth in the Brontës’ lifetimes.

²² The idea of the ontological model of containment also appears in Dan Miller’s *Stuff* in relation to what he describes, in his reading of clothes in Trinidadian culture, as the Western depth ontology. Employing Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor reading technique he describes phrases that support the dominance of the depth ontology, examples that also support the container ontology:

We possess what could be called a *depth ontology*. The assumption is that *being* – what we truly are – is located deep inside ourselves and is in direct opposition to the surface. A clothes shopper is shallow because a philosopher or a saint

Here Lakoff and Johnson are suggesting that depth ontologies are not only about how we see ourselves but also reflective of how we see and spatialize the world. This means that a sense of contiguous inhabitation might be bounded in an abstract non-physical way: one is *in the middle of* a great story; one is *in* Wordsworth's Lake District – two examples that reflect Lakoff and Johnson's suggestion that we impose boundaries on locations without physical barriers. This idea of the container metaphor informs aspects of contiguity. If we read places as spatialized and ourselves as *in* them, then we are 'in' the same places that the absent writer has been. This can take the form of being 'in the Lake District' or 'in Carlyle's house' or of 'standing in the spot where Dickens wrote *Great Expectations*'. This container ontology gives spaces a sense of delineation and location making them spaces that can be *shared* despite the passage of time.

V – Resonance

On 1 October 1852 Thomas Carlyle wrote a letter to his good friend Lady Ashburton describing his visit to the room in Wartburg where Martin Luther (1483-1546) had lived when translating the Bible, and to Friedrich von Schiller's (1759-1805) house in Weimar. Of Luther's residence he wrote:

[H]is old room is still there, unchanged, his old oak-table, the very floor he walked upon; the window he looked out of (into sheer abysses, over lonely mountains, into uncertainties, immensities and eternities),—poor old fellow: I felt that there was not probably in the Earth a more truly *sacred* spot than that

is deep. The true core to the self is relatively constant and unchanging and also unresponsive to mere circumstance. We have to look deep inside ourselves to find ourselves. But these are all metaphors. Deep inside ourselves is blood and bile, not philosophical certainty. (16-17)

Here, Miller, using the depth metaphor to clarify how Westerners understand being, also employs the container metaphor: 'deep inside ourselves' is both 'deep' and 'inside'.

same; and I did my worship (being in a *sleepless* excited condition) with great fervour there. We were next in Gotha, and then— three days in Weimar itself, Schiller's old writing-table (the correct image of your model at The Grange, or rather *vice-versa*) is still there; his little poor harpsichord and beside it poor bed where he died, picture of his face when dead: that room also is rather memorable to me. (CLO)

What is it about writers' houses that create for some visitors such an affective sense of a past world and its former inhabitants? What does it mean when visitors to the Brontë parsonage use the word 'aura' to describe the feeling in the house, or 'atmospheric' or 'Alive!' or write 'I was touched' in the comments book, or '[i]t brought me closer to them'? What does it mean that for some people the museum experience is *so* resonant they describe the house as having an 'overwhelming aura'?²³

These ideas – of experiencing an atmosphere, of feeling 'closer' to the past, of encountering something 'sacred' with contiguous powers (something 'unchanged', 'same', 'still there' to use Carlyle's words) are aspects of 'resonance' a mode of encounter alluded to frequently in narratives surrounding meaningful things even though the word is seldom defined or interrogated.²⁴ This section will develop a concept of resonance as related to writers' houses/museums and writerly things in order to ensure that the term is grounded conceptually as a kind of encounter. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of the word and Stephen Greenblatt's

²³ From the Brontë Museum Visitor Comments Summary: April 2010, July 2010, December 2009, August 2010, February 2010, July 2011.

²⁴ Anecdotal examples of resonant encounters are often provided in texts without critical reflection on the encounter. Pascoe, for example, often describes resonant encounters without foregrounding the term, as when she references an encounter between a Harvard senior named Woodberry and the poet Shelley's notebook (shown to him by Edward Silsbee, the Shelley enthusiast). She quotes Woodberry as saying 'I can still feel the thrill in my fingers, as they moved over lines where Shelley's hand had hovered...' (10) – an encounter that bears some of the traits (contiguity in particular) that this thesis associates with resonant experiences. Broadly speaking, it is not uncommon across texts for words like 'resonance' 'aura' 'atmosphere' etc. to be employed without an accompanying definition or any kind of sustained phenomenological deconstruction. For examples of definition-oriented techniques in relation to abstract terms see Sherry Turkle's reading of objects as 'uncanny' in her Introduction to *Evocative Objects*, and Salman Akhtar's reading of encounters with 'sacred' objects in *Objects of Our Desire* (see esp 76-87) wherein he defines the term 'sacred' and considers the components that form the 'gestalt of sacredness' (77) describing, for example, a psychoanalyst friend's feelings of 'respect, humility and near-awe' whenever he shows someone the handwritten letter of Sigmund Freud's which he owns (85).

exploration – and definition – of resonance in his essay ‘Resonance and Wonder’ will form the basis of this consideration.

Reinforcement, Prolongation, Reflection

The word resonance comes from the Middle French ‘résonance’ and its primary definition relates to the reverberation of sound. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun resonance in the first case as: ‘1.a. The reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection or by the synchronous vibration of a surrounding space or a neighbouring object. Also: a sound, or quality of sound, resulting from this’ (OED). The first use of the word ‘resonance’ in English dates from 1460²⁵ and the use of the word to reflect a quality of sound is still common today. Definition 1.b. refers to ‘[t]he property of an object of giving rise to this phenomenon’ – as in a lute (from 1669); ‘the cavity of the mouth’ (from 1875); ‘the body of the violin’ (1920) (OED).

The second definition of resonance is less focused on the auditory and is the one most obviously relevant to the idea of resonant experiences in writers’ houses/museums. I will explore this second definition briefly and then return to definition 1. Resonance, *n.* definition 2:

Corresponding or sympathetic response; an instance of this. In later use also: the power or quality of evoking or suggesting images, memories, and emotions; an allusion, connotation, or overtone. (OED)²⁶

This second definition of resonance references ‘an instance’ (or experience) of what might be termed an ‘affinity’: a ‘corresponding’ (from L. *together, with each other* +

²⁵ ‘a1460 *Knyghthode & Bataile* (Pembr. Cambr. 243) l.787 The Clarioner, Trompet, and Hornycler, With horn & trompe of bras and clarioun..; The firmament thereto making resoun Or resonauce’ (OED).

²⁶ I have set this definition off to highlight it for ease of reference.

to answer (OED)) or ‘sympathetic response’ between entities – which is to suggest a congruity between what occurs in the first instance and what occurs or is felt as a result of that instance (a response which itself becomes its own instance). The second part of definition 2: ‘the power or quality of evoking or suggesting images, memories, and emotions; an allusion, connotation, or overtone’ reflects the use of ‘resonance’ to describe a felt or evocative instance, one that is connected to or dependant on some external / originating stimulus. This definition, by leaving the issue of *what* is doing the ‘evoking’ open-ended, suggests that a resonant feeling can arise from a variety of stimuli (a written work, a thing, a comment, a landscape or a setting etc.) and that what the stimuli can evoke can also vary, though it may include ‘images, memories, and emotions’ which, taken together may comprise feelings, experiences, or events.

In the dictionary’s examples of historical usage for definition 2, the 1828 citation comes from Thomas Carlyle’s essay ‘Burns’ on the poet Robert Burns (1759-1796) originally published in the *Edinburgh Review* and republished later in Carlyle’s *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*. In ‘Burns’ (an essay on Burns’ life, value and work – and on the qualities ideally found in a poet) Carlyle describes Burns as having ‘a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his “lightly moved and all-conceiving spirit”’ (Carlyle, *Critical* 271).²⁷ Carlyle’s use of the term ‘resonance’ here seems to reflect the idea of a ‘corresponding and sympathetic response’ – especially one of an emotional nature. Here we have the idea of Burns’s great power of empathy, of how as a poet his range of understanding made him able

²⁷ For other references to this idea of sympathetic feeling in the ‘Burns’ essay see also 277: ‘Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy...’; 279 (of the poem ‘Macpherson’s Farewell’): ‘...who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?’; and 281: ‘Apart from the universal sympathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns...’.

to grasp a wide variety of emotions and feelings: ‘the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful...’ (271). But Carlyle’s use of resonance also seems to carry the metaphorical suggestion that as a ‘poet of special insight’ (263) Burns was *himself* a medium for reflecting or echoing back or relaying those notes of human feelings – which is to read ‘resonance in his bosom’ doubly: as a sympathetic feeling that corresponds to the same feelings in others and as an auditory resonance: as if his body (‘bosom’), being, or work is akin to those instruments (objects) that physically give ‘rise to this phenomenon’ of resonance (OED).

Whether this metaphoric reading is agreeable or not, Carlyle’s use of resonance in this nineteenth century example is useful in that it still carries within it a sense of the auditory definition – ‘for every *note* of human feeling; *the high and the low...*’ (271 emphasis added) which suggests that there might be something to learn by returning to the auditory element of the word in relation to its later use as a term that describes the evocation of images, memories, and emotions. While definition two fits with this thesis’s use of ‘resonance’ in relation to the power of things and settings to evoke or suggest ‘images, memories, and emotions’, folding-in the sound-related definition of resonance in relation to writers’ houses/museums allows other aspects of the concept of resonant encounters to come to the fore. Which is to argue that the word ‘resonance’ is itself an especially fit term for affective encounters, in that it carries within it sets of concepts that can inform how resonant experiences in writers’ houses/museums might be understood. Again, the first definition of resonance is:

1.a. The *reinforcement* or *prolongation* of sound by reflection or by the *synchronous* vibration of a surrounding space or a neighbouring object. Also: a sound, or quality of sound, resulting from this. (OED emphasis added)

The concepts of ‘reinforcement’, ‘prolongation’, and synchrony (L. together + time) are especially useful here in that they relate to a number of the dynamics at work in the writer’s house/museum, for example: how the house/museum setting attempts to create a sense of the *prolongation* of the former occupant’s inhabitation – as when a visitor writes ‘Dickens appears to live in these very rooms’²⁸ – an illusion that is often supported by the use of ‘as-in-life’ displays which can range from a set table, to a made or turned-back bed, to open books and writing implements and texts left out as if their author will shortly return to them.

The concept of *reinforcement* in a writer’s house/museum environment is most evident through the use of signs, texts, tours or other narratives that reiterate the visual cues of the setting (such as the sign next to Sir Walter Scott’s clothes that reads ‘Clothes Worn by Sir Walter Scott’) though it can also be experienced through the knowledge or belief that the things one is looking at existed both in the world of the writer’s *then* and in the visitor’s *now* – each thing reinforcing the fact of the writer’s former presence through its history/biography and material survival. This is a kind of *synchrony* – the things of the past now present with the viewer, a kind of access that can create a sense of a knit now-and-then-ness. ‘It was beautiful’ one visitor to the Dickens Museum wrote in 2014, ‘to experience and imagine the atmosphere of a long time ago...visiting the past’. Another visitor called their Dickens Museum experience ‘a step back in time’.²⁹ This idea of not just *imagining* the past but of *experiencing* a sense of the past is part of the resonant encounter – because resonance (as a reflection or reverberation) springs from *something already*

²⁸ Dickens Museum comment book, 19 June, 2014.

²⁹ Dickens Museum comment book 24 June and 23 June 2104 respectively.

in existence; it isn't pure imagination or pure conjuring, but an experience, echo or reflection from a preceding (and still palpable) source.

If resonance as an auditory phenomenon reinforces or prolongs the sound emanating from its source, so too does the writer's house/museum reinforce or prolong some sense of the life or lives at its source – except that the reverberation or echo in the museum (the one vibrating off 'a surrounding space or a neighbouring thing' (OED) isn't auditory, it is something akin to the second definition, an evocation of images, memories and emotions, 'vibrating off' things – an effect that this thesis describes as 'worlding'.

'The power of the object'

The second definition of resonance employed in this thesis comes from the literary critic Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Resonance and Wonder'. Two versions of this essay were published: one version in 1990 in the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, and a second version (with the same title) in 1991 as a chapter in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*.³⁰ In the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* essay Greenblatt considers the differences between resonance and wonder and relates these modes of encounter to both the aims and procedures of new historicism and to then-contemporary museums. While the variety of topics considered in this essay are too wide-ranging to make the work wholly applicable here (Greenblatt is writing about new

³⁰ The *Exhibiting Cultures* version is preoccupied with a more formal register of museum (especially the 'art museum') than the earlier version is. The latter chapter-version also does away with the part of the definition of resonance that references metaphor and metonymy – as well as with the specific autographic example of Cardinal Wolsey's hat (found at the very start of the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* version). For these reasons the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* version will form the basis of this discussion.

historicism as a critical practice, literary art, painting, sculpture, everyday objects, museum-display practices, *and* what I call ‘autographic’ things) Greenblatt’s definition of resonance and his use of an autographic object to introduce his essay are useful for how they frame resonance as a particular kind of encounter – one that can occur through contact with individual things. To be clear, there is a crucial difference between Greenblatt’s subject matter and the subject matter at the centre of this thesis. Throughout ‘Resonance and Wonder’ Greenblatt’s emphasis is on those things that have cycled through a variety of historical contexts (unlike those objects in a writer’s house/museum which are largely seen as *remaining* in their original or most meaningful context). In this section I will posit that Greenblatt’s reading of resonance in transposed conditions provides a framework for a reading of those things with cultural contiguity, arguing that if resonance can be found in things taken *out* of context, then perhaps those things perceived as remaining *in* context over time are even more powerful loci of resonance, evoking in the viewer, as Greenblatt suggests, the ‘cultural forces’ from which those objects have emerged (19).

Greenblatt’s 1990 essay begins with his consideration of a red priest’s hat that once belonged to Cardinal Wolsey (c. 1473-1530) on display in the library at Christ Church, Oxford (a college Wolsey founded). A note card describing the hat’s provenance explains that the hat had come into the University’s possession in the eighteenth century via a theatre company. For Greenblatt, even without sufficient context (what company it was, if – or how – the hat was used by them, when it went on display etc.) the hat, in his words, ‘nonetheless evokes a vision of cultural production that I find compelling’. He goes on to write that ‘[t]he peregrinations of Wolsey’s hat suggest that cultural artifacts do not stay still, that they exist in time,

and that they are bound up with personal and institutional conflicts, negotiations, and appropriations' (11). For Greenblatt, the hat, 'a bit of red cloth stitched together' is a 'material referent' to large and complex narratives, to a biography and to events that adhere to the life of the person who wore the hat (11). Still, he imagines that '[b]y the time Wolsey's hat reached the library at Christ Church, its charisma must have been largely exhausted...[though] the college could confer upon it the prestige of an historical curiosity, a trophy of the distant founder' (12). Greenblatt refers to the hat as a 'trivial relic' (13) though he also admits that 'in its glass case, it still radiates a tiny quantum of cultural energy' (12).

In beginning with the hat Greenblatt is laying the ground for a discussion about new historicism. He uses the material object of the hat and its biography as an analogy for his central topics – literary criticism, and the difference between resonance and wonder in relation to texts. He calls books '[t]he display cases with which I am most involved' (13) and proceeds to read Wolsey's hat as analogous to texts, which also partake in, and are affected by, social practices and 'historical transactions' (13).³¹ This leads him to an analysis of the positions usually undertaken by new historicist writers (14-19), positions that help 'describe an interest in the kinds of issues I had been raising – in the embeddedness of cultural objects in the contingencies of history' (14). For Greenblatt, a reading of some of the seemingly ephemeral or marginal aspects of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is enhanced by a consideration of the way certain objects and rituals might have been read differently over time, an approach that demonstrates that meanings and relations aren't fixed (13).

³¹ Greenblatt's analysis of objects both *in* texts and as analogies *for* texts and his interest in their historical transactions is connected to his practice, expressed in *Practicing New Historicism*, in reading culture as a text (*Practicing* 15-16) and reflects his assertion that 'intriguing enigmas of particular times and places' can reside in signifying systems such as texts (*Practicing* 14).

In starting with the red hat Greenblatt was embodying his argument about texts. He acknowledges later that sometimes material things are more tractable as models: he calls his literary example from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 'an appropriately tiny textual equivalent of Wolsey's hat' (13) and notes that '[i]t will be easier to grasp the concepts of resonance and wonder if we think of the way in which our culture presents to itself not the textual traces of its past but the surviving visual traces, for the latter are put on display in galleries and museums...' (19). This statement suggests that not only are visual traces (or 'things') more easily understood as models of the resonant than linguistic or textual things, but that 'display' may play a role in increasing the ease with which one might apprehend resonance – as if displayed things garner, or demand, a certain kind of attention through their remove from everyday contexts and their immediacy. Here, Greenblatt's interest in Wolsey's hat – and in the issue of display he raises – relates to the dynamics of contingent forces on things like Wolsey's hat, and to texts like Shakespeare's being read from a contemporary (and slant) standpoint. After describing his encounter with Wolsey's hat he states:

...I am fascinated by transmigrations of the kind I have just sketched here – from theatricalized rituals to the stage to the university library or museum—because they seem to reveal something critically important about the textual relics with which my profession is obsessed. They enable us to glimpse the social process through which objects, gestures, rituals, and phrases are fashioned and moved from one zone of display to another. (13)

Here, a critical difference between Greenblatt's study of resonance and historical trace and my material things is evident: he is interested in things and texts that have undergone informing and informative 'historical transactions'; that have undergone transpositions, or have shifted 'from one zone of social practice to another' (14) – things such as Wolsey's hat: an emblem of Wolsey's religious affiliation and

position at one point in time, and a theatrical prop at another. In the very beginning of his paper Greenblatt specifies that the Cardinal's hat 'was not a direct bequest' (11) which may be what contributes to the exhaustion he describes in Wolsey's hat – a hat worn down for centuries post-Wolsey by the contingencies of history (in the form of a theatre troupe in unknown contexts). Which is to suggest that perhaps resonance as Greenblatt describes it in relation to Wolsey's 'largely exhausted' hat works like sound resonance – that in order for resonance to noticeably occur, the primary force or effect cannot be obscured, cannot, as it were, bend around corners, and encounter obstacles. If the contingencies of history can muffle resonance so that, as in the hat's case, only 'a tiny quantum of cultural energy' remains (12) then it stands to reason that those things that have *not* been shaped or marked by a variety of historical transactions might radiate or contain a more concentrated kind of cultural energy, or at least a sense of resonance that is oriented more specifically in one direction.³²

For Greenblatt, an awareness of the traffic of things and of changing social practices (whether ritualistic or linguistic) can lead to informative and informing fields of inquiry. In his analysis of the approach undertaken by new historicist critics he identifies previously marginalized aspects of texts or culture as worthy of consideration: '...new-historicist critics are interested in such cultural expressions as witchcraft accusations, medical manuals, or clothing, not as raw materials but as

³² An interesting comparison to Greenblatt's reading of Wolsey's hat can be found at the institution to which I am submitting this thesis. For 150 years, the University of Edinburgh has ceremonially tapped its new graduates on the head with a cap reputedly made from John Knox's breeches. As with Wolsey and Christchurch there is contiguity between the institution and Knox (an education reformer whose statue – wearing a similar cap – can be found on University grounds). But unlike Wolsey's hat, which is seen as having lost resonance because of its peregrinations, the Knox material has accrued resonance through travel. In 2006 a piece of fabric embroidered with the University's emblem was sent into space with an Edinburgh graduate (the astronaut Piers Sellers) and then, after his – and its – return, sewn into the Geneva bonnet ('One small step'). This story was told to me at my MSc graduation ceremony and it imbued the capping aspect of the day with a profound – and superadded – resonance, one that incorporated ideas of limitless future horizons into already existing ideas of history and tradition. Whereas Wolsey's travels have diminished resonance, the bonnet's travels have added to its resonance.

“cooked” – complex symbolic and material articulations of the imaginative and ideological structures of the society that produced them’ (19). This statement anticipates Elaine Freedgood’s reading of the calico curtains in *Mary Barton* (Freedgood, *Ideas* 55-80) and Dan Miller’s reading of clothing in Trinidadian culture (Miller, *Stuff* 12-41) instances where the value of things like curtains or clothes – of a hat like Wolsey’s – are elevated to the level of symbol, metaphor and ‘cultural archive’ (Freedgood 1) while also supporting the idea of ‘material articulation’ – the idea that objects can contain, *speak to* (and reveal) a kind of cultural knowledge that may normally be hidden or unexplored.

Greenblatt’s eventual definition of resonance (which appears a third of the way into his essay) supports this assertion that things and texts can communicate aspects of culture to the viewer. He states:

By ‘resonance’ I mean the power of the object displayed to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which—as metaphor or, more simply, as metonymy—it may be taken by a viewer to stand. (19-20)

This definition asserts that a displayed object or thing has the power to exceed its mere physical form and to provoke a feeling or set of concepts and relations in the viewer. What is evoked might be some sense of the object or thing’s own context or biography (the world/culture ‘from which it has emerged’) or something figured through its metaphoric or metonymical qualities. For Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott’s hat was a metonymical thing: it resonated both a sense of Scott (for whom it stood) and the events of Scott’s last days. It extended itself in that it ceased to simply be a hat or a tool for wearing. This is to suggest similarly, that in seeing Charlotte Brontë’s wedding bonnet the viewer may be met by what the bonnet signifies (concepts from the culture that we meet the bonnet with), as well as by the bonnet’s

metaphoric or metonymical properties (the bonnet as a stand-in for Charlotte on her wedding day; for her short-lived happiness and so forth).

In this definition Greenblatt is suggesting that resonance occurs dynamically between things ('the power of the object displayed to reach out...') and beings ('to evoke in the viewer') and that part of resonance is the perception of a thing as *more than* its formal boundaries or physical self. This definition supports key themes in this thesis, specifically, the idea of a thing's power ('the power of the object'); the role of stasis (via display); the assertion of a thing's agency (its ability to 'reach out' and 'evoke') along with its ability to 'world' – to evoke events or individuals from the past – in particular those events the thing itself was witness to (in the culture 'from which it has emerged').

Ultimately where Greenblatt's interest in resonance differs from this thesis's interest is in relation to contiguity. His interest in transpositions (in texts, things or rituals that have been subverted or repositioned or infused with other entities or practices) is more complex than the kind of transposition (of equipmental use) considered here. The objects in this thesis are, for the most part, things that have not shifted zones, they are things that have been integrated *back* into their original environment, or, at least, into an environment deeply associated with the person with whom the thing was once affiliated.³³ This may explain why Greenblatt's definition doesn't emphasize the power of the material thing's physical form in the resonant encounter – because the things he is thinking of in this essay have trafficked through a variety of contexts which means that there would be little sense of how or by whom

³³ Interesting case studies involving the travels and shifting zones of autographic things can be found in *Proust's Overcoat* (Foschini, 2010) which details the perfumer Guerin's interest in Proust's things and his recovery of Proust's overcoat which was worn for years by an acquaintance of the family on his Sunday fishing trips. See also 'Fort, Da: The Cap in the Museum' by Lydia Marinelli which details the theft (and eventual return) of Freud's hat from his museum. In both of these cases the coat and hat were not shed of their autographic status though they would, for a time, have appeared to others as everyday objects.

a tear on Wolsey's hat was caused – whether by him or by an actor in a play, a costume handler, or an antiques dealer. Antithetically, part of the power of the Charlotte Brontë bonnet's material form – the ghostly veil, its embroidery, the bonnet's fastened flowers, its delicacy and agedness – comes from the sense that it has existed predominantly in relation *to her*; that its physical form is a material trace of not only the culture from which the bonnet arose, but her life and bodily movement through the world and the time that has passed (ageing the bonnet) after her death.

Toward the end of his essay Greenblatt furthers his consideration of the effect of resonance. In describing the multifaceted, multi-contextual kinds of displays one sometimes encounters (one where, for example, a painting is supported by 'the display of the palette, brushes, and other implements that an artist of a given period would have employed') he describes how sometimes even contextual objects ('placed only to provide a decorative setting for a grand work') can 'take on a life of their own, make a claim that rivals that of the object that is formally privileged' (22).

He states:

For the effect of resonance does not necessarily depend upon a collapse of the distinction between art and non-art; it can be achieved by awakening in the viewer a sense of the cultural and historically contingent construction of art objects, the negotiations, exchanges, swerves, exclusions by which certain representational practices come to be set apart from other representational practices that they partially resemble. A resonant exhibition often pulls the viewer away from the celebration of isolated objects and toward a series of implied, only half-visible relationships and questions. How have the objects come to be displayed? What is at stake in categorizing them as being of 'museum quality'? How were they originally used? What cultural and material conditions made possible their production? What were the feelings of those who originally held these objects, cherished them, collected them, possessed them? What is the meaning of my relationship to these same objects now that they are displayed here, in this museum, on this day? (23)

What Greenblatt's reading of resonance here suggests is that resonance can be achieved in a variety of ways – even through an awareness or reading of the complex dynamics involved in the set-up or presentation of an exhibit – a resonance that can include, or be found in, the unknown contingencies and constructions of the environment. While there are texts that explore these constructions at length in relation to writers' houses/museums (see especially Anderson, Hendrix, Goldhill and Trubek) this thesis is concerned with resonant objects that seem, for the most part, to adhere to, or amplify, a single or larger narrative: the life of the writer. Greenblatt's analysis of the 'resonant exhibition' is useful however because it acknowledges that things, even outside of contiguous contexts or even when not 'the focus' of the display or exhibit, can 'world' – can create a sense of affective engagement with another time, the time inhered in the thing's biography. Greenblatt also suggests that things can raise questions about themselves, questions about origin and use and relations, questions like 'What were the feelings of those who originally held these objects, cherished them, collected them, possessed them?' thereby pulling the viewer toward 'half-visible relationships' that may transport the viewer affectively into some sense of contact with those we deem to have been in orbit around these objects, those we deem these objects to have been in relations *with*.³⁴

Ultimately one of the conundrums that Greenblatt's reading of resonance raises is the question of different degrees or registers in resonant experiences. For him

³⁴ Greenblatt's suggestion in this quote that resonance 'does not necessarily depend upon a collapse of the distinction between art and non-art' is also interesting because it relates to the role of display and exhibition in creating resonance and in creating a felt-sense of something we might categorize as more-art-like than not. This idea, of how display makes a tool or a piece of equipment into something else, something more-art-like, is discussed in chapter five wherein I argue that display and stasis play a powerful role in shifting a visitor's sense of the 'with-which-to' dynamic of an object which contributes to a thing's modality as a 'with-which-to-remember-the-past' which contributes to a thing's resonance. Greenblatt's emphasis on the larger exhibition and the relationships between things, a relationship that can pull 'the viewer away from the celebration of isolated objects and toward a series of implied, only half-visible relationships and questions' is also interesting because it seems to set up a dichotomy: the singular thing and the setting – a dichotomy this thesis hopes to trouble through a reading of Heidegger's 'Analysis of the Structure of Experience' in chapter two.

Wolsey's hat only 'radiates a tiny quantum of cultural energy' (12) whereas the State Jewish Museum in Prague is, for him, '[p]erhaps the most purely resonant museum I have ever seen...' (23). If auditory resonance can vary in kind and degree it follows that the same might be true of affective resonance. While Greenblatt's discussion of resonance lays the foundations for an understanding of resonant experiences with texts or things *in general*, one of the differences between his transposed models and my contiguous models may be one of amplification. If, as Greenblatt suggests, only a 'tiny quantum of cultural energy' can be found in Wolsey's hat after its travels, might an even greater amount of cultural energy be found in those things viewed as, or established as, contiguous? Might the individual looking at Charlotte Brontë's wedding bonnet, free of the sort of travels Wolsey's hat underwent, feel they have a greater kind of access to the past and to Charlotte herself? The supporting narratives in this thesis suggest that the answer is yes: that the concepts we meet things with (that 'this *is* Charlotte Brontë's wedding bonnet'), the authenticating narratives that come with things (ones that usually emphasize contiguity or which omit the kinds of 'travels' Wolsey's hat underwent) and the thing's own mode of showing forth its qualities contribute powerfully to a sense of resonant and meaningful encounter with things and the world that is brought to the fore through them.

Chapter Two: Worlding Things

This chapter will explore the phenomenological aspects of encounters with writerly things by reading Marion Harland's 1898 description of encounters with the Carlyle's things in *The Haunts of Familiar Characters in History and Literature* alongside Martin Heidegger's concept of 'worlding' and a fictional account of an environmental experience with things in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Villette*. This chapter will demonstrate that house/museum settings have the ability to effectively gather and exhibit (or 'world') a powerful sense of both the absent writer and the absent writer's life – an encounter that is generated through provocative and meaningful things. This chapter seeks to unsettle any potential perceptions of resonant encounters in writers' houses/museums as purely subjective in order to establish that affective experiences are brought about by individuals and environments *together*. Heidegger's assertions that all things exist in a set of relations, and that environments can 'world' will then serve as a departure point for an analysis of the role of stasis in resonant encounters, a theme that will be developed in relation to tools in chapter five.

I – The Haunts of Familiar Characters

In 1898, one year before she wrote *Charlotte Brontë at Home*, Marion Harland (1830-1922; pseudonym of Mary Virginia Hawes) published a book called *The Haunts of Familiar Characters in History and Literature*. In it she describes visits with her daughters to a number of sites including Robert Burns's cottage, the

Brussels locations associated with Charlotte and Emily Brontë (and Charlotte's novel *Villette*) and the Carlyle's house on Cheyne Row.

Marion Harland's description of the Cheyne Row house begins in the kitchen, due to her assertion that it is 'the thought of Jane Welsh Carlyle, more than the fame of her husband, [that] has brought us to No. 24' (65). In writing about both the Carlyle's kitchen and the larger house Harland places an emphasis on the authentic things she encounters, noting, for example, that '[t]he dresser is the same in which Jane Welsh arranged her crockery with the help of Bessy Barnet, her one maid-servant, in the leafy month of June, 1834' (65).³⁵ A number of kitchen anecdotes follow, incorporating a mixture of quoted sources and hypothetical imaginings. Harland describes, for example, how '[t]he notable housekeeper must have had unrecorded battles with dough and circumstance over the ugly table and the sulky-looking sink in the days when she "got up at half-past seven to prepare the coffee and bacon-ham for breakfast"...' (66). Here, the hypothetical 'must have had' – and the assertion of the hypothetical via the acknowledgement that the imagined battles are 'unrecorded' – is juxtaposed with an unsourced quote that specifies household habits both in terms of time (half-past seven when the maid got up) and diet (what the Carlyle's drank and ate for breakfast). Amidst these imagined and factual-seeming anecdotes sits an 'ugly table' and a 'sulky-looking sink', two objects, along with the dresser, that not only establish the setting (then *and* in Harland's 'now') but which also, as tools for storing, making, washing etc. played a role in the events she describes. Harland, standing in that very same setting is, it seems, watching such housekeeping scenes unfold before her very eyes. This becomes evident when she describes how: '[t]he vision of the trig [sic] figure stepping briskly from table to range and dresser is

³⁵ June 1834 is the date the Carlyle's took possession of what was then No. 5 Great Cheyne Row.

suddenly struck from the imagination by something the custodian is saying: “He used to smoke in the kitchen every night. His chair stood *here*,”...’ (66).

What is interesting about Harland’s chapter is the powerful effect of nearness, of sensing through the staying power of things and the contiguity of place, a proximity to past events and those involved in such events. Harland describes this presencing in a way that, as this section will demonstrate, is interestingly Heideggerean: in referencing a vision of Jane brought on by a comment on her tour of the house she writes ‘[t]he picture of the dainty mistress of the home... comes to the front again...’ (67). This ‘comes to the front’ is the kind of presencing enabled by the setting in the form of a set of relations / material things. This is evidenced further by the fact that over the seventeen pages of Harland’s text there are over a dozen references to particular things that existed in both the Carlyle’s lifetime (in their domestic sphere) and in the time of Harland’s visit almost two decades after Thomas’s death – a list that includes various items of furniture, a clock, Jane’s screen, Thomas’s skylight, and grape vines. There are also a half-dozen references to spots or locations where specific kinds of events took place i.e. where Jane ‘lashed “a gypsy’s tent...” and sat under it with her work’ (79) or where Tennyson sat when he visited (66). These are noted frequently throughout by the use of locating words such as ‘here’ as in: ‘[h]ere they sat and talked...’ (of Thomas and Jane in the parlour) (68). It is, accordingly, both the ‘here’ of the environment and the *things* of the house that create a sense of the Carlyles and their world; an effect that, borrowing from Heidegger’s ideas around meaningful environments and unfragmented relations, I will call ‘worlding’.

II – Worlding

‘Worlding’ is a Heideggerean term that relates to how the world (existence in all its relations) comes to presence. To say the ‘world worlds’ (Heidegger, *PLT* 180) or the ‘thing things’ (*PLT* 172) is to evoke a special kind of phenomenological description of being-in-the-world. The use of the phrase ‘*it worlds*’ (of the environment) (*TDP* 58) appears as early as Heidegger’s 1919 lecture ‘The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview’. In Heidegger’s early use of the word Timothy Clark suggests that Heidegger was invoking something akin to ‘being’, noting that ‘world’ does not refer to any specific location but to ‘that presupposed and disregarded space of familiarity and recognition within which all the beings around us show themselves, *are* for us’ (16). This sense of world foregrounds its relational aspects – suggesting that ‘world’ is that way of being which is our own and which encompasses all that we are and encounter as individual selves going about life, existing and coexisting with things and other beings who come to the fore in our daily doings. Clark elaborates on this early notion of world further by suggesting:

Heidegger’s concept of ‘world’ is close to the common meaning of the term when we talk about ‘the world’ of the Bible, or the ‘world’ of the modern Chinese or modern English – i.e. the fundamental understanding within which individual things, people, history, texts, buildings, projects cohere together within a shared horizon of significances, purposes and connotations. (16)

This inheres to the concept of ‘world’ *all that there is within a given set of relations*: all that there is within the Victorian world, the world of the Carlyles and so forth. Crucially, nothing is left outside of this world, it includes both the concrete (the smoking jacket Thomas Carlyle was wearing as he sat on a stool in the yard at Cheyne Row smoking; the grass underneath his feet) and the abstract (the thoughts

he was having, the feel of the breeze on his face, the intended recipient of the letter in his pocket) – as such world is not separable from being and the relations of being.

Heidegger's 1950 essay 'The Thing', given as a lecture some thirty-one years after his 1919 lecture's references to world, is notable for numerous examples of a more complex kind of descriptive noun/verb interplay. For example: 'If we let the thing be present in its thinging from out of the worlding world, then we are thinking of the thing as thing. Taking thought in this way, we let ourselves be concerned by the thing's worlding being' (*PLT* 178). In this context Heidegger is suggesting that by meeting things with a certain comportment or care (Clark describes this comportment as 'attunement': 'a general unthematized sense of things as a whole' (18)) we gain access to aspects of the thing in an unconcealed or unveiled manner – the thing thusly *things* (in its unveiledness) and signals its relations and world. Rather than a mere appearance we are encountering a manifold.

Worlding as I am employing it in this thesis incorporates aspects of both Heidegger's concept of world as the 'world of the Brontës' or the 'Victorian world' – and 'world' as what things can *do*: reveal an apprehension or sense of unfragmented relations and significances. When a visitor to a writer's house/museum becomes attuned to a thing – to Sir Walter Scott's quill pen, for example, this thesis suggests that the quill pen worlds a set of relations in a complex and, again, unfragmented way: relations that do not bracket time, that foreground meanings; relations that bring 'Scott's world' to the fore in an affective or expansive manner.

What is most appealing about Heidegger's concept of world for the purposes of this thesis is that it does not polarize or make 'grammatical' a set of causal effects: I encounter a thing / I perceive it / I understand it to be such-and-such. Rather, as the

next section will show, it reveals that we are always already in a world of things, relations and significance. This suggests that affective encounters are whole encounters, manifolds in which things, beings and ideas interrelate in a way that best exemplifies the co-determinate relations contemporary thing theory seeks to explicate. Accordingly Heidegger's concept of world deserves further clarification – a path that I believe is most clearly (and concisely) traversed by a consideration of Heidegger's early use of the concept of 'worlding'.

In 1919 Heidegger presented a lecture course at The University of Freiburg, which was later translated into English by Ted Sadler in *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* as 'The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview'. Although this was an early lecture in Heidegger's career a number of the concerns that arise in *Being and Time* – the question of what 'is', of the ever-present 'I', and of how we phenomenologically encounter the world – are evident here, as is Heidegger's interest in trying to suggest a way out of the circular (and therefore self-fulfilling) nature of theoretical knowledge (see especially 14-24 and 74-76). Ultimately this lecture begins to work toward a new understanding of phenomenology via a (re)consideration of the structure of experience – especially experience as it occurs in relation to environments, or, the world of things.

It is in Part Two, Chapter One of the lecture (a chapter called 'Analysis of the Structure of Experience') that Heidegger begins to elaborate most concretely on how one encounters an environment. Using his lectern and the room he is lecturing in as examples, Heidegger reminds his students that one does not encounter things (such as a lectern) as a set of properties (i.e. as a colour, angle, shape) but 'in one fell swoop, so to speak, and not in isolation' (57). Things, he notes, never stand alone but

are, like the lectern ‘in an orientation, an illumination, a background’ (57). He elaborates on these points in the following way:

In the experience of seeing the lectern something is given *to me* from out of an immediate environment [*Umwelt*]. This environmental milieu (lectern, book, blackboard, notebook, fountain pen, caretaker, student fraternity, tram-car, motor-car, etc.) does not consist just of things, objects which are then conceived as meaning this and this; rather, the meaningful is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension. Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world. It is everywhere the case that ‘*it worlds*’ [*es weltet*].... (58)³⁶

In this section of the lecture, Heidegger lays out a number of important ideas that contribute to the suggestion that things and environments have a ‘worlding’ character. First of all, he presents his students with the idea that the material world or landscape is not seen as, or perceived as, a set or sets of properties (colours, angles, shapes), but rather as *signifying things* belonging to (or entangled in) a larger setting or environment. The lectern is not just a brown box, rather it is seen as meaningful: as a place from which he would lecture – it is part of a classroom, a place of learning and so forth. Second, Heidegger suggests that there is an immediacy to such encounters, and that part of the dynamic of the encounter is that it is ‘immediately given’ which is to say instantaneous and not bound-up in a conceptual or theoretical comportment (a point Heidegger makes repeatedly throughout the lecture, see esp. 59-60; 67-70). Third, he suggests that the milieu before the observer (the ‘I’ to whom the something is meaningful) is always *worlding* or exuding some kind of signification ‘everywhere and always, everything has the character of world’ (58). What is ‘given’ is therefore both *material* (in the form of the lectern and the things in the ‘environmental milieu’ that may have associations or relations with the lectern

³⁶ See also *Being and Time*: ‘What we encounter as closest to us... is the room; and we encounter it not as something “between four walls” in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment for residing. Out of this the “arrangement” emerges, and it is in this that any “individual” item of equipment shows itself. *Before* it does so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered’ (98).

such as the blackboard) and *immaterial* in that things like lecterns can also signify ‘learning’, ‘teaching’, and so forth.

It is important to note that Heidegger acknowledges that *what is given* in environmental relations can vary and does not need to be culturally or equipmentally correct to be meaningful. This point, elaborated on below, is useful in relation to the writer’s house/museum because it posits that affective experiences of the house/museum are equally valid whether the person experiencing the ‘worlding’ quality of the environment is apprehending something akin to a factual narrative (as Harland seems to feel she is) or encountering a less narrative-driven sense of presence, or something even more ambiguous (as in the environmental experience in *Villette* discussed in the next section of this chapter).

In order to support his argument that the significance of what is given in an environment is always meaningful even if it varies, Heidegger presents his students with an anecdote involving two strangers who might visit the classroom and who might find it foreign or strange. After discussing the lectern Heidegger has his students imagine first a ‘farmer from deep in the Back Forest’ encountering the lectern and then a villager from Senegal ‘suddenly transplanted here from his hut’ (57). Having noted earlier that he and his students do not see the lectern as ‘[b]rown surfaces, at right angles’ or ‘[a] largish box with another smaller one set upon it’ (or even process their knowing of it through such stages) but rather as a lectern ‘at which I am to speak’ or ‘from which you are to be addressed’ (56-57) he goes on to suggest that the farmer from the Black Forest might see something he identifies as ‘the place for the teacher’ which, for Heidegger, means that the farmer ‘sees the object as fraught with meaning’ (57). The Senegal native, unfamiliar with such things as a

lectern, might instead see the lectern as ‘something to do with magic, or something behind which one could find good protection against arrows and flying stones’ (57) or even perhaps as ‘a bare something that is there’ (58). Regardless, Heidegger insists that all the varying encounters or instances of apprehension share a common trait. For even if the strange equipment encountered by the Senegal villager did not signify specifically, it still would have ‘a meaning for him, a moment of signification’ (58). Heidegger concludes that regardless of the differences, ‘[t]he meaningful character of “instrumental strangeness”, and the meaningful character of the “lectern”, are in their essence absolutely identical’ (58).

What Heidegger appears to be suggesting is that always and everywhere things are perceived as part of a set of relations and that these relations and significances are related to, are innate to, the ‘I’ who perceives the milieu. Similarly, in Harland’s case (and, as I will demonstrate, in the scene from Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*) the apprehension of an ‘ugly table’ (Harland, 66) can be read as part of a set of relations, a set of relations that can be imbued with a wide variety of possible significations i.e. the kitchen table as a kind of equipment may signify food preparation, signify, perhaps, bread, and Bessie doing the work (as was the case for Harland), which could also bring to the fore the idea of sustenance and Jane’s health and Thomas smoking by the hearth and his struggles with his work and Nero, the Carlyle’s canine companion begging for scraps.³⁷ Which is to say that things, as part of a series of references, provide us with environing experiences, and in doing so have the

³⁷ This gesture of expansion, of things *giving* into a larger system of references (as in my model of progression from the Carlyle’s kitchen table to Jane’s health and Nero’s hunger) is a technique employed by Heidegger (and by Graham Harman in explaining Heidegger’s relational model) as a means of illustrating the material worlding of the world as it colludes with (or is enmeshed with) Being. See Heidegger’s examples of the bridge (*PLT* 151-152), jug (*PLT* 166-72) and temple (*PLT* 40-42) and Harman’s example of the house (*HE* 62). What makes the 1919 lecture more useful than these examples at this juncture of the thesis is that here he is beginning to articulate a set of new ideas for himself (Figal 5) and, as such, his ideas are being laid out in a more direct manner than in his later works where he incorporates ideas like the four-fold into his thinking.

qualities of what Heidegger in his 1919 lecture calls ‘world’. Again, as Heidegger states: ‘[l]iving in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world. It is everywhere the case that “*it worlds*”...’ (58).³⁸

One last point relevant to this thesis needs to be made in relation to the worlding nature of environments and things, and that is that in Heidegger’s worlding concept the encounter *is not static*: even if the students are physically still and the lectern is fixed firmly in place the environment is worlding – it is a place *of experience*, an ‘envirning’ (versus ‘environed’) world wherein an ‘I’ with a whole range of experiences is in encounter with things (68). Again, for Heidegger the apprehension of a simple lectern is a *lived experience*, one that does not occur in isolation even as the lectern – to use Ms. Harland’s term: ‘comes to the front’. As noted earlier, Heidegger states that ‘[i]n the experience of seeing the lectern something *is given to me from out of an immediate environment*’ (58 emphasis added). Heidegger’s ‘given to me’ is important in relation to the things this thesis is considering because it suggests that the material things are involved in the giving. As the philosopher Graham Harman notes in his analysis of Heidegger’s 1919 lectures there is a difference between the German and English approach to communicating the idea that something exists: ‘When we want to say in English that something exists, we say “there is” or “there are” such things.... In German they say *es gibt*, which literally means “it gives”’ (HE 22).³⁹ This ‘giving’ illuminates how worlding encounters are

³⁸ For Heidegger’s post-1919 explanation of his different uses of ‘world’ see esp. *Being and Time* pages 91-93.

³⁹ Because Heidegger, in this 1919 lecture, suggests that ‘givenness’ has a theoretical comportment that de-vivifies our experience of things and that givenness is ‘quite probably a theoretical form’ (69) this thesis will maintain its description of the envirning world as a world that resonates or ‘gives forth’. In the 1919 lecture Heidegger states ‘...for something environmental to be given is already a theoretical infringement. It is forcibly removed from me, from my historical “I”; the “it worlds” is already no longer primary.... Thus “givenness” is already quite probably a theoretical form, and precisely for this reason it cannot be taken as the essence of the immediate envirning world as environmental’ (69). In this section Heidegger

formed: through things that give and beings that encounter them in a receptive comportment. As Heidegger notes:

In this experiencing, in this living-toward, there is something of me: *My* 'I' goes out completely beyond itself and resonates *along* in this 'seeing,' *More precisely*: Only through this particular 'I' resonating along does it experience something environmental, does it world. Wherever and whenever it worlds for me, *I* am somehow fully along with it. (Figal 35)⁴⁰

For Heidegger the experience of things and the relations that come with things and environments always comes from the perspective of an 'I', but crucially, an 'I' encountering a thingly environment – an 'I' *resonating along with* the world of things.

III – *Villette*

This section of the chapter will concern itself with the relationship between worlding things and resonance through a consideration of how affective experiences of things are described: first by considering the narrative surrounding an affective encounter with worlding things in Charlotte Brontë's 1853 novel *Villette*, and then by returning to Harland who in *The Haunts of Familiar Characters in History and Literature* describes a tour of the locations in Brussels that held associations with both Charlotte Brontë herself (who studied there for a year with her sister Emily in 1842 and again on her own in 1843-1844) and *Villette*'s (fictional) heroine Lucy Snowe.

The purpose of this two-pronged approach is to get closer to the worlding or resonant experience of places and things as it is described both indirectly (as in the case of *Villette* where the intention of the scene Charlotte Brontë pens is arguably as

seems to be drawing the listener's awareness to the fact that paring off the experienced encounter in any way is already a reduction.

⁴⁰ For its conceptual clarity I have chosen to quote this passage of Heidegger's 1919 lecture using the Sadler / Veith translation from 2009 (versus the earlier Sadler translation of 2000).

much about establishing a setting and forwarding the plot as it is about any kind of deconstruction of the worlding-through-things experience) and directly (i.e. by Harland who is, on the whole, writing consciously about literary pilgrimages and the resonant experiences her haunts provoke). These narratives both illustrate the worlding experience – the scene in *Villette* doing so in a way that has points of contact with aspects of Heidegger’s 1919 lecture, in particular his suggestion that a sense of ‘there is’ permeates all encounters (*TDP* 54-55) and his suggestion that what is immediately given in our encounters with things is the lived experience of those things (66). In the same way that Harland’s encounter with the kitchen furniture in the Carlyle’s house called to the fore a past world and a set of relations, so too does the furniture in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*. As with Harland’s experience at the Carlyle House, objects are presented which ‘straddle’ two different times: the apprehending present and the apprehended past – objects that act as a catalyst toward the remembrance of past events and sets of relations; things that *world*.

Charlotte Brontë’s (1816-1855) novel *Villette* (1853) was her last major publication. It is considered strongly autobiographical (Byatt xiii) and concerns the experiences of an Englishwoman named Lucy Snowe who becomes a teacher at a *pensionnat* in a town called Villette (a *pensionnat* that is widely believed to be modeled on the pensionnat of Monsieur Héger, which Charlotte and Emily attended in Brussels). In the scene under consideration, which begins Volume II of the book, Lucy is coming back to consciousness in a strange environment after fainting on the street in an unfamiliar neighbourhood. The chapter begins with the line ‘Where my soul went during that swoon I cannot tell’ (191) after which Lucy describes her sense of being disembodied, a state that is resolved with some difficulty: ‘[t]he divorced

mates, Spirit and Substance, were hard to re-unite: they greeted each other, not in an embrace, but in a racking sort of struggle' (191). As she is coming to consciousness Lucy describes how:

At first I knew nothing I looked on: a wall was not a wall—a lamp not a lamp. I should have understood what we call a ghost, as well as I did the commonest object: which is another way of intimating that all my eye rested on struck it as spectral. But the faculties soon settled each in his place; the life-machine presently resumed its wonted and regular working.

Still, I knew not where I was.... (191–192)⁴¹

As she begins to get her bearings she notices through the arrangement of objects in the room (and the kinds of objects that they are) that she is in 'an unknown room in an unknown house' (192). But soon particular pieces of furniture begin to appear. Lucy's evocation of the furniture she surveys is worth quoting at length, not only because it describes an environment that is determined by the things within it but also because her description imbues the things in the setting with a kind of dynamism, for it is the things themselves that play a role in starting to locate her. She 'gazes' at these pieces of furniture (her 'old acquaintance') but they also seem to be worlding back at her – as Lucy says "'auld lang syne" [times long past] smiled out of every nook' (193). In this encounter things come to the fore in a dynamic way – they *grow* familiar. This passage reveals the role that things in an environment can play in giving forth a sense of world – not just in the present sense as a set of relations (i.e. where one is located) but also in the sense of a set of memories, for as the narrative continues Lucy states:

⁴¹ This awareness of an 'is' (a something – even if spectral – rather than a nothing) corresponds to Heidegger's description, in his 1919 lecture course of what precedes the particular and begs the concrete. This is most evident in the passage where he suggests: '[i]t is asked whether there is *something*. It is not asked whether there are tables or chairs, houses or trees, sonatas by Mozart or religious powers, but whether there is *anything whatsoever*. What does "anything whatsoever" mean? Something universal, one might say, indeed the most universal of all, applying to any possible object whatsoever' (TDP 54). This sense of an essential 'there is' seems, for Heidegger, to correspond to why we turn to material things to ground ourselves in an environment: *vis-à-vis* how '...in attempting to grasp the meaning of "something in general", we return to individual objects with particular concrete content' (54). In the next part of the scene Lucy notes concrete objects and uses them to ground herself.

...I gazed at the blue arm-chair, it appeared to grow familiar; so did a certain scroll-couch, and not less so the round center-table, with a blue covering, bordered with autumn-tinted foliage; and, above all, two little footstools with worked covers, and a small ebony-framed chair, of which the seat and back were also worked with groups of brilliant flowers on a dark ground.

Struck with these things, I explored further. Strange to say, old acquaintance were all about me, and 'auld lang syne' smiled out of every nook. There were two oval miniatures over the mantelpiece, of which I knew by heart the pearls about the high and powdered 'heads'; the velvets circling the white throats; the swell of the full muslin kerchiefs; the pattern of the lace sleeve-ruffles. Upon the mantel-shelf there were two china vases, some relics of a diminutive tea-service, as smooth as enamel and as thin as egg-shell, and a white center-ornament, a classic group in alabaster, preserved under glass. Of all these things I could have told the peculiarities, numbered the flaws or cracks, like any *clairvoyante*. Above all, there was a pair of handscreens, with elaborate pencil-drawings finished like line-engravings; these, my very eyes ached at beholding again, recalling hours when they had followed, stroke by stroke and touch by touch, a tedious, feeble, finical, school-girl pencil held in these fingers, now so skeleton-like.

Where was I? Not only in what spot of the world, but in what year of our Lord? For all these objects were of past days, and of a distant country. (192–193)

Here we see how material things signal the past and in doing so double Lucy's sense of place. These things that comprise her environment, while visibly in front of her, seem also to arise out of the place of memory, serving to locate her and dislocate her simultaneously. The things give her a sense of who she is (help unify her after her disembodied state) while also locating a version of herself in the past as evidenced by both her acts of remembrance ('[o]f all these things I could have told the peculiarities') and her question 'in what year of our Lord?' (193). This double encounter or simultaneous sense of experiencing two places in different instances in time (the apprehended past and visible present) demonstrates how material objects can presence a sense of an other world, whether imagined (as we will see shortly in relation to Harland's trip to Brussels) or remembered.

What is striking in the phenomenological sense of this spectral or ghostly encounter with things is the vitality with which the materiality of the objects (described in great detail throughout the scene) seem to presence their previous context, a vitality that calls into question the reality in the present tense as experienced by the protagonist. Lucy, in the following pages, uses the words ‘mystery’ and ‘dream’ to describe her confounded state; she offers an analogy of transport by comparing her experience to the *Arabian Nights*’ character ‘Bedreddin Hassan, transported in his sleep from Cairo to the gates of Damascus’ (194). Later, still struggling to come to terms with the presence of those things she once knew so intimately (‘I could have...numbered the flaws or cracks’ (193)) she thinks ‘[t]hese articles of furniture could not be real, solid arm-chairs, looking-glasses, and wash-stands – they must be the ghosts of such articles...’ (195); but then Lucy accepts that they are actually there, stating: ‘I knew—I was obliged to know—the green chintz of that little chair; the little snug chair itself, the carved, shining-black, foliated frame of that glass... – all these I was compelled to recognize and to hail.... Bretton! Bretton! and ten years ago shone reflected in that mirror’ (196).

Lucy Snowe’s encounter with the past through things offers a useful analogy to the worlding or resonant effect of writers’ houses/museums. In these settings things ‘straddle’ time, they are recognized as having two existences: as objects in the here-and-now and as objects connected to another life or past events. Accordingly they can ‘world’ and transport, they can un-tether the viewer – as when Marion Harland’s awareness of the curator recedes when she is imagining or reconstructing past events at the Carlyle’s – which is a way of foregrounding the *presence* of the past. Ultimately what things like Lucy Snowe’s fictional furniture and the material

remains in the writer's house/museum do is to make dynamic the-past-within-the-present, a kind of simultaneous-yet-dual worlding akin to the dual worlding in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* scene – an instance of transport as Lucy describes it, one that allows the past to shine 'in that mirror' (196).

Marion Harland's narrative of her trip to the Carlyle house is a good example of the ability of the writer's house/museum and its things to world: the kitchen table worlds a sense of the domestic life of the Carlyles; the garden worlds Jane's presence and her activities within it. But Harland also wrote a short chapter called 'Villette' in which she and her daughters go to Brussels 'because Brussels is "Villette"' (288). This narrative provides further evidence of the way an environment can world a set of relations, one that is even more complex than Lucy Snowe's. For where Lucy was cognizing two sets of relations in a kind of overlap: the shadowy sense of her unknown present world in tandem with her known past world – here we have three narratives in dynamic tandem: the Harlands in an environment aware of their own present, the evoked world of the real Brontë sisters, and the evoked world of the fictional Lucy Snowe. This multi-faceted worlding reflects one of the possible dynamics of the writer's house/museum in that what tends to be worlded in the writer's house/museum is not only the author's life and self, but their imaginary fictional worlds as well – an idea expanded on in chapter five through a look at the writer's desk as a space of creation.

For Harland the real-world setting of Brussels is 'a locality familiar to the mind's eye' (280) and Pensionnat Héger evokes, not only the shadowy presence of Charlotte and Emily who studied there, but also the setting of the novel: '[h]ow well we know it all. And how present and vivid is the reproduction here in the marble-paved room'

(288). The setting as such conflates a number of events: Charlotte and Emily's time in Brussels, Charlotte's later writing of the novel (Harland writes of 'comprehending that it "came" to her here' (295)) and Lucy's (fictional) life and all the events contained within it. At one point Harland conflates the real Charlotte with the fictional Lucy by stating 'in Lucy and Charlotte's time...' (292). Later she describes how while walking she and her daughters lose the real-life historical figures of the authors to the two fictional ones: 'We lost Charlotte and Emily as soon as we struck upon Dr Bretton's track and somehow felt the presence of the pale mute shadow [Lucy]...' (285). For Harland the larger setting worlds not only the two Brontë sisters, but a number of scenes from Charlotte's novel. Harland describes how '[t]he belief that we are following John Bretton's "frank tread" and Lucy's soundless footsteps takes fast hold of us. Without attempting to analyse the sensation, we quicken our pace...' (283).

Visiting a writer's museum can be like this too: a way of attempting to follow in the footsteps or feel 'the presence' of the writer who lived there. As the Freud Museum's guidebook notes, this sensation can often take the form of an 'absent presence' (20 Maresfield 50) – a felt encounter generated by an environment: by the things that are left behind by the absent individual as well as by those pockets of landscape or settings where the writer has been. Harland, for her part, extends this sense of a felt-presence even to Lucy, Charlotte's fictional protagonist, writing of Lucy that 'nowhere are her being and her presence a more vital actuality than in the garden...' (292). In this reading of resonance even the imaginative world of the writer can, to revisit Greenblatt's definition, 'reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world' (19); here even the fiction of Charlotte's imagination becomes

incorporated in the worlding of resonant things and places, the ‘here’ of the garden that inspired Charlotte’s scenes in *Villette*, worlding both the writer and the world of the novel that she’d written. In this way Harland’s narrative is useful not only because it reinforces those tropes that tend to be associated with affective encounters i.e. the imagination (‘the mind’s eye’ (280)); the vivid nature of the encounter (288); a felt presence (285); beliefs and sensations (283), but her trip to ‘Villette’ (she states very clearly that ‘Villette is not fiction as far as the setting of the story is concerned’ (293)) demonstrates that affective encounters that world the writers can also world their works.

Earlier in this chapter I described Harland’s experience at the Carlyle House as one of sensing through the staying power of things and the contiguity of place, a proximity to past events and those involved in such events. Harland’s affective experience expands on this statement by serving as a reminder that bound up in the setting of the writer’s house/museum is the writer’s work, known to whatever degree by the visitor and therefore adding, to varying degrees, to the resonant ‘worlding’ encounter. While Mike Robinson suggests that ‘[i]n the case of literary tourism we are, as tourists, looking for evidence of the writer’s real life, perhaps to use symbolically for inspiration or as an addendum to our reading’ (xvi) Harland demonstrates that the inverse is also true, the work can sometimes be more resonant than the biography – a useful reminder that aligning the life story of things with writerly biographies is only one part of the dynamic. Resonance as such is a multifaceted experience, it worlds a manifold of worlds – historical, literary, and imagined.

IV – ‘Being-for’ and the Museum Setting

The focus of this last section is on stasis, one of the dynamics I am suggesting is fundamental to resonant encounters in writers’ houses/museums. This section will lay the foundations of an argument that will be returned to in depth in chapter five of this thesis, namely that the ‘display’ aspect of the house/museum setting contributes to the resonant power of the things within them by changing how those things are viewed. Employing Heidegger’s consideration of ‘equipment’ in *Being and Time* and his concept of art in his essay ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, this section will suggest that through the forefronting of the museal environment a visitor’s usual sense of a thing’s ‘being-for’ is complicated, and that within that state of ambiguity two things are likely to happen: 1) the thing is likely to be registered as a displayed artefact and/or a work of art and 2) the thing’s ‘being-for’ is likely reconfigured.

Taken on a thing-by-thing basis many of the objects in a writer's house/museum can be understood to be equipment – which is to say that as actual equipment (chairs to sit in, spectacles to see with, pens to write with, cups to drink from) and as categorically ready-to-hand equipment in a Heideggerean sense, most of the everyday things that populate the museum have a sense of being-for.⁴² Heidegger's famous example of the ready-to-hand occurs in *Being and Time* when he uses the hammer as an example of a tool. For Heidegger:

Equipment can genuinely show itself only in dealings cut to its own measure (hammering with a hammer, for example).... In dealings such as this, where something is put to use, our concern subordinates itself to the ‘in-order-to’

⁴² ‘Ready-to-hand’ is the term Heidegger uses for the type of being possessed by tools. Tools are the kinds of things that are not forefronted in our consciousness until they break, cease to function with their usual efficiency, or go missing (*BT* 95-107, esp. 103-104; Harman, *HE* 176). In this way a hammer is a tool, a teacup is a tool (its purpose is to hold a liquid, such as tea), a dress is a tool intended to clothe us, keep us warm, allow us to enter into society within the conventions expected of us and so on).

which is constitutive for the equipment we are employing at the time; the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly it is encountered as that which it is—as equipment. (98)

Here, Heidegger is furthering his idea of sets of relations through affirming his lectern model: when we see a hammer we do not generally see brown wood with a metal head but rather an object with which to bang nails or build a shelter or mount a hook for a painting to hang from. For Heidegger our relationship with things is most natural or primal when we engage with them in terms of their in-order-to-do-‘X’-with aspect. The hammer recedes from our perception in its use; it is only when the hammer fails us, when it breaks or does not perform as intended that it becomes conspicuous.

Heidegger’s idea of being-for is problematized in a museum setting wherein the equipmental nature of equipment is beyond our reach. As Heidegger noted above, in using a tool for its purpose we are in synch with it, ‘the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become ’ (98) – but in the museum setting we can not generally grab hold of things and therefore cannot use them in the way they were intended – as tools – to be used. In museums tool-use is suspended by the act of display and/or severed through the elevation of the equipment to ‘art’ or ‘artefact’. In the display dynamic the act of display suspends use, as when a tea set belonging to the Wordsworths or a dog collar belonging to the Brontë family’s pet is removed from circulation as a tea set or as a collar for a dog and held in a cabinet in a kind of display-stasis. In these cases a change of status occurs (through a new reading of environmental relations): the tool becomes something more akin to ‘art’ in that the equipment is rendered ‘aesthetic’ (for looking) and loses its former felicity of purpose in order to be viewed. Take for

example, the small Brontë notebooks (or juvenilia) which were created as booklets to-be-read (with all of the picking up, putting down, holding, page flipping and assimilation that reading implies) and which now, as rare/autographic objects, are predominantly looked at in isolation, either as closed objects or as staged objects open to a page in a *Book of Kells* fashion, as if the regard of the markings and script fulfills the object's purpose.

Whether the object's removal from tool-use is seen primarily as 'static-making' or 'aesthetic-making' (or both) depends on the context of each displayed thing (how the setting shows it forth or establishes the parameters of regard) and on the viewer. For one viewer a dress as a thing may predominantly be a tool for covering oneself, while for another a dress may be a work of art. Accordingly, Charlotte Brontë's silk dress displayed in a glass case in the centre of a room in the Parsonage house/museum may be 'suspended from use' for one person (taken out of its usual frame of reference or assignment), be a work of art for another, or may shift in apprehension from one kind of status to another depending on the aspect from which it is viewed (comportment) and what elements are, or are not, noticed. In both cases the being-for of the dress as clothing (to clothe, to cover, to decorate, to signify etc.) is effaced because the dress as a displayed artefact signifies something that is not to be worn but is rather to be regarded.

In this model of encountering things it might seem that an object (stripped of its purpose) could be reduced to a kind of present-at-hand thing: a thing that, for Heidegger, is physically present but largely conceptualized / stripped of its mystery. But the house/museum setting already makes such a reduction improbable in that the setting itself implies or contextualizes such things as having a 'being-for' something

– even if the ‘being-for’ is read by visitors as a ‘being-for-seeing’. As Graham Harman suggests, part of Heidegger's concept of historicity or ‘foreconception’ involves the fact that ‘[b]efore looking at things for ourselves, we have already heard about them, and we tend to interpret them in the same way as others.... A purely original, independent judgment is impossible’ (*HE* 33).

In this way encountering an object in a writer’s museum – whether it is a chair, teacup, dress, or pen, we often come not only with assumptions about the being-for or tool nature of these things but with assumptions about the being-for nature of the house/museum itself. It follows then that the suspension of the original being-for of the equipment in a museum is not a shock as such (as when one picks up a hammer in Heidegger’s model to find it has failed in its use). Still, as Heidegger says of a damaged or an unsuitable tool, in its unusability ‘equipment becomes conspicuous’ (*BT* 102) which means that even in the writer’s house/museum setting unusable tools are conspicuous to a degree (it is, I would argue, shocking to see a braid of hair in a glass case, and disorienting to see a dress ‘standing-up’ as if filled with a human form that is not actually present) but as *museal* objects they are also already understood as having a different ‘being-for’ – a being-for that involves the embodiment of the immaterial (the absent individual for whom they stand and the world of the past) – a being-for that is for seeing and, as many of the narratives in this thesis attest, also for presencing: a dynamic that can involve both memories / narratives and a sense of somatic encounter.

Already we have seen how autographic ascription, authenticity and contiguity contribute to the resonant power of things. Suddenly, in those scenarios, added to everyday tools such as tables, teacups, umbrellas and pens is an element of the

significance of the person who used or touched them. This renders the tool special by association, but it does not change the status of the tool. In Bruce Hood's experiment he passed a cardigan that allegedly belonged to the serial killer Fred West around an auditorium and asked people touch it. He also passed a pen around claiming that it was Einstein's pen in order to consider the different responses to things associated with appealing figures (Einstein) or taboo figures (Fred West). In both these cases the things are still a tool *first* – an article of clothing, a writing implement – a unique or valuable tool with deep associations, yes, but as a held thing, passed along hand to hand they are things that are not removed from the arena of their use (Hood challenges people to wear the cardigan and any one of the people handed the pen could write with it). What writers' houses/museums do is provide a setting in which a tool becomes, through displacement from the everyday natural setting in which the tool functions – a worlding entity, an artefact or a work of art. As Harman notes, for Heidegger:

...pieces of art are *works*, not just tools or present-at-hand physical lumps. The essence of art is that it shows the truth of beings set to work. What artworks reproduce is not things, but rather the *essence* of things. Normally, equipment is used invisibly and silently until it breaks down or otherwise attracts our notice. Only in artworks does the equipmentality of equipment come to the fore. While tools tend to be invisibly immersed in the world, in the artwork the tool's entire world becomes visible along with it. (*HE* 110)

This idea, that art's work, or one of its functions, or part of its being-for is illumination or the revelation of essence will be returned to in chapter five in relation to Dickens's desk and chair and how two artworks featuring his desk and chair illuminate aspects of worlding. In this instance it is enough to note that Harman is suggesting that artworks can bring aspects of a tool's essence to the fore, a dynamic borne from the heightened visibility of a tool that one would normally use without

deep consideration. I am suggesting that a similar dynamic happens in the removal of a tool from use and its placement on display in the writer's house/museum. In such cases the essence of the thing becomes foregrounded – the thing ceases to be ready-to-hand and in that stasis is seen more profoundly, which I am suggesting allows the tool as a thing to become ready-to-hand as a remembrancer.

If Harland had simply encountered *a* table in *a* house (versus *the* Carlyle's table at *the* Carlyle House) she may not have raised it in her regard beyond the general setting and either its present-at-hand reduction or ready-to-hand nature, she might have looked past it or set her bag on it. As a tool or piece of equipment it would have recessed into the environment and its set of relations, but as a tool or piece of equipment read as an *artefact* the table's ability to world comes into being. It's being-for as a tool (which Bessie made bread on) is noted in tandem with its being-for as a tool capable of provoking and presencing the past and those who abided in the past alongside the table. Similarly, if a manuscript page is severed from its use as a draft or document and framed as 'art' (autographic/literary art or aesthetic art in that its markings matter) it becomes a tool for provocation, evoking the hand and writer who drafted it and other associated relations; in short: it 'worlds'.

The placement of tools in stasis facilitates the transition of a tool's being-for. It removes the object from its common associational tool-use. Harman suggests that '[o]nly in artworks does the equipmentality of equipment come to the fore' – referencing Heidegger's analysis of Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes in his essay 'On the Origin of the Work of Art' (*HE* 110) but I would argue that the equipmentality of equipment that comes to the fore in writers' museums is (extending Harman's suggestion) while related to the essence of the things

themselves (the being-for of the dress for wearing) also a springboard toward a different dynamic, one in which memories and narratives are stored in things.

This chapter began by asserting that a sense of encounter or communion with a writer can be manifested through an environment of worlding things. Things, removed from their original tool-use preserve not only a sense of the person with whom they were associated in their ‘equipmental’ life; they also, through exclusion from the circuit of use, fulfill a new purpose – becoming tools for remembrance. This is one of the most important ways the setting of the writer’s house/museum contributes to the resonant power of things, and one of the ways specific kinds of things – as the next four chapters will show – contribute to resonant encounters in writers’ houses/museums.

Chapter Three: Hair

Locks of hair were powerful remembrancers in the Victorian era. As a part of the body that was severable, pliable, portable and enduring hair was especially fit for the task of evoking the absent or dead individual to whom the hair once belonged. Reading locks of hair from the Wordsworth Trust collection alongside letters from William, Mary and Dora Wordsworth, the first section of this chapter will demonstrate that, in the nineteenth century, locks of hair were utilized as physical reminders that could evoke the absent individual for whom they stood while also materially figuring bonds through a medium that would outlast the individuals signified.

Section two will read the anthropologist Edmund Leach's essay 'Magical Hair' alongside hair binding narratives in *Villette* and *Wuthering Heights* in order to demonstrate that hair, as a material remain, was a tool that could be both representational (something that 'says') and instrumental (something that 'does').

Section three will examine hair's instrumentality in the context of the writer's house/museum. As a non-circulating / displayed fragment and an autographic remain hair presences the absent individual in a different way than it would have in its original context. Whereas many of the locks of hair in these collections may originally have signified or cemented bonds of love, or represented the grief of severance at death and a longing for connection, in the writer's house/museum locks of hair are both bodily archives and bodily witnesses – providing the viewer with a different sense of connection, one in which the absent individual is figured as a present-absence, evoking both the physical fact of their life and their death.

I – Wordsworth’s Hair

The Wordsworth Trust collection has over seventy samples of hair⁴³ many attributed to Wordsworth himself though some are attributed to family members or individuals from their larger social circle.⁴⁴ These samples take a variety of forms: some are locks, some plaits, some strands or even trimmings – a good number of those attributed to Wordsworth himself are smoothed locks tied with ribbon or thin slips of silk.⁴⁵

There are so many locks of William Wordsworth’s hair in various public and private collections that it seems dubious one man (with so little hair on his head in his later years) could have produced such a large sampling. An undated newspaper clipping archived at the Wordsworth Trust’s Jerwood Centre suggests as much. Filed with a small ambrotype glass reproduction of Wordsworth and a lock of his (alleged) hair (catalogue item 1994.37), the article, entitled ‘Lock of Hair and Miniature’ focuses on the auctioning-off of a lock of hair purported to be Wordsworth’s from the property of a Rev. G. C. Fletcher of Grasmere. It contains the following summary:

Explaining the low price of the relic, an antique dealer told a Gazette reporter that it was due to the fact that there would be no ready market for it. ‘Some time ago,’ he said, ‘there was a great sale in lockets containing what were reputed to be strands of Wordsworth’s hair and in this way much more hair

⁴³ For comparison’s sake, The Brontë Parsonage collection lists 48 samples of hair (47 human, 1 canine). Of these, 28 of the samples are attributed to the Brontës, 20 are unattributed. 19 of the samples are worked (meaning: plaited, plaited and bound, or set in some form of jewelry; 13 mounted or framed (including J81 which is a mounted and framed collection of 7 locks from the family) and 16 are unworked (meaning: a simple cutting bound with silk or of the type placed in an envelope).

⁴⁴ The Wordsworth archive is a good indicator of the range of exchange common in his lifetime. While there are many samples of beloved family members’ hair, there are also samples from the family’s larger social and familial circles. Examples of hair samples belonging to those who were not immediate members of the Wordsworth family include 2003.79.96.42 (Herbert Coleridge’s hair); WLMS Moorsom /28/15 (a lock of a Joshua Stanger’s hair); WLMS Moorsom/28/13 (a lock of a Margaret Emily Spedding’s hair), WLMSS11/11/5 (an envelope containing the hair of the four Stewart siblings).

⁴⁵ GRMDC.E68a purple ribbon; GRMDC.E68b red ribbon; GRMDC.E72b red ribbon and black thread; GRMDC.E73a blue silk in pink tissue paper; GRMDC.E73b black thread and blue ribbon; GRMDC.E5 tied with blue wool; 2002.19.12 envelope and so on.

than the poet could ever have had on his head was sold to souvenir hunters. Therefore, even this lock, which has been treasured by the Fletcher family from the days when Wordsworth was a regular guest at their home, would be treated with distrust by buyers.’ (‘Lock’)

According to the clipping, the miniature and the lock were purchased anyway, for £1 18s by a Mrs. Bailey of Grasmere, the two objects and the newspaper article eventually finding their way to the Jerwood Centre where they were acquired in 1994.

To be clear, Wordsworth was not ungenerous with his hair. When an old friend, Basil Montagu, wrote to Wordsworth requesting a lock of his hair, Wordsworth obliged, writing in his reply of 1 October, 1844: ‘I send you the lock of hair which you desired, white as snow, and taken from a residue that is thinning rapidly’ (C. Wordsworth 411). Edwin Paxton Hood’s 1856 biography of Wordsworth (*Wordsworth: A Biography*) also documents the ‘traffic’ in Wordsworth’s hair, describing how James Dixon, one of three servants at Rydal Mount, took advantage of his position as Wordsworth’s barber. Paxton Hood states that Dixon ‘who was to the poet gardener, groom, and something more, a loving and faithful, and watchful heart, cut his master’s hair, but the locks were never thrown away from that venerable head, but have found their way into hundreds of hands in every part of the Empire’. Dixon also apparently kept ‘a quantity of cards with the poet’s autograph, and thus he sometimes comforted those who failed to see him, by either a lock of his hair, or a dash of his pen’ (471).

Real human hair, whether properly ascribed or not, is an authentic thing, it is also the most *inherently* autographic and contiguous object considered in this thesis. Even when viewed apart from its person (as in those slim grey locks from Wordsworth’s head) hair tends in its fragmentary/severed form to reference its absent source, which

implies that conceptually hair is never severed completely from its context; that some sense of affiliation or contiguity (to the known or abstracted individual) remains.

The locks of hair in the Wordsworth Trust collection, both in terms of their number and the variety of ways (formally, informally) in which they are configured, support this chapter's assertion that hair was used materially to establish, signify and maintain a bond between individuals, whether separated by distance or death. This is evidenced by a letter written by Wordsworth's sister-in-law Priscilla (née Lloyd) in which she asks her father for some hair with which to remember her dead siblings (P. Wordsworth 'Letter') as well as by the gold-mounted mourning brooch containing a plait of William's nephew's hair and inscribed 'In memory of / J. Wordsworth / who departed this / life on the 18th of / Augt. 1846' (Mourning Brooch).

Hair tokens, like the ones Priscilla requested and like John Wordsworth's, were not uncommon in the Victorian era and were often distributed widely depending on how many family members or friends might wish to receive such a token. As Elizabeth G. Gitter notes in 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination' the 'literary fascination with the magical power of women's hair coincided in Victorian everyday life with an intense popular preoccupation with hair and hair tokens.... fashioned, as if through alchemy, from the plaited hair of family members, lovers, and friends, living and dead' (942).

While hair tokens that commemorated the dead were often imbued with feelings of loss, grief and longing, the exchange of hair tokens between the living tended to function as reminders or symbols of friendship or love. In a letter written in 1832 to her step-daughter Jemima Quillinan, Dora Wordsworth Quillinan (William and Mary's daughter) noted that she was still wearing a locket with Jemima's hair in it,

stating: ‘as further proof that you are not forgotten I *must* tell you that at this moment I have round my neck a lock of your hair which I cut off your little bit of a head, as it was, ten years ago & which has been worn by me ever since’ (D. Wordsworth ‘Letter’). Dora’s letter demonstrates that the use of hair as a ‘presencing’ device or ‘remembrancer’ could occur in relation to those living, for Jemima was not dead, simply distant; a distance that the apprehension of the lock diminished: the locket and hair likely calling Jemima to mind both when Dora consciously considered them and when the hair locket presented itself on her body – a ‘proof’ that her step-daughter was ‘not forgotten’. Here, hair is a positive remembrancer, a ‘touchstone’ that calls Jemima to mind.

Hair tokens used this way – singly – were therefore a reminder of an absent individual, though locks of hair were frequently combined: plaited or bound to signal a bond or a union between two or more individuals. This is the case with the comingled locks of William and Mary Wordsworth’s hair (Wordsworth box, Fig. 3 below) – an object that serves as a concrete example of the way locks of hair were sometimes used in the era: as both a symbolic representation of a couple’s love and affection and as the embodiment of a communion.

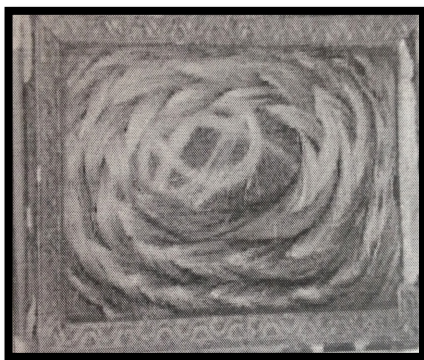


Fig. 3. William and Mary Wordsworth's hair in silver box, GRMDC.H120. Photograph: Giovanna Rocchi ©The Wordsworth Trust Museum, Grasmere.

The Wordsworth's hair, catalogue item GRMDC.H120, is a decorative rectangular silver box that may possibly have been used as a snuffbox; it is 70mm long, 49mm wide and 12mm high. A floral pattern and a decorative cross are etched on the lid and the box opens via two small hinges on one side. Inside, framed behind glass are two locks of hair belonging to Mary and William Wordsworth (WT archive). Mary's hair takes the form of a larger fair-haired plait wound numerous times into an oval shape, inside which William's smaller (and whiter) lock (bowed into something resembling a pretzel-shape) is nestled.

How the hair came to be bound in the box is uncertain, but aspects of William and Mary's correspondence affirm that both of them were invested in the idea of togetherness both in life and after it. This is evidenced by repeated expressions of longing and their dissatisfaction around the idea of separation⁴⁶ as in William's assertion to Mary, in a letter written in June of 1812, that their recent period of separation has led him to understand the strengths of their marriage: 'How I long, (again must I say) to be with thee; every hour of absence now is a grievous loss, because we have been parted sufficiently to feel how profoundly in soul & body we love each other; and to be taught what a sublime treasure we possess in each others love...' (Darlington 229). Or Mary to William: '...only I must say longings to have you by my side have this day been painful to me beyond expression...' (219), or William to Mary: '...for you never I think are out of my mind 3 minutes together

⁴⁶ See in particular Darlington's *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth* pages 33, 60, 62, 81-2, 162-2, 183, 210, 219, 229. These letters explicitly mention loss or separation. Mary's hair was also a topic in their letters. In 1810, one day before her fortieth birthday, Mary wrote a letter to her husband lamenting the outward signs of aging: '...tis true I am losing my teeth and my hair is becoming grey – these, the two great ornaments my Youth had to boast of, (my hair especially I prized, because thou once ventured to speak in admiration of it) I must own are *upon the wain* – else I think I am as good as ever...' (Darlington 78). Whether the 'admiration' Mary was referring to was expressed in William's poem 'She Was a Phantom of Delight' or in some private comment is unknown, although the poem in which Wordsworth wrote of a woman with 'eyes as stars of Twilight fair; / Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair' is a likely candidate, as it was written two years into their marriage (Wordsworth, *Selected* 34).

however I am engaged, but I am every moment seized with a longing wish that you might see the objects which interest me as I pass along, and not having you at my side my pleasure is so imperfect that after a short look I had rather not see the objects at all' (62). These letters and others like them suggest that, whatever the vagaries of a marriage, there was a strong sense of affection between the couple and that their time apart made them palpably aware of how much they missed each other. For William, Mary's absence brings him to an awareness of both their spiritual and bodily love. For Mary, William's absence is described in an embodied fashion wherein his absence is traceable to a specific location (by her side – a spatial identification also present in William's letter), an absence that causes her 'pain' just as William's longing 'seizes' him.

This longing to be together is affirmed in a letter of Mary's written in 1810, though here she takes the idea of separation one step farther: 'Well! next Saturday but one & we meet to part no more for any length of time – till a sod separates us, & that separation I trust will be for no great length of time' (81-2). This idea of two kinds of separation, the one in life, and the one after the death of one of the partners ('till a sod separates us') and the theme of a desire to bridge the distance and be together both now and eternally reflects in language the kind of bond expressed materially by the comingling of their locks of hair. In this way the twining or nestling of hair is both an emblem and a material and synecdochal⁴⁷ manifestation of an

⁴⁷ Synecdoche is 'a special type of metonymy' wherein the part stands for the whole (Preminger 840). In *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson also identify synecdoche as a special case of metonymy. Interestingly they differentiate metonymy from *metaphor* by noting that metaphors are 'principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another' with understanding as the main function of the construction whereas metonymy has 'primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another' (36). This referential function means that a lock of hair as a 'part' points to, or refers to its absent whole. While definitions of synecdoche note that the figure usually features an inherent relation (either of entity or concept) between the part and the whole (Preminger 840) – as in the inherent relation between a lock of hair and the body it sprang from – Lakoff and Johnson emphasize that linguistically 'which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on' (36). They note, for example, the use of 'good heads' for smart people has special correspondences between the part singled out and the attribute being described: '[I]ike metaphors, metonymies are not random or arbitrary occurrences, to be treated as isolated instances' (37). As 'a tangible part of one's self' (Bell 7) a lock of hair is not an arbitrary fragment in

embodied desire – a gesture, if made by the couple, that expresses an abiding connection between two individuals. A gesture, if made by others, reflecting the bond of the couple in life and how it was understood they might like to be represented eternally.

As with most of the locks in the Wordsworth collection (and across the collections of the writers' houses/museums considered here) the Wordsworth's hair is not overly 'worked'. This implies that the locks did not serve a decorative function. Similarly the lack of an inscription or notice (as on the box holding Dora Wordsworth's plait, examined later in this chapter) reduces the likelihood that the hair was placed in the box for predominantly commemorative or public purposes. Because the nestled locks do not take the form of hair jewelry (especially in those forms associated with women: locketts, brooches, bracelets, rings) it's possible the silver box belonged to a man; that perhaps William took it with him on his travels in order to present Mary. (The authenticating narrative for the object includes the fact that the donor – a relation of the family's – always referred to it as 'Wordsworth's snuffbox'.) It's also possible that the locks were pressed together after the Wordsworths' deaths (William in 1850 and Mary in 1859) to preserve some sense of them as a couple.⁴⁸ In either case, the presence of Mary's hair and the predominance of her coil make the object seem less like a Wordsworthian 'literary souvenir' and more like a romantic or familial token: the coiled locks encased behind glass (now doubly encased – in that this item is displayed prominently at the Wordsworth Museum) serving as a visual

constructions for remembering and binding – it is a part of the loved body that can be seen, touched or held even when the body cannot; it is a part of the body that outlasts it. Phillipe Ariès refers to hair as an 'incorruptible fragment' (*Howr* 462). As Robert Bartlett suggests in his essay 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages', one of the reasons hair 'is a particularly fertile and powerful bearer of meaning' is because it 'is an exceptionally malleable body part. It has almost the same range of possibilities of treatment as clothing – it can be shaped, dyed, removed – but it emerges from the body and is thus organic in a way that clothes are not...' (43).

⁴⁸ The box and hair were acquired by the Trust through Wordsworth's grandson Gordon Graham Wordsworth who came into possession of it through Mrs Buller Little whose family was related to Mary Wordsworth née Hutchinson's family ('Wordsworth Box' WT object card).

semiotic of an eternal union – an eternal union William himself sought to evoke when, in a letter to Mary, he suggested that their letters be ‘deposited side by side as a bequest for the survivor of us’ (Darlington 60), an allusion to the material world’s ability to both outlast and symbolically unite individuals via those objects that are deeply associated with them.

The comingling of the Wordsworth’s hair for personal or familial use, and Dora’s use of a lock of her step-daughter’s hair as a reminder of her establishes that hair was used materially to signify a bond between individuals. But hair, as the next section of this chapter will demonstrate, was more than just a signifying object – it was also something that could ‘do’.

II – Things that Say and Things that Do

In his 1957 essay ‘Magical Hair’ the social anthropologist Edmund Leach sought to address some of his concerns with recent psychoanalytic readings of anthropological rituals or symbolic behaviours concerning hair. His focus was on the psychoanalytic analysis of hair that Charles Berg had employed in a 1951 publication entitled *The Unconscious Significance of Hair*. Berg’s reading of hair symbolism used anthropological examples of rituals involving hair and haircutting (predominantly from Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* published some sixty years before) but he used these to support the idea that hair could be seen cross-culturally as a representation of genitalia and was often employed as such because of issues of repression. In his essay, Leach, without dismissing the value of psychoanalytic readings as informative frames of reference, argues that the ritual use of hair (styling, oiling, cutting, etc.) is a

conscious mode of symbolism established through cultural contexts and not some manifestation of individual repression. Although he does not disavow the possibility that certain practices might be born in part from cross-cultural ideas and associations (conscious or subconscious) around issues such as purity, impurity etc. his position was one that sided, by and large, with conscious meaning-making on the part of groups or individuals. This means that in relation to hair as a thing Leach prioritized human agency as a determinative factor in hair rituals, stating: ‘In the anthropologist’s view, ritually powerful human hair is full of magical potency not because it is hair but because of the ritual context of its source, e.g. murder, incest, mourning etc. It is the ritual situation which makes the hair “powerful”, not the hair which makes the ritual powerful’ (159).

What is most useful in Leach’s argument in relation to this thesis – beyond his assertion that rituals involving hair occur across a variety of cultures and that anthropologists suspect ‘that human hair has some universal symbolic value’ (160)⁴⁹ – is his differentiation early in the essay between two kinds of symbolic behaviour (public and private) as well as his differentiation between the kind of symbolic behaviour that ‘says something’ (as communication content) and the kind that ‘arouses emotion and consequently “does” something’ (147).

Leach’s definitions of acts of public and private symbolism revolve logically around acts that are committed in front of an audience or for the purpose of display (public or social acts wherein the groups might ‘share a common set of conventions’)

⁴⁹ Leach acknowledges:

It is quite true that ethnography reveals an almost world-wide distribution of hairdressing rituals. These rituals are particularly prominent in mourning ceremonies but occur also in other *rites de passage* and even in rites of a less personal nature. There is substantial though not complete consistency between the hair rituals of different cultures, and it has been a common postulate among anthropologists that human hair has some universal symbolic value. Discussions of hair symbolism were fairly prominent in the early debates concerning animism and magic. The general consensus was that *hair* stands for the *total individual* or for the *soul*, or for the individual’s *personal power (mana)*. (160)

This statement supports the synecdochal reading of hair in this thesis, as in ‘the part for the whole’.

and those committed more privately between one or two individuals (private/subjective acts) (148). His analogy for symbolic behaviours that say or do (which he originally equates with public (say) vs. private (do) rituals) is worth noting. He suggests:

If a sovereign wears a crown at a state function, this ‘says’ something, it asserts that ‘this is the King’. In contrast, when at a coronation, oil is poured on the sovereign’s head, this ‘does’ something: it ‘makes him a King’. In this latter case we are dealing with what is ordinarily referred to as magic; the magical act alters the situation in a mystical rather than in a material sense. (151)

For Leach the anthropologist’s responsibility is to the observable, public act. He sees psychoanalysis as concerning itself with the relatively unknowable private act, a position that ‘assumes that the potency of these symbols is derived from something innate in every particular individual’ (159). What Leach acknowledges in his conclusion is that even though he regards psychoanalytic methodology as suspect, ‘both the psychological and the sociological analyses lead to closely similar interpretations of the “meaning” of particular symbols’ and that ‘each is “correct”, but only when considered within its own frame of reference’ (161-162). For Leach, those areas of cross-disciplinary agreement in relation to hair rituals cannot be homogenized through unifying ideologies or the anthropologists’ societal approach and the psychoanalysts’ personal approach. Instead he suggests ‘a bridge between the two frames of reference’ (162), frames of reference that I believe the anthropologist Daniel Miller attempts to bridge in his recent work on material culture when he advocates for a ‘*simultaneous commitment* to the extremes of particularity and of generality’ (Miller 9, emphasis added, see especially *Stuff* 7-9; 22).

Similarly, thinking about things that can *both* ‘say’ and ‘do’ is crucial. Leach acknowledges in ‘Magical Hair’ that there can be a conflation, that ‘[s]ymbolic

behaviour not only “says” something, it also arouses emotion and consequently “does” something’⁵⁰ (147) a simultaneous saying and doing that is demonstrated by a scene in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Villette*.

In the novel *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë uses the binding of hair as a motif to signify a connection between individuals. In the scene in question, Paulina – observed by the novel’s protagonist and narrator, Lucy Snowe – sits between her father and her fiancée Graham under a tree on the grounds of the palace at Bois l’Etang. To make peace between them she fashions an amulet of their hair bound with hers. This scene is worth quoting at length because it shows clearly that the amulet Paulina makes is not only imbued with power by Paulina’s verbal assertion but also perceived to enact a new state of affairs in the trio’s relationship. Even Lucy (observing) notes that through Paulina’s act of binding the hair a new relationship is ‘rendered’ – that of unity. The scene is told from Lucy’s point of view. Lucy sees the trio and notices Polly, how:

...with the tiny pair of scissors, glittering in her lap, she had severed spoils from each manly head beside her, and was now occupied in plaiting together the gray lock and the golden wave. The plait woven–no silk-thread being at hand to bind it–a tress of her own hair was made to serve that purpose; she tied it like a knot, prisoned it in a locket, and laid it on her heart.

‘Now,’ said she, ‘there is an amulet made, which has virtue to keep you two always friends. You can never quarrel so long as I wear this.’

An amulet was indeed made, a spell framed which rendered enmity impossible. She was become a bond to both, an influence over each, a mutual concord....

...I watched the father, the daughter, the future husband, now united–all blessed and blessing. (505-506)

⁵⁰ We can see these two modes at work in a letter written by a young woman named Emily Palmer to her brother William in 1852. Emily had just received a ring from their sister Laura which contained hair from their recently deceased sister Dorthea:

Dear Laura...has given us each a ring of our Do’s hair with a small pearl in the middle. I am so fond of it. We chose a ring – and I am glad for 3 reasons. First because always wearing it – helps me always to think of her – 2nd because a ring seems to be [a] bond of love – 3rd it being round – a circle reminds one how one’s love and communion with her may and will last for ever if we don’t lose it by our own fault. Then the Pearl ‘Purity’ pleases me so much. (Jalland 298-9; see also Lutz 134).

In her letter Emily privileges the fact that the ring ‘helps’ her remember Do and the symbolically resonant details (the symbolism of rings as a bond, the infinite nature of the circle, the pearl) follow. This reflects Dora Wordsworth’s emphasis on the functional role of her stepdaughter’s hair – as a remembrancer first, rather than as a symbolic piece of jewelry.

The question of agency in relation to resonant things is one that will reoccur in different guises in every chapter of this thesis. In the case of *Villette* two readings of the hair's role in establishing the 'mutual accord' between Paulina's father and future husband are suggested: in one the binding of the trio's hair is symbolic – a *representation* of a situation, and, in the other, hair is a constitutive or determining force.

The reading of hair as a determining force comes predominantly from Polly's assertion that the amulet⁵¹ has the 'virtue' to make a certain condition exist – though the assertion can be read as a veiled instruction, which relocates the agency to Paulina. In giving their locks the men have already submitted to her will which means that it's unlikely they would (given their respective love for her) challenge her dictum. In asserting the amulet's power Paulina relieves herself of having to tell the men directly what to do, she locates the authority in the object and lets the binding act as a surrogate for her demand.

In this case the bound locks are symbolic in so much as they are material things that represent conditions enacted by Paulina and agreed to by the men. Still, even in their symbolism they perform a function – through the locket's actual physical form and presence on her body Paulina is relieved of a responsibility in future dynamics. All she has to do is wear the amulet in order for the men to be 'always friends' because having instructed them in such a way and having *tied the instruction* materially to the amulet the wearing of it acts as a reminder to the men who, if they want to respect her wishes, must behave accordingly. Having submitted to her in the making of the amulet all that would need to happen in the future is for the amulet to

⁵¹ The term 'amulet' is generally associated with an object used for protection and preservation i.e. when worn as a charm (OED).

be seen in the midst of a conflict, thus calling to mind the agreement made and thereby ending any potential conflicts. Here the binding *symbolically* puts the men in their place in relation to the dynamics of the situation (they are tied to each other and Polly is what binds them) but the *act* of being bound together in a material/synecdochal form and the agreed-upon transfer of power to the hair amulet (a transfer of power that is given *because* of the hair's fitness to represent the trio and bind them) is what *enacts* an understanding and the resultant change. This makes the amulet a constitutive force in the peace making; this also makes the hair a tool.

In 'Magical Hair' Leach ascribes the power of things like hair to the willingness of the individuals to be so affected, a position that Leach acknowledges 'poses for the anthropologist an essentially psychological problem: Just where does the emotional content of symbols come from, and how is it that some symbols are more emotionally loaded than others?' (147). This is not a question he attempts to answer, perhaps because, as he states in relation to the anthropological position, he sees *the context* as the actor or signifier, not the hair. Implicit in his question, and most useful for the purposes of this thesis, is a secondary query: if the emotional content of a symbol is weak then how can it be effective? If the emotional content of a symbol is strong ('more emotionally loaded') and can therefore *effect* change in those engaging with it, then is there not some aspect of change that is *induced by* the object in question? And if so, is that power of induction totally put onto the thing by the ritual context or does it come, in part, from those qualities that are inherent in/to the thing in question?

In keeping with Leach's open-ended query about emotional content, I'll return to his analogy about the making of the king in which he asks: 'In this instance, for

example, what is there about “pouring oil on the head” which makes the act *appropriate* for “making” a king?” (151). In this question Leach focuses less on the material object of choice (‘oil’) and why it might be the vehicle or tool most ‘fit’ for ‘making’, than on the act of ‘pouring’ – the subject-oriented / human-enacted framing, or what he refers to as the human context. This foregrounding of human agency and determinism can be challenged by the anthropologist Daniel Miller’s assertion in *Stuff* (2010) that ‘[i]t is now clear that in material culture we are concerned at least as much with how things make people as the other way around’ (42). This is not to say that Leach is wrong and that the ‘making’ of the king isn’t determined by human will and agreement, it is only to suggest that his insistence on the human actor’s agency doesn’t leave room for the question of what makes a thing (in his case oil) the right tool or agent for the making.

If things ‘do’ – if they are perceived as agents for doing-with, as tools able to fulfill our ritualistic needs (to feel close to, to connect with, to remember) then, as this thesis suggests their ability to do so comes in part from them. Oil is used to make a king because it has qualities (overt or intuited) that make it more fit for the task of consecration than leaves or wood or nails. Hair is used to evoke memories and to presence the absent because in the Victorian era it was more fit for the task than other objects (which explains why its popularity as a remembrancer declined after the advent of photography). Which is to say that it is *because* hair is biologically and visually contiguous, because it is an actual part of the entity from whom it sprang, that it is a fit tool for remembrance: for binding, connecting and conjuring.

One more example from literature will be useful in elaborating on aspects of the distinction between things that ‘say’ and things that ‘do’. In both Charlotte Brontë’s

Villette and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* hair bindings are used to enact a set of human relations. In *Villette* it is a bond between Paulina, her father and future husband – all living. In *Wuthering Heights* the binding is intended to enact a comingling after death. *Wuthering Heights*, in this way, doesn't bridge Leach's differentiation between the kind of symbolic behaviour that 'says something' (as communication content) and the kind that 'arouses emotion and consequently "does" something' (Leach 147) as in the *Villette* scene, rather the scene in *Wuthering Heights* – of a hair binding that is intended to be private – affirms that hair in the era was not always employed as a tool that could enact through saying, rather, it was sometimes perceived as something that had the power to 'do'.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* was published in 1847. Set in the Yorkshire moors, it concerns the love affair between Catherine Earnshaw and her former childhood friend, Heathcliff, a homeless boy taken in by Catherine's father when they were young. Because of Heathcliff's social status Catherine cannot marry him and instead marries Edgar Linton. Out of spite Heathcliff, having found wealth, elopes with Edgar's sister Isabella. Eventually Catherine dies, having given birth to Edgar's daughter. Throughout the novel there are intimations that Catherine is near – haunting the farmhouse and Heathcliff.

In recounting the story of Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship to an enquiring Mr. Lockwood, the narrator of the novel, Nelly, describes an event that took place just after Catherine's death – a scene in which Heathcliff removes Edgar Linton's hair from the locket around the recently-deceased Catherine's neck only to replace it with his own lock (205). This crucial scene where Heathcliff casts Linton's hair out of Catherine's locket serves no emblematic or symbolic purpose within the scene if

part of the function of a symbol is to be read by others. Catherine was ready for burial and already draped (Heathcliff had to move ‘the drapery about the corpse’s face’ to access the locket) which means that it’s unlikely anyone would have known Heathcliff had replaced Linton’s hair with ‘a black lock of his own’ had Nelly not discovered Linton’s discarded lock (205).

What kind of intention can be drawn from Heathcliff’s actions? He is not a sentimental character. It’s possible Emily Brontë wanted to appease her readers’ disappointment at Catherine’s death and the lovers parting by providing some sense of their eternal communion – an outcome already alluded to through Heathcliff’s ‘sudden paroxysm’ wherein he states ‘I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth’ after which he begs (the already dead) Catherine to ‘[b]e with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!’ (204).⁵² It’s also possible Brontë wanted her readers to believe that in placing his hair in the locket some element of his person, some synecdochal iteration would go with Catherine to the grave, a sentiment Brontë subverts wonderfully by having Nelly twist Linton *and* Heathcliff’s locks together in the locket, a binding that may represent compromise for Nelly, but which ultimately represents the continuity of the love triangle as it was in life, one that induces (in this reader at least) a sense of discomfort, of the wrong kind of psychological contamination, of an eternity mired in the somatic kind of conflict that entangled the trio in life.

This perception of a lock of hair as an eternally connecting force is evidenced in the real-life diary of the painter John Horsley (1817-1903) whose wife Elvira died on

⁵² For an interesting reading of Heathcliff’s actions in relation to his lock of hair see Deborah Lutz’s suggestion that Heathcliff’s desired union is more flesh-based than ethereal. She also suggests that in taking a fragment of his body and melding it to hers that Heathcliff ‘desires his presence to linger, synecdochally, in the place she is, somewhere on the other side of death’ (131). Lutz’s reading supports a belief in the connecting fragment as one whose sympathetic connection to its former host can enact or maintain a union, a fact bolstered by Lutz’s fleeting reference to ‘a much older fabric of belief – sympathetic magic’ (132).

1 December 1852. In *Death in the Victorian Family* Pat Jalland recounts how before burying Elvira:

They hung round her neck a little red velvet bag containing locks of hair from John and the children, so that she could take to the grave some earthly reminders of her family. John recalled in his diary how his dying wife had planned this a month earlier, calling in the children one by one, cutting off locks of their hair, wrapping each in a note stating the name and date. (214)

In this example the hair of the living is being used to link the living with the dead *for the dead*, as if the children's hair – even in its cut state – would somehow remain linked to their ongoing vitality, a vitality that – the scenario seems to imply – will remain meaningful to their dead mother, perhaps connecting her to them from across death's divide.

The taking of the locks of hair to the grave – and narratives like *Wuthering Heights* that employ hair as a material synecdoche of the self – a synecdoche that reflects laws of sympathetic magic (what befalls Heathcliff's lock befalls him) supports the idea in the Victorian era that locks of hair created a sense of connection, of being together, a 'communion-through-things' – one that transcended (as Bruce Hood suggests in *Supersense*) common-sense boundaries.⁵³ As Elizabeth G. Gitter

⁵³ Sir James Frazer's (1854-1941) anthropological thirteen-volume opus *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* was published over a period of years beginning in 1890. One of the remarkable aspects of a contemporary reading of certain parts of Frazer's text – in particular those dealing with the idea of sympathetic magic and hair as a remain – is that there is some consistency between how Frazer suggests hair was viewed anthropologically in other cultures and how it was conceptually employed in Victorian social practices. In chapter 21 section 6 of *The Golden Bough*, in a section entitled 'hair tabooed', Frazer notes that: 'For the Savage believes that the sympathetic connexion which exists between himself and every part of his body continues to exist even after the physical connexion has been broken, and that therefore he will suffer from any harm that may befall the severed parts of his body, such as the clippings of his hair or the parings of his nails' (231–232). In section 8 he furthers this idea by stating:

The notion that a man may be bewitched by means of the clippings of his hair, the parings of his nails, or any other severed portion of his person is almost world-wide, and attested by evidence too ample, too familiar, and too tedious in its uniformity to be here analyzed at length. The general idea on which the superstition rests is that of the sympathetic connexion supposed to persist between a person and everything that has once been part of his body or in any way closely related to him. A very few examples must suffice. They belong to that branch of sympathetic magic which may be called contagious. (233)

Here Frazer is describing a belief that he suggests can be found widely across cultures, that of 'sympathetic connexion' a 'superstition' wherein some sort of incorporeal tether or relation remains between things formerly joined – such as hair and the person, or nail trimmings and the person – even after those things have been severed. Frazer calls the belief a superstition though the sociologist/anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), writing just after the turn of the century, classified the law of 'sympathetic contiguity' as a kind of magic. For Mauss, writing in *A General Theory of Magic*, contiguity is one of the three principal laws of sympathy, the other two being similarity and opposition (79). Of the law of contiguity he states:

The simplest expression of the notion of sympathetic contiguity is the identification of a part with the whole. The part stands for the complete object. Teeth, saliva, sweat, nails, hair represent a total person, in such a way

noted in ‘The Power of Women’s Hair in the Victorian Imagination’ the leap from anthropological ideas of ‘sympathetic connexion’ to Victorian hair practices was not so great (942).⁵⁴ This leap is not such a leap however, for essential to both is the idea of contiguity, a contiguity that transcends the distance between the part and the whole; that transcends absence or death.

III – Hair’s Fitness as a Remembrancer

As the previous two sections have demonstrated contiguity is one of the fundamental aspects of hair’s power as a symbol and a tool for remembrance. The fact that hair comes from the body, that it is durable and portable, that it is a part of oneself that can be shared make it fit for the task of evoking the absent individual for whom the hair stands, and for figuring bonds materially.

This last section will examine hair in the context of the writer’s house/museum demonstrating that as a non-circulating fragment and an historical autographic remain hair presences the absent individual in a different way than it would have in its original context. Beginning with a reading of a large plait of Dora Wordsworth’s hair from the Wordsworth Museum this section will illustrate that locks of hair can

that through these parts one can act directly on the individual concerned, either to bewitch or enchant him. Separation in no way disturbs the contiguity; a whole person can even be reconstituted with the aid of one of these parts: *totum ex parte* [part of the whole]. It is not necessary to give examples of beliefs which have become so well known by now. The same law may be expressed in another way: the personality of a being is indivisible, residing as a whole in each of his parts (79-80).

⁵⁴ In ‘The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture’ Deborah Lutz also correlates relic keeping with the desire for an on-going connection: ‘a desire to see death as not permanent, in that material remains might be proof that the loved one still exists somewhere, somehow’ (129). While Lutz acknowledges the role of sympathetic magic in the synecdochal reading of hair as ‘a part that could stand for the whole’ she also identifies religious and spiritual trends in the era as a contributing factor in the popularity of relic keeping:

Spiritualism’s rise in the 50s and 60s contributed to the mid-century popularity of hairwork and secondary relics like clothing, jewelry, and bedrooms.... To many Evangelicals, and even more clearly to the Spiritualists, the dead remained tangibly among us. Spiritualists believed not only that the worlds of the living and the dead, the absent and the present, were permeable, but that the dead hovered close, and the lines of communication might be kept open. (133)

be read as both bodily archives and bodily witnesses – providing the museum viewer with a different sense of connection, one in which the absent individual is figured as a present-absence, evoking the physical fact of their life along with their death.



Fig. 4. Dora Wordsworth Quillinan's plait, GRMDC.E59. Photograph: Giovanna Rocchi © The Wordsworth Trust Museum, Grasmere.

One of the most telling observations during my numerous visits to the Wordsworth Museum involved two women who'd come into the museum to pass time before meeting others for lunch. They seemed to have no interest in Wordsworth at all and moved quickly around the room chatting socially with each other and only paying cursory attention to the objects in the cases they passed by. Then one of them stopped and shrieked 'Oh my God, look at the hair!' and the second woman came over and together they stared at Dora Wordsworth Quillinan's rather large plait of hair in its wooden box (GRMDC.E59) (fig. 4, above). My sense, from where I stood nearby taking notes, was that they were both fascinated with, and slightly repulsed

by, the hair. For them the context of the hair (the historical associations, connection to Wordsworth) seemed secondary to its jarring sensory presentation, for Dora's plait is an unusually large one, cut from her head, as the box's inscription indicates, the year she died (most likely at the time of her death). The inscription reads: 'Dora's hair / cut off by her own desire / for her husband / E.Q. 1847' ('Plait').

Dora's plait is striking not only for how it signals overt sensory information (the fair colour of the hair, the individual thready strands unified in waves of plait), but also for its ability as a fragment to visually signal other kinds of objects in a metaphoric and visual way. A plait of hair boxed as Dora's is, is an unusual object to encounter, an object severed from its full context and usual relations – not only in terms of its setting, but also in terms of time. As such it offers up the possibility of other associations. For me the plait carries qualities similar to that of sleeping animals, burrowing things curled up in a small enclosure. This signals, for me, a sense of life under the surface of the plait that is created by the sensory similarities between the plait and my experience of, or understanding of, a category of mammals such as squirrels. I also remember associating the box with a coffin the first time I saw the object, a miniature coffin that made the plait feel like a full form. Obviously such associations are subjective and as such they will vary (there is also, arguably, an equally serpentine quality to the thickness and weave of the plait) but in each case these associations will be provoked by the sensory material attributes of the thing itself. Which is to say that things can, and sometimes do, provoke us in ways that could be called 'metaphoric' and that those apprehensions, no matter how

subconscious, can not only shock us, but impact our sense of a material thing's power and meaning. In such cases hair can signal more than itself.⁵⁵

In 'The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture' Deborah Lutz describes the sensory dynamic of hair as capable of evoking both reverie and shock.

To pore over the relic is to fall into the reverie of memory, to call to mind the absent being. The object disappears and becomes pure symbol, pointing only outside of itself. Yet the texture, its somewhat shocking substantiality as a thing, as an actual piece of that person, can call one back from reverie to feel its bluntness, its weighty, obstinate 'thingness,' its non-symbolic quality which refers to nothing but its own presence. (136)

Here Lutz is describing the way a thing, like a plait of hair, can evoke both a sense of the absent individual from whom it came and also its own obdurate reality. Rather than a symbol that 'says' the plait *is* – a body part, remain, a post-mortem relic.

Hair in this way presences itself, *showing forth* and exuding certain qualities – qualities that may not be limited to visual attributes such as colour, length, volume, sheen, luster / health, or aromatic ones such as perfumes or body oils or dust, but also tactile ones such as softness, sleekness or brittleness (or the literal and figurative 'bluntness' Lutz describes). These sensory qualities add a layer of dynamism to hair that other objects may not show forth as readily. A chair, while still evocative and individual, can tend toward the allographic – an object *made* autographic by ascription – whereas hair is always autographic, its qualities are not qualities that can be replicated elsewhere the way a manufactured chair's qualities might be. As an autographic thing that is always individual and which signals its individuality via its

⁵⁵ See Nadia Seremetakis's *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture* for a description of how the sensory aspects of an artefact can provoke involuntary memory, a memory which itself might evoke senses. She states: 'As a sensory form in itself, the artifact can provoke the emergence, the awakening of the layered memories, and thus the senses contained within it. The object invested with sensory memory speaks; it provokes re-call as a missing, detached yet antiphonic element of the perceiver' (10-11). Seremetakis' idea of the role of sensory perception in engaging with an artefact, and the evocation of senses within layered memories is useful because it considers the affective or sensuous element of encounters and illustrates the role of the physical attributes of the object in affective experiences.

materiality hair can presence the individual more directly and profoundly than other things that might have less contiguity or fewer identifying qualities.

One crucial difference here is the factor of time. Hair taken from someone no longer remembered or not visually represented through photographs or other such documents (drawings, paintings etc.) tends to signal the *idea* of an individual more than an individual themselves. This ‘pointing-to’ still creates a sense of a present-absence, though the body and being represented is more abstract than they might otherwise be.

Hair as archive

The idea of hair as an archive of the individual from whom it sprang is not just a metaphorical concept. On a visual level a cutting of someone’s hair taken in youth may record or archive something of his or her physical appearance when said lock was cut. A cutting taken later in life may reflect the changes that come with age as Wordsworth’s later white locks reflect his advanced years. Hair also carries a host of information about the life of the individual from whom it sprang and can be used to identify not only one individual among millions, but also an individual’s ancestry or elements of their biography – as was the case when Marie Antoinette’s hair was DNA-tested in order to definitively prove that the mummified heart in the royal crypt at St Denis was indeed Louis the XVII’s (it was) (Hosford 12), and as was the case in 2007, when some of the Brontë family’s hair was analyzed for information about the family’s general health and diet, leading to test results that contrasted ‘some of the

myths' about the family's poor health and eating habits ('Bad Hair Days').⁵⁶ Hair, in this way, can be read as a material synecdoche or extension of the actual (not figurative) self and as a unique identifier and vital archive.

Hair remains are also an archive in another way in that they may also place a person bodily in a particular context, location or time. In this way the horrific 'hair room' at Auschwitz (a glassed-in display where hair cut from the heads of thousands of individuals is amassed) is a material archive (and public document) that attests to the former presence and ongoing non-presence of the individuals represented (perhaps made identifiable) by their remains. By extension, if, as an archive of the self, hair remains can place individuals in a particular location they can also place them within a cultural and historical context. The analysis of the Brontë family's hair (undertaken by Dr Andrew S. Wilson at the University of Bradford in 2006) for example, places them within a population 'where dietary sources are more seasonally-defined than for modern UK populations' (A. S. Wilson 3). The samples also indicated that two the locks were likely taken at 'different times of the year' (those of Mrs Brontë and Maria), and that 'Mrs Brontë's diet was least rich in protein or vegetables' (3) – the kind of information one would expect to glean from a diary or an eyewitness rather than a strand of hair.⁵⁷ Which is to say that hair can 'archive' numerous aspects of a life (aspects other than presence), for example the 'prodigious quantity' of women's hair George IV collected, hair 'of all colours and lengths, some locks with powder and pomatum still sticking to them' (Bury 44; see also Pascoe 59-

⁵⁶ Two types of DNA can be examined in hair: the more comprehensive nDNA (nuclear DNA) can be tested if the follicle is attached, while mtDNA (mitochondrial DNA) can be tested from the shaft even if the follicle is absent.

⁵⁷ The conceptual artist Cornelia Parker was present in the Bradford lab during the work on the hair. She later wrote 'A proposal to the Greater London Authority' in which she suggested the following: 'I want to propose a tiny enhancement to Nelson's Column, adding a little more body to his hair by inserting real strands of the famous Brontë sisters' hair into the fabric of his. Doing so would link the two iconic names in a literal and physical way, infusing the monument's structure with an authentic bodily relic.... Together they could share a vista' ('Nelson'). This idea of fusing the inanimate with the still-animate hair supports several of this chapter's suppositions around vitality and the binding powers of locks – both symbolically and psychically.

60) – here hair documents certain habits and indulgences in a way that textual archives may not.

While the presence of, and implications surrounding, the existence of DNA in hair were unknown in the Victorian era, I would like to suggest that hair was still conceptualized as an identifying marker and as an archive of the self. Sir James Frazer's reports of hair as a magical substitute for the individual support this, as does a scene in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* – a scene in which a few strands of hair identify Lucie Manette as her mother's daughter.

A Tale of Two Cities was published in weekly installments in 1859. It concerns the lives of a group of individuals before and after the French Revolution (1789-1799) in particular a Dr Manette (who has been imprisoned in France), his daughter Lucie Manette, and her eventual husband Charles Darnay. The hair-related scene in question takes place in chapter six, 'The Shoemaker', when Lucie Manette is taken to meet her father, presumed dead but in actuality imprisoned in the Bastille since she was a child. At first Dr Manette is disassociated: not recognizing his daughter after so many years he asks if she is the gaoler's daughter. She says 'no' and sits beside him. Dickens then writes: 'Her golden hair, which she wore in long curls, had been hurriedly pushed aside, and fell down over her neck. Advancing his hand by little and little, he [her father, Dr Manette] took it up and looked at it' (51-2). Shortly after this Dr Manette:

...laid down his work, put his hand to his neck, and took off a blackened string with a scrap of folded rag attached to it. He opened this, carefully, on his knee, and it contained a very little quantity of hair: not more than one or two long golden hairs, which he had, in some old day, wound off upon his finger.

He took her hair into his hand again, and looked closely at it. 'It is the same. How can it be! When was it! How was it!' (52)

The strands of hair were Lucie's mother's – strands that had found their way to his sleeve and which he begged to be allowed to keep in prison by saying to the guards 'You will leave me them? They can never help me to escape in the body, though they may in the spirit' (52). For Dr Manette, the likeness between mother and daughter's hair is the first sign or proof that helps him to begin to understand not only who Lucie is (his daughter), but also that time – eighteen years – has passed. But first Lucie's hair so resembles her mother's that he has to reorient himself: 'His hands... went up to his white hair, which they tore in a frenzy. It died out, as everything but his shoemaking did die out of him, and he refolded his little packet and tried to secure it in his breast; but he looked at her, and gloomily shook his head. 'No, no, no; you are too young, too blooming. It can't be' (52).

This moment is interesting because the implication here is that the hair seems the same to him, that it signals that this woman *is* his wife (interesting, if we bear in mind that the hair, genetically, would carry similar markers) – a confusion that disorients the Dr in time: 'you are too young', he says. Lucie eventually replies to his confusion, in a long speech meant to help him come to terms with the past through connections with her in the present, eventually saying: 'If you touch, in touching my hair, anything that recalls a beloved head that lay on your breast when you were young and free, weep for it, weep for it!' – a speech meant to allow him to access his past through both intellectual knowledge and bodily touch (53).

Hair in this fiction replaces the paper archive: it is its own document, one that furnishes recollection and asserts familiarity to the extent that Lucie is shortly thereafter recognized and accepted as his daughter. In this scene Lucie's hair is a

metonymical device: a part that stands for the whole he does not know, but comes slowly to know *through the part* and its resemblance to his remembrancer.

Hair, and Lucie's hair in particular, is employed repeatedly as a motif in *A Tale of Two Cities*.⁵⁸ Book the Second is called 'The Golden Thread' a reference to the strands of hair that Dr Manette carries, and Lucie's hair as metonymical for her, as well as the bonds she (and her hair) have established. Dickens asserts early in the book (of Dr Manette) that '[o]nly his daughter had the power of charming this black brooding from his mind. She was the golden thread that united him to a Past beyond his misery, and to a Present beyond his misery...' (86). More overtly in chapter twenty-one Dickens writes: 'Ever busily winding the golden thread which bound her husband, and her father, and herself, and her old directress and companion, in a life of quiet bliss, Lucie sat in the still house...' (209). Indeed, each of those mentioned above has a scene with Lucie where her hair is used as a motif and where her hair comingles with another's or is stroked or touched by another. Chapter twenty-one continues, mentioning a few paragraphs later that even though time had passed, Lucie was again '[e]ver busily winding the golden thread that bound them all together, weaving the service of her happy influence through the tissue of all their lives...' (209). Here hair binds and weaves – much as the hair binding in *Villette* binds and weaves those whose hair is bound. In Dickens's novel Lucie's hair not only creates or adds symbolically to the tenor, tone or symbolism of the book's themes – hair that says – but it also serves as an archive, becomes its own document of authenticity, a thing which connects Dr Manette to his past, to his late wife, and

⁵⁸ See especially (in relation to Lucie's hair) 34, 35, 51-54, 86, 96, 104, 144, 193 (in which Mr Lorry, on Lucie's wedding day 'laid the bright golden hair against his little brown wig, with a genuine tenderness and delicacy...' and 194 after Lucie's marriage to Charles Darnay when 'in due course the golden hair that had mingled with the poor shoemaker's white locks in the Paris garret, were mingled with them again in the morning sunlight, on the threshold of the door at parting' also 207, 208, 287, 351.

then to his son-in-law ('...the golden thread which bound her husband, and her father, and herself' (209) – hair that does. What Lucie's hair helps configure is a set of incorporeal or abstract relationships. She and her hair (with its magical power to evoke the past and recall her father to life) are the tangible thing that binds the relationships.

There is another useful example in *A Tale of Two Cities* of the difference between hair that 'says' and hair that 'does'. When Lucie's son is dying Dickens employs the boy's hair symbolically. In the death scene he describes his hair as a halo, writing: 'Even when golden hair, like her own, lay in a halo on a pillow round the worn face of a little boy...' (210). Here we see two things: hair used as confirmation of maternity or of likeness ('like her own') and hair as a halo. The latter use, of hair as a halo, is symbolic: it *says*, to return to Leach's early distinction, that the boy is good, angelic, blessed and so forth, a symbolism meant to convey or signify something to those witnessing the moment (which includes Dickens's readers). Lucie's hair, and her mother's strands are, on the other hand, described as threads. Thread as a thing has performative associations, is a tool that we associate with connecting, binding and so forth, which reflects Dickens's use of it. Gitter suggests similarly that Lucie's hair with its 'beneficent powers' make her a kind of 'angelic Arachne' (944), which implies the use of the thread as a weaver's tool to *make with*. Lucie's hair therefore predominantly *does*, whereas her son's hair predominantly *says*.

Hair as witness

Hair, by its very presence, evokes its own biography. The biography may not be made explicit to the observer, but the idea of a biography – that a history is contained within the thing itself, that the thing has had ‘experiences’ of the world (readable or not) – is always implicit. This kind of biographical principle can be applied to all things in existence, but in relation to hair it has a double-life. First there is the ‘living’ biography – that of the hair on the head as a symbiotic thing belonging to / springing from the body – and then there is the biography of ‘after’ e.g. after the final cutting when the lock of hair begins to exist as a thing unto itself. In this way hair is an archive privy to – and presencing – two distinct biographies, a co-dependant one and an independent one, biographies that speak to hair’s capacity to witness.

In ‘Bracelet, Hand Towel, Pocket Watch: Objects of the Last Moment in Memory and Narration’ Mona Körte deconstructs the phenomena of the ‘object of the last moment’ (110) in relation to the former *Kindertransport* children who were sent, for their safety, to the United Kingdom from Germany and German-annexed countries at the start of the Second World War. In her essay she describes how the objects the *Kindertransport* children were given by their loved ones before being sent away became a support for memory, and how, later, ‘with greater distance from events’ they acted ‘as a bridge to memory or a bracket for an event’. Using objects of the last moment such as the bracelet, hand towel and pocket watch of her title, she goes on to suggest that ‘[f]eelings of love, childhood, and home attach to the object, revealing in a flash entire thematic clusters’ (110). A ‘thematic cluster’ as Körte describes it is not just a memory of an event fixed in time, it is also the larger sets of relations that adhere to the event – such as the feelings of love, childhood and home in Körte’s example.

Echoing Marius Kwant, who suggests in his Introduction to *Material Memories*, that objects can ‘serve memory’ by constituting a person’s picture of the past, by stimulating memory and by forming a record of the past (2), Körte stresses the role of the object of the last moment in stimulating remembering:

By preserving and caring for the object one remains loyal to it, perhaps, because there is an intuitive awareness that memory is constantly reshaped by the demands of the present. Remembering means renewing in the present the affect that is tied to the image or object; as such these mementos become aids to mourning. (111-112)

She takes this idea of imbuing a thing with a set of feelings and memories (or of renewing memories via a thing) one step further however in suggesting that:

There may well be a ‘knowledge’ of the object; the objects were, after all, there at the last moment and may have witnessed something that can be revealed at the appointed moment.... As objects of mourning they extend their message through time. Symbolically compressed within them are entire thematic clusters, making them, in a double movement, keepers of memory. (120)

Here, the coming-to-fore of the past (the worlding) is connected to a non-subjective kind of knowledge, a knowing *in the thing* that might add to what the subject brings to it, a knowing that might be revealed by the object in question in the form of a physical mark or presentment or tangible (the knowing, for example, about the Brontë’s health that was in the hair that witnessed their lives), or via an apprehension that provokes an instance of stirred and new (versus renewed) remembrance.

Christiane Holm’s essay ‘Sentimental Cuts’ alludes to the idea of witness as well, noting that one of the specific qualities of cut hair is that it is ‘a witness of the hidden story’ (140). This concept of the animate nature of even cut hair can also be found in Deborah Lutz’s *Victorian Literature and Culture* essay on materiality and the artefacts surrounding death when she suggests that ‘[f]or the Victorians, artifacts of beloved bodies still held some of the sublime, fetishistic magic of those outmoded

holy relics of bygone days. Not only does death bring the tragedy of turning people into things – of subject into object – but it might also start inanimate objects to life’ (129).⁵⁹ This idea of an animate object opens up the possibility that the thing that survives the absent individual must now bear the task of narrating their story, of attesting to their having-been. Hair understood as a witness or keeper of memory makes the seemingly inanimate seem animate: a presencing thing with its own resonance. In Victorian culture hair was often taken at death as Dora Wordsworth’s likely was: hair marked by that moment of separation. The cut hair, which was present at the moment of its own separation from the body, is thus a witness to its own last moment and, as part of the biological entity, an intimate witness to (even subject to) the moment of bodily death. The fact that it endures when the body is shuttled away makes hair one of the few surviving or material witnesses to both the individual’s death and their biological life.

In ‘Shakespeare’s Hair: Staging the Object of Material Culture’ Jonathan Gil Harris addresses the importance of apprehending objects in the context of the ‘present’ without reducing them to a static present-tense only existence. He argues that instead objects ‘also possess a more dynamic, diachronic dimension’ (484). He links this to Arjun Appadurai’s idea that ‘objects possess “life histories” or “careers” that invest them with social significance and cultural value’ (Harris 485, Appadurai 34). Harris’s assertions in relation to the diachronic nature of things points to one of hair’s more concealed aspects: its temporal multiplicity.

The plait of Dora Wordsworth’s hair in the Wordsworth Museum in Grasmere illustrates the phenomenon of temporal multiplicity in a way that also evokes

⁵⁹ The object-narrator genre in pre-Victorian and Victorian literature provides an interesting example of narratives told from the point of view of a witness-thing. For more on this genre see *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects and It-Narratives in Eighteenth Century England*, ed. Mark Blackwell, Lewisburg: Associated University Presses, 2007.

worlding. Although Dora's plait 'cut off by her own desire' is always apprehended in the first instance in the *present tense*, its presence also evokes both a sense of *general pastness* (for on seeing the plait one recognizes that this is the hair of a person who is not-present-now or, who may be, as in Dora's case, no longer living) and of a specific past event or events. In the case of this specific artefact, at least three other events in time are implied: most overtly the year '1847' (cited on the hair boxes' inscription as the year in which the hair was taken) and more obliquely *the moment* when Dora's plait was severed and the moment it was placed in the box that contains it. Various kinds of understanding will result from seeing such an object. As with any object the plait's biography will be apprehended to various degrees based on the individual viewer's knowledge of hair, the Victorian era, the Wordsworth family etc., but such knowledge is conceptual. What the hair radiates in this instance is not biography; rather, what it radiates is a sense of its own abidance – of its being and having been.

Following on from Körte's use of the idea of thematic clusters, I am suggesting that hair, as a thing with visual and inherent markers *related to time*, evokes, what I will call 'abiding time' – a term, through its rootedness in the word 'abide' that is intended to carry within it (as per the definitions of 'abide' and 'abiding') ideas of lingering, remaining, expectation, encounter, dwelling, persisting, and continued existence. (See especially 'abiding' n. definition 4: 'Continuance, duration, permanence, enduring; an instance of this' (OED). 'Abiding time' as I conceptualize it can have a powerful affective component, can evoke some sense of a continuance of presence, as well as a complex kind of dwelling that is not wholly past (severed) but enduring even in its pastness. In this way 'abiding time' refers to the evocation of

a multiplicity (or cluster) of events in which numerous encounters or moments in time are layered or woven together, in a less-than linear model.

In her essay ‘Memory and Objects’ Juliet Ash describes one aspect of this time dynamic in relation to the apprehension of her late husband’s ties. For Ash the ties are ‘memory objects’ which ‘can, and do, have powerful repercussions in terms of visual and emotional affectivity’ (219). Ash describes how in perceiving such objects there can arise the sense ‘of the simultaneously existing presence and absence of a person’ (221). She states:

The mind works as much in a projected dissimilitude as it reacts with what is presented to be seen. However much memory knows the absence, death even, of a person, even so there is, within that knowledge, the assumed pre-existence of that person in their absence.

The associative memory of an absent person, stimulated through the viewing and/or sensing of an existing item of clothing, requires us to be imaginative about the past, about the object or person when they did exist, and that process is positive, not sentimental, although the contemplation is of and for absence – possibly death. (221-222)

This idea of being imaginative about the past and the object and person echoes the idea of both Körte’s thematic cluster and ‘abiding time’, which is to say that things can evoke aspects of, or moments from their own biography (the hair on the head, the tie on the beloved and so on) along with a whole range of possible associations or relations: images, feelings and meanings; which, taken together, evoke a complexity of time and, therefore, ‘world’.

In relation to hair, hair – like other objects associated with the beloved in ‘life’ – evokes through its very material presence the hair as-it-was (or might have been) in different temporal contexts. This is in part because locks or plaits of hair are not normally perceived as ‘whole’ when they are apart from the body, because as fragments they infer an absent whole and therefore a corresponding state of ‘before’

– a ‘before’ when the hair was on the head of the living person. By virtue of its cut-ness, of its having-been-severed hair may also speak to the moment of cutting. Christiane Holm’s essay ‘Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewellery with Hair’ is one of the few published essays on hair to examine ‘the very moment of the cutting’ which she believes ‘gives the hair a new status’ – a status which imbues the dead hair with a kind of ‘temporal semantics’ in that the lock or cutting as cut ‘embodies as materialized time an epoch that is absolutely past’ (140). For Holm ‘[t]he cut edge of the hair in the material medium of remembrance marks the act of remembrance as the very moment when its natural status was transformed into a cultural status, and when the present presence of the body is anticipated as a future absence’ (140).

This idea of a thing marked by, and signifying, time via its fragmentary and cut form demonstrates some of the ways a thing like hair can world. But as the letter Dora Wordsworth wrote to Jemima Quillinan about Jemima’s own lock shows, hair doesn’t only radiate temporal multiplicity in relation to the before and after of life and death: locks taken long before death for the sole purpose of providing a sense of nearness or remembrance also resonate multiple instances of time: ‘as further proof that you are not forgotten I *must* tell you that at this moment I have round my neck a lock of your hair which I cut off your little bit of a head, as it was, ten years ago & which has been worn by me ever since’ (D. Wordsworth ‘Letter’). Here a number of temporal instances are evoked in relation to the instance of perception. In one sentence Dora gives us the present tense via the wearing of the locket ‘at this moment’ of writing, the instance of the cutting which evokes both the exact moment of cutting and more generally 1822 (‘ten years ago’) and an ongoing continuity

implicit in 'worn by me ever since' – a continuity that encloses all the years in between the cutting and the unfolding now. In this letter the perpetual presence of the locket and its perpetual ability to recall Jemima signals a fluid kind of time, one that reads as more thematic than chronological. This is one of the qualities that makes hair a fit remembrancer: it abides even as it marks time.

Hair, and locks of hair in particular, can embody and ground the myriad emotions and memories that thoughts of the absent individual can evoke in the perceiver of the remain. Whether those feelings are about loss, grief, joy, or pride, whether imagistic, sensory or narrative — hair as a 'remain' can provide a locus from which, and in which, these associations can be accessed or placed. Locks of hair can provide a sense of nearness. One of the ways they evoke a sense of nearness is through having been near or contiguous to the now-absent individual. For Heidegger nearness was a kind of apprehension, a dwelling in Being rather than a spatial construct. Heidegger thought that nearness could not be encountered directly but rather could be manifested through attending to the material. He said '[w]e succeed in reaching it rather by attending to what is near. Near to us are what we usually call things' ('The Thing' 164). For the Victorians, locks of hair provided a sense of nearness, of dwelling-with; hair symbolized for some, and functioned for others, as a medium through which a kind of magical / cognitive nearness could be achieved. Hair's fitness for the task of presenting the absent individual arises in part from its special ability to facilitate such encounters and to presence the absent individual in the complexity of time. This is especially true in the writer's house/museum where hair's obdurate and lasting qualities – and the fact of it as a bodily remain – serve as a locus for the absent individual from whom the hair came.

Chapter Four: Clothing

As a material extension of the self, hair can easily be read as a synecdoche of the body or being (Rosenthal 2; Rifelj 85; Harris 483; Lutz 132). Like hair, clothing is a ‘material remain’ (Harlow 1) – though it is a ‘remain’ that was not an inherent part of the body. For Deborah Lutz in ‘The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture’ hair is a primary relic and clothes are secondary relics (132). While bodily fragments might be more easily read as vestiges of, or conduits to, the absent individual (largely due to their long and ingrained associations with the individual from whom they sprang), the object of clothing has a sort of free-floating life, one that is often times independent of the person who wears it. This independence, however, is complicated, because clothes, even when off the body, still bear traces of the individual. As Margaret Gibson writes in *Objects of the Dead: Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life*: ‘Clothing engages a range of sensory and memorial experiences linking the body of the bereaved to the body traces of the deceased. The bereaved will often smell the clothing of the dead, looking for traces of the body in things like shoes, dresses and jumpers’ (118). Her assertion that clothing is a ‘link’ reflects the deeply held connection between clothes and the dead, one that makes clothes as near primary a relic for remembrancing as a lock of hair.

This chapter will build on the previous chapter by picking up and developing the themes established in the hair chapter and applying them to clothing – themes related to contiguity, metonymy, tool-use, fitness, remembrance, and display. It will begin with a reading of a caricature of a pair of Thomas Carlyle’s trousers and proceed, as in the hair chapter, to consider clothing in a Victorian context via a reading of the

everyday actuality and significance of objects of clothing in Thomas and Jane Carlyles' letters and Jane Carlyle's journal. Through a consideration of how the Carlyles wrote about clothing three key elements of my argument will be developed: first of all, that clothes were well-considered objects that functioned as 'equipment' both practically and aesthetically; second, that certain items of clothing, when strongly associated with the wearer, could take on metonymical qualities; third, that such associations (between people and things) made objects of clothing effective remembrancers. The second and third parts of this chapter will assert that empty or unoccupied clothes are especially fit for presenting the absent wearer, and that as a material remain clothes have the ability to act as archives of both bodily knowledge and historical knowledge. Through a reading of the 'Old Clothes' chapter of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and Charles Dickens's 'Meditations on Monmouth Street' (from *Sketches by Boz*) this chapter will demonstrate that objects of clothing can, and have been, read as material witnesses to events experienced by the individual who once wore the clothing. In these cases – where clothing metonymically represents the individual or the present-absence of the individual – the clothing remains can sometimes be enlivened or personified to the degree that the object itself is regarded as a locus of knowledge. This change in a piece of clothing's status from 'equipment' to 'remembrancer' will be returned to in section three through a consideration of the effect of the removal of objects of clothing from the circuit of use and on the resultant dynamics of display. Referencing the 'Symbols' chapter of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and John Harvey's *Clothes* the last section of this chapter will return to the idea that clothes are particularly fit remembrancers because of their evocation of both an historical past and an absent body.

I – The Carlyle’s Clothes



Fig. 5. Elizabeth Paulet’s caricature ‘Hero worship reduced to *faute de mieux*’ (Ashton, 179).

Jane Carlyle’s friend, Elizabeth Paulet (1806-1879), sometimes sent Jane caricatures in the post.⁶⁰ One such caricature, entitled ‘Hero worship reduced to “faute de mieux” [for want of something better]’ (fig. 5, above), depicts two men in a gallery-like room being shown a pair of Thomas Carlyle’s trousers by a third gentleman while Carlyle himself is depicted on the far side of a distant window smoking in the garden (*CLO* 10.1215/It-18450920-JWC-TC-01).⁶¹ Three aspects of this sketch are especially interesting: the scale of the trousers compared to the three men in the foreground (they almost run the full length of the body of the man who is holding

⁶⁰ As noted in *CLO* It-18431201-JWC-HW-01: ‘I had a precious batch of caricatures from Mrs Paulet lately professing to be “illustrations of Miss Jewsbury’s late matrimonial speculation”—in my life I have seen none cleverer—they would have made old Pestrucchi himself...’; and *CLO* It-18450405-JWC-JW-01: ‘...but the greatest consolation of all has been a packet of caricatures from Mrs Paulet which made me laugh till the tears ran down...’; see also *CLO* It-18450920-JWC-TC-01.

⁶¹ Further references to Duke University’s *Carlyle Letters Online (CLO)* will be cited as ‘*CLO*’ when the date of the letter is given within the text, or ‘*CLO*’ followed by the D.O.I when the date is not established. From this citation forth the first part of the DOI (10.1215) will be omitted, as it is a code that is consistent across all the Carlyle letters. The second part of the DOI incorporates the date of the letter and the correspondents, thus ‘It-18450920-JWC-TC-01’ refers to 1845 September 20, Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle.

them up); the juxtaposition of the trousers ‘on display’ and the art-filled room they are displayed in; and the reactions of the men – one with his arm extended toward the trousers, the other holding spectacles up to his face – both seemingly expressing some kind of sincere regard for the object brought before them. While Paulet’s sketch clearly has a satirical element it also conveys quite directly the perceived congruity between a person’s self and those items of clothing worn by them. If the embodied form is the idealized encounter (Thomas Carlyle himself) then the next best thing – the ‘faute de mieux’ – is that which is closest to the body, that which has, and knows, the body’s form; that which the wearer has touched intimately, and that which might therefore, in turn, be touched by others. In this way clothing can be read as an intermediary: as that which represents or ‘stands in for’ the wearer, perhaps carrying their scent or some sense of the residue of their days. This idea – of the affective power of clothing as a stand-in for the absent self – is the central topic of this chapter.

Even though it is a play on hero-worship, Elizabeth Paulet’s caricature captures elements of many of this thesis’s themes: the larger-than-life representation of the trousers speaks to how amplified those things we associate with beloved figures can become; the juxtaposition of the trousers in the art-filled setting speaks to the trouser’s transition from one type of equipment to another – for as soon as the trousers are removed from their usefulness and held aloft to be looked at (like a piece of art or an artefact) they cease to be equipment for wearing and become something worthy of consideration, study or regard. The absurdity of the caricature is, of course, Carlyle’s presence at the back of the scene, the nearness of the man himself. Were Carlyle not in the sketch, or were the sketch made some fifty or one hundred years

after Carlyle's death (and his figure therefore ghostly and inaccessible), the image would probably not evoke such a strong sense of irony or the ridiculous. The trousers in the sketch would more likely be regarded as a rare and valuable material remain of a regarded historical person; an 'object of the dead' (Gibson, *Objects* 14) that can serve as a point of access to the past – to both Carlyle himself and to the world he lived in.

Thomas Carlyle often thought of clothing in a very pragmatic way although he was not immune to the pleasures of a nicely fitting hat or well-made things. Of a pair of 'brown-grey socks' that Thomas, in a letter to his mother, enthuses 'are as they before were the best foot-clothing I ever had' he adds the satisfied query: 'Is not this minute enough?' (*CLO* It-18341023-TC-MAC-01). The contents of *The Carlyle Letters*, edited by the University of Edinburgh and Duke University, indicate a notable degree of preoccupation with both the practical aspects of clothing and the pleasurable. This section intends to provide a brief overview of the everyday actuality and context of clothes in the Carlyles' lifetime and to explore simultaneously, through a consideration of Thomas and Jane's hats, caps and other wearables, a number of examples of clothes functioning as tools, as metonyms and as remembrancers; themes that will be developed throughout this thesis.

Many of Thomas and Jane Carlyle's letters, and a significant proportion of Jane's 1855-1856 journal entries, reference clothing, evidence of the attention they paid to the time-consuming tasks related to procurement or repair, as well as their concerns around the efficiency of clothes in relation to the weather or the way their clothes represented them. A number of entries also contain aesthetic commentaries about

others – for example, Jane has left to posterity two wonderfully detailed descriptions of the clothing worn by Count Alfred D’Orsay on his visits⁶² – while others demonstrate how objects of clothing were sometimes employed in figurative language (as in Thomas’ frequent use of ‘old clothes’ as a metaphor to represent worn-out ideologies). Thomas’s mother Margaret, still living up in Scotland, was often the recipient in autumn and winter of letters from Thomas in which he enquired about her wardrobe or gently reminded her to clothe herself adequately for the weather. Over a dozen letters expressing concern about her warmth survive, many, like the letter of 18 February, 1842 expounding the value of a suitable wardrobe: ‘Good diet and warm clothing: these two are the most important points of all’ (*CLO*).⁶³ Still, in a number of letters, as well as in Jane’s journals, clothing is also shown in a pleasurable light – as when Thomas writes of ‘a cloak (of brown cloth with fur neck), a most comfortable article...warm as pie’ (*CLO* It-18341224-TC-MAC-01) or when Jane writes of taking ‘a last look at myself in my new grey gown, and smart lilac cap... I looked a decidedly presentable woman – for my years!’ (It-18580804-JWC-TC-01).

Thomas’s sister Jean made some of his clothing, she also sometimes procured items from Scotland for the couple. In October of 1841 a Glengarry Cap arrived in the mail from Jean and Thomas wrote on the fifth to thank her, acknowledging both its usefulness and pleasing aesthetic: ‘I tore open the package, and disclosed our new Glengarry! Its fits excellently well, is much approved of in regard to appearance; and

⁶² See Jane’s letter to her mother Grace of 7 April 1839, and her notebook entry from 13 April 1845 (*CLO*).

⁶³ Of Thomas’ letters written between 1832 and 1861 a significant number are concerned with temperature and comfort. See, for example: 31 Aug 1832; 2 October 1838; 15 Aug 1839; 14 Nov 1840; 20 Sept 1845; 16 Nov 1846; 9 Jan 1847; 18 April 1851; 24 April 1851; 17 July 1852; 24 Feb 1853; 16 April 1858; 30 Oct 1859; 19 May 1861. Those expressing concern for his mother’s warmth include: 21 Jan 1838; 10 March 1844; 5 Dec 1844; 12 Oct 1844; 31 Dec 1843; 18 Feb 1842; 7 Jan 1841; 2 Feb 1839; 24 Dec 1834 and 22 Jan 1832 where he also expresses concern for father’s warmth / adequate clothing. In a letter to his sister Jean on 29 January of 1838 he advocates flannel clothing for his nephew, then states succinctly: ‘Above all things I must insist on heat. My astonishment is how children ever live at all considering how they are clad’ (*CLO*).

indeed will altogether fulfil very well the function of a winter-cap' (*CLO*). He then noted in a letter to his mother on the twelfth that 'Jean lately sent me a *braw* Glengarry Cap, of the gray color, from Dumfries: will you therefore apprise Alick that he need not send me the one I talked of; –unless indeed he have already got it, in which case I will not let it go to waste' (*CLO*). A letter from Thomas to his sister on 30 October, 1859 goes on at some length as to his instructions for 'another clothing operation' in which he implores Jean for 'a new pair of socks...best stuff and structure you can get, plenty of *spring*, plenty of size, I will *pay* your Artist whatever she can earn by taking *pains* upon them' (*CLO*). Letters such as these are evidence that clothing – its functional comfort and its aesthetic – mattered to the Carlyles, a suggestion furthered by a series of letters Thomas wrote to Jane from Wales in August of 1850 concerning 'one point of business' – the procurement of a bathing-cap (*CLO* It-18500805-TC-JWC-01).

When Thomas Carlyle was in Wales in 1850 he sent instructions to Jane around the acquisition of a bathing cap to be sent 'by return of post' and to be got where 'Rd got his... in Albemarle Street (Piccadily)' an operation that required detailed directions in regards to finding both the shop (run by 'an excellent old umbrella maker, – mender &c, from whom the article in all varieties is to be obtained') and the right item: 'the biggest... an elastic runner both before and behind, so that they will ply to any head...'. Thomas assured Jane that she would 'manage it to perfection' (*CLO* It-18500805-TC-JWC-01) a fact confirmed a week later when he writes on the 13th of August:

I have all but forgotten again to say how well the bathing cap serves; which cost you such a splutter of whitewash! The cap does admirably, – except that I shall certainly tear the strings one day, they are so fine and small, and you will have to put a pair of cotton tape ones in instead: – but it saves me completely

from the water; *wd* hold the biggest head in Wales, I do think, with a ramilies wig on it, and is really an excellent article.... (CLO)

A bathing cap seen in this light is signified predominantly as equipment (in this case, one with a potential fault in the form of the too-fine strings). The bathing cap is a useful article and effective tool because it fits the subject (Thomas) and serves the purpose of keeping his head dry when he ‘bathes’ off the coast. Thomas himself had clearly articulated his need for it, noting that he was bathing daily he added ‘I have too much hair at present; and when the head gets fairly wetted, I hardly get it dried again under 3 or four hours [sic] of combing and exposure’ (CLO). In an age when hair had to dry naturally bathing caps were useful tools, especially when rules of etiquette would have frowned upon being seen with wet hair away from the beach and when strong associations between the head, weather and illness were common.

Clothing of course is equipment in a number of ways – ways that are both functional and ideological. Clothing not only acts as a buffer between the wearer and the weather, it can also hold and arrange the wearer’s body, and help constitute a person’s identity; it makes the wearer presentable (or not) within or without social groups. Clothing can reveal facts or assumptions about the wearer – size, gender, age, even the ‘labour history of the body’ (Gibson, *Objects* 105) – and also, for the keen observer, how a wearer might feel about themselves. As John Harvey notes in *Clothes*: ‘Clothes may be metaphors for our own feelings, but also they may be wishful feelings we want other people to have for us’ (13). This is clothing as image or impression-making equipment. Take, for example, Jane Carlyle and William Thackeray’s descriptions of Charlotte Brontë. Jane wrote a quick and dismissive description of meeting Charlotte Brontë at the Thackerays: ‘I also met Jane Eyre (Miss Brontë)... extremely unimpressive to *look at* –’ (CLO lt-18500704-JWC-HW-

01) whereas Thackeray described Charlotte more cordially as a ‘tiny, delicate, serious, little lady, with fair straight hair, and steady eyes... dressed in a little *barège* dress with a pattern of faint green moss’ (Footnote, *CLO* It-18500704-JWC-HW-01). Here, Charlotte Brontë’s clothes fail to inspire Jane Carlyle; they fail – to employ Jane’s root word – to *impress* her or to press upon her consciousness whereas William Thackeray’s description is more fulsome and charitable. Of course, what Charlotte Brontë wanted her dress to do is unknown, it’s possible the *barège* may have been chosen for its relative safety, in the hope that it would neither draw attention nor invite ridicule. This is one of the difficulties with the semiotics of clothing: the tendency is to want our clothes to *say us*, but clothes as such are always saying us to someone who might disagree with, or misunderstand, what is being said. As John Harvey notes, we depend on clothes, but sometimes clothes can betrays us, they ‘can be treacherous companions, perhaps the more so because they touch us closely, because they touch our skin’ (4).

Clothes in this way can fail to meet a variety of litmus tests – as equipment they can be wrong aesthetically but they can also fail functionally. Jane Carlyle writes humorously about one such technical failure. In late October 1856 she was taking a walk with the artist Robert Tait. Tait would soon begin *A Chelsea Interior*, an intimate painting of Thomas ‘in a full-length checked dressing gown’ and Jane ‘neatly dressed’ in their sitting room (Ashton 1), a painting that currently hangs in their Chelsea house/museum. Describing the walk Jane noted in her journal on the thirty-first:

The only other incident of today was ‘a—what shall I say?’—*prosaic* one ‘upon *my* honour.’ While taking a few minutes walk with Mr Tait, under Umbrellas (‘for the good of my health’ he said) I became sensible of a growing *impossibility* about my legs, which perplexed me exceedingly, and then of *a*

white line betwixt my black dress and the mud. Was it?—could it be?—oh yes decidedly it was my—flannel-petticoat coming down! But in the *gloaming*, it (the petticoat) did not perhaps catch Mr Tait's artist-eye; and I got out of it (not the petticoat but the difficulty) in making believe to stand still *voluntarily*, and send him away *voluntarily*. What I did *then* I pass over in modest silence. (CLO)

Here we see, in a Heideggerian sense, the failed equipment of the petticoat come to the forefront of consciousness. This is like Heidegger's description of the hammer in *Being and Time*: we have dealings with things and use them as equipment, equipment that we tend not to notice in any kind of relief until said equipment fails (Heidegger *Being*, see esp. 97-107). Here too, in Jane's description, there is a sense of a failure or breach: the breach of the equipment and the breach of etiquette or of personal/societal boundaries. The fact that Jane had to remove Tait from her presence to resolve the situation implies that the various breeches (of equipment and decorum) were not to be shared, but also implied in this narrative is the fact of the petticoat as a kind of liminal object. Petticoats, after all, were not external garments intended for visual consumption; they were usually worn (as a contemporary slip might be) between outer garments (those visible/public components of dress) and undergarments (those considered most private/worn against the naked body) thus inhabiting a realm that is not quite public, but also not shockingly private; one that is, perhaps, while representative of womanhood, safe enough to joke about in a journal even as the dictates of etiquette demand 'modest silence' or some form of discretion in relation to the particular resolution of the event.

Clothing in this way is equipment – even if, as with the petticoat, it is equipment in the service of warmth or of creating a shape for the purposes of being fashionable, or a means of projecting modesty, ensuring cleanliness and so forth. But unlike Heidegger's hammer, which is largely inconspicuous in its use, the

petticoat is equipment that tends always to signify in a complex manner even as it functions. For Heidegger the tool recedes from the forefront of consciousness until it breaks down or ceases to function; Jane's petticoat may have done as much for her until it stopped 'working' but generally clothes do not recede, they 'fashion' or assist as tools in a kind of self-identification or projection, they help speak (truthfully or not) of the self to others.⁶⁴ If Jane's petticoat was a simple tool it's unlikely she would have noted so exuberantly in her journal of November seventh that 'Geraldine and I are going to have scarlet Petticoats!' – a petticoat that she notes disappointingly three days later 'came home, about a quarter of a yard too short' (*CLO*). Clothes, Harvey notes, are often chosen to amplify elements of ourselves: 'we have an outfit, or a set of outfits, that are *us*. No one else will use quite the same combination: so we have a fabric "self"...' (71). It is to this idea of the fabric self that this chapter now turns, beginning first with a consideration of Carlyle's relationships with his caps and hats (a relationship that can be read as metonymical) and then moving to a brief consideration of Harvey's idea that not only do clothes help create our identity, but that within this dynamic the garment while having 'its identity' can also 'move us with a delight close to love' – a kind of affection that means that the feeling for the garments is (or can be) 'a feeling for the person' (18).

⁶⁴ As Byrde in *Nineteenth Century Fashion* notes: 'In the nineteenth century the appearance of a man's or woman's clothes was regulated not only by fashion but also by the rules of social etiquette. For anyone who wished to stand well in society it was essential for clothing to be appropriate to the person's station in life, to the occasion, and to the time of day' (110). In *Dress and Identity: An Introduction* Mary Harlow notes that '...the subtlety and nuances of meanings encoded in dress are rarely simple and require a range of analytical tools to unpick even in a shared cultural context. This problem is enhanced if the observer is distanced by culture and time' (1). For a consideration of the semiotics of clothing see John Harvey's *Clothes*, Daniel Miller's chapter on clothing 'Why clothing is not superficial' in *Stuff* (12-41) and Harlow's *Dress and Identity*. For a detailed consideration of the etiquette of dress (including clear examples of the expectations across classes in relation to such matters as gender, age, occasion, station, etc.) see Penelope Byrde's excellent *Nineteenth Century Fashion*.



Fig. 6. Thomas Carlyle in his 'wide-awake' hat (Chesterton and Hodder Williams 10).

In a letter written on 16 July 1848 to Helen Welsh, Jane Carlyle, thanking her cousin 'for your kind remembrance of me and my poor birth-day' mentions a present of a pair of 'beautiful sleeves'. She writes:

...the sleeves almost *frightened* me for a moment, for there seemed to be some touch of witch-craft in them – I had got home a new black-silk *polka spencer!* (God help me!) from the dressmaker – and she had made the sleeves half-short – and at the *very instant* your packet came, I was sitting looking at it '*in a state of mind*' (Capt Sterlings phrase) saying to myself 'Oh dear me I must make white sleeves for it, the first thing, and how am I to shape them'?! Certainly there are secret affinities in people and things that no mortal will ever get to the bottom of! (CLO)

Here, the affinity Jane seems to be most obviously referencing relates to the coincidental good fortune of a pair of sleeves arriving just when she is trying to resolve the issue of the too-short sleeves of her spencer [a close fitting jacket]; a gift that is obviously timely, and well-considered. But Jane's statement about 'secret

affinities' does not limit the affinities to those between people (as in those between Helen – who seemed to have some foresight in her choice of gift – and Jane the happy recipient), instead she states that 'there are secret affinities in people *and things*' (emphasis added) an inclusion that implies that not only was there an affinity in the thought of the gift but in *the gift itself*, the right kind of sleeves for the right kind of outfit; sleeves that would remedy Jane's problem, that would work as performative tools but which also, perhaps, had a certain fitness to her personality, style or sense of identity; her 'fabric self'. It is this rightness of things for people that constitutes one aspect of the fabric self and of the resultant metonymy that can come from the identification of an item or items of clothing with a particular individual.

This sense of the fitness of an item of clothing and its rightness for, or identity with, its wearer is certainly the case with Thomas Carlyle and his 'wide-awake' hats. Wide-awakes were wide-brimmed hats with a low crown, quippishly called a 'wide-awake' because (according to *Punch* magazine) the hat had 'no nap' (Byrde, *TMI* 185). Although he also wore caps of various sorts, and straw and even fur hats, the wide-awake was Carlyle's preferred hat for most of his adult life, a notable fact given that the majority of the men in his circle and in society would have been wearing top hats for formal and societal occasions – a difference evident in a photograph of an elderly Thomas (in a wide-awake style hat) sitting on a set of steps with his brother Dr. John Carlyle and an unknown gentleman (both in top hats) and his niece Mary Aitken (in a bonnet).⁶⁵ In a letter to Lady Ashburton on 22 November 1851 Thomas demonstrates a playful self-awareness as to the effect of his choice of hat:

⁶⁵ For more on Thomas Carlyle's unconventional choice of headwear see Thea Holme's *The Carlyles at Home* esp 104-106. Further proof of the wide-awake's status as a less-than-conventional hat can be gleaned through the scarcity of its mention in retrospective books on hats in the era. While the top hat in its various incarnations throughout the nineteenth-century is given ample consideration in many books on men's fashion and men's accessories the 'wide-awake' rarely garners more than a paragraph. For examples, see Lester and Oerke's 2004 *Accessories of Dress: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Hilda Amphlett's

I go to buy a new ‘wide-awake,’ namely, and have to meet my wife for that important object, at the stroke of half-past 3 in Croucher's reading room! A *new* wide-awake; think what a chivalrous-looking old fellow I shall be when you see me next,— if it please the pigs!— Seriously I have never had another kind of hat that was in the least comfortable for me; and in these last days to wear the old hard cylinder proves entirely insupportable. (CLO)

The wide-awake, as Penelope Byrde noted in *The Male Image: Men's Fashion in England 1300 to 1970* was normally worn in the country or for informal occasions (185) – this is likely the reason for Carlyle’s ‘pig’ reference. Playfulness aside, Carlyle also calls the hat an ‘important object’ and devotes more than a quarter of his short letter to his discussion of it. Thomas’s preference for wide-awakes (over the ‘hard cylinder’ top hat) was so established by 1851 that Jane teases him about them in the letter written on 3 December of that year. She’d recently gifted Thomas with a waistcoat made to his measure, and in a letter she noted of the waistcoat ‘it is decidedly *fast*; but a man with *three* wide-awakes may do with a waistcoat *fastissimo!*’ (CLO).

For Thomas the wide-awake was a practical hat but he was also aware of it as an aesthetic object, or, rather, as an object of questionable aesthetics: in a letter to his sister Jean he describes how in the blowing rain he will put on ‘an oldish “Kossuth wide-awake” (not an ugly hat at all), and defy the weather...’ (CLO It-18530429-TC-JCA-01) and in a letter to Lady Ashburton from Berlin in October of 1852 he describes how, on a tour that involved numerous stops at literary houses, ‘Goethe’s House was opened by favor; nay the reigning powers (seeing us in the Newspapers) invited poor Neuberg and me to dinner; and we went in spite of my “shocking bad

Hats: A History of Fashion in Headwear, and Penelope Byrde’s *The Male Image: Men's Fashion in England 1300 to 1970*. Byrde, who gives the wide-awake the most attention, describes it as a popular informal hat, ‘[l]ower-crowned, wider-brimmed and softer hats... normally made of felt or straw’ (185). Whereas very few images of Carlyle depict him with a top-hat (as in the youthful 1833 lithograph of Carlyle holding a top hat by Maclise (NPG D2019)) a large number of the surviving images of Carlyle depict him wearing a wide-brimmed ‘wide-awake’ style hat; these images (made from or taken in over a dozen different sittings or settings) range from photographic prints to pen and ink sketches, paintings and a medallion.

hat” (a dusty wide-awake, which I hid dexterously below stairs)...’ (*CLO* It-18521001-TC-LA-01). In this way the object that is useful equipment (protecting his head from dust) is also insufficient ‘societal’ equipment that Thomas has to hide.⁶⁶

That Carlyle identified with his wide-awake is apparent through his use of the hat as a metonym in a letter to Jane on 30 July 1853. Jane was returning to London at a time when the cabmen were on strike and Thomas wrote to say that he intended to ‘be on the ground for you, on Monday with a Neat Fly’. He then instructs her to ‘[n]ame the hour, therefore; and keep it;—and look well out for the brown wide-awake, as it will for you’ (*CLO*). In this letter Thomas first identifies the hat as a unique marker, as if it might be distinguishable within a large crowd of people. Then, in the second part of the sentence he personifies the wide-awake metonymically, stating that it will look for Jane. This self-identification is strong evidence of Thomas's perception of an affinity between himself and his hat. Another example of this strong sense of identification can be found in a letter written by Jane to Ellenor Ruding in which she references a photograph of Thomas, commenting that ‘Mr. C “rather likes it” he says; because “the hair (his own hair) is black in this one!” By *hair* he must mean *hat*, for I’ll be hanged if there is a hair on his head seen; his head being completely covered by a wide-awake. [T]he wide-awake is certainly as “black” as could be wished!’ (*CLO* It-18621102-JWC-ERU-01).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Walkey and Foster note in *Crinolines and Crimping Irons: Victorian Clothes: How They Were Cleaned and Cared For*: ‘Out of doors, some sort of headgear was essential at all times...’ (74) and Hilda Amphlett in *Hats: A History of Fashion in Headwear* notes the impact of ‘the grimy surroundings of industry’ on the need for practical choices in headwear (144). Byrde in *The Male Image: Men's Fashion in England 1300 to 1970* states that ‘[h]ats and other head coverings were originally worn for practical reasons. They protected the head and shoulders (including the neck, eyes and ears) from the weather and from knocks and blows (for example when riding or fighting)’ but she also adds that ‘[f]rom an early date, however, a symbolic and decorative significance was attached to the placing of a covering or ornament on the head and the wearing of a hat has continued to be regarded as a mark of authority or respectability’ (172).

⁶⁷ Jane also sometimes personified clothing or drew analogies between herself and objects of clothing, for example in her journal on the 26th of November 1855 she writes: ‘Spent the after-breakfast in sewing a beautiful row of steel buttons up the front of my old dressing-gown! Partly out of tender interest in that dressing-gown, which “has seen better days,” – like myself, and partly out of justice towards the buttons, which have “waited seven years” – to be found a use for’ (*CLO*). Here we see the

In these instances Thomas metonymically lets the hat stand for his self (as in the letter to Jane about the Fly) or integrates the hat into his being as a part of himself (as in Jane's anecdote about the black hair). As Byrde notes in her survey of the male image in fashion, it was sometimes the case that '[c]ertain articles of clothing became popularly associated with individual characters or were consciously adopted by them as a personal device' (174). Harvey suggests something similar in *Clothes* when he describes how in the 'social or cultural or communal imagination' there are 'figures whom we recognize by their clothes' (120); and instances where 'personages are fused with their clothes: when they appear in other dress, they are less than fully themselves...' (121). This association between Thomas and his wide-awake – and the fact that the association was also held by others – is again supported by a letter written by Jane to Thomas on 16 July 1858 in which she relays a story; she writes: 'I could swear you never heard of Madame Blaize de Bury! But she has heard of you! ...you might offer a modest thanksgiving, for the honour that *stunning* Lady did you in galloping madly all round Hyde Park in chase of your "brown wide-awake" the last day you rode there!' Jane then goes on to detail the impetus of the event: how Madame Blaize de Bury had once asked George Cook to introduce her to Carlyle and how George, upon meeting her in the park on the day in question 'said "I passed Mr Carlyle a little way on, in his brown wide-awake"' after which '[t]he Lady lashed her horse and set off in pursuit, leaving her party out of sight – and went all round the park at full gallop looking out for the wide-awake!' (*CLO*). What's most interesting about this anecdote (other than how it illuminates the heights of Carlyle's fame) is the way Jane references the wide-awake as a stand-in for Carlyle ('in chase of your

buttons 'waiting' to be useful (to fulfill themselves) and Jane's 'tender interest' in a gown that she associates (via simile) with herself.

“brown wide-awake” and ‘looking out for the wide-awake’) when the word ‘you’ would have sufficed (‘in chase of you’ and ‘looking out for you’ or even ‘looking out for you and your hat’). Instead the hat stands-in metonymically for the man wearing it.

Items of clothing that become identifiable with an individual often have a sense of shared biography, which is to say that there’s a sense that the object’s biography mirrors the individual’s. As section two will discuss this sense of shared biography can sometimes take the form of an item of clothing having witnessed or been present at a significant event, but sometimes shared biographies come from a sense of longevity, of contact or touch over a long period of time. In two letters to his sister Jean (written on 1 May 1861 and on 26 November 1862) Thomas describes his use of the hat in his post-ride ritual. In the first letter he describes how after riding he makes a ‘try for *sleep* (often successful, in a quietish place I have contrived; a cape, a rug, and your quilt covering the body of me, an old wide-awake *lightly* my head, and all made perfectly *dark*)...’. In his letter of the following year he writes of riding ‘my good old Fritz... almost every afternoon; then a pipe with suspicion of brandy-and-water; – after *whh*, half an hour of real sleep; well packed under your quilt on the sofa, with old wide-awake (worn light as duffel) set on the side of face and head’ (*CLO*). There is tenderness in Thomas’s description of his naps, of the pleasure (and literal comfort) afforded by a particular arrangement of coverings. There is in this way an intimacy sensed between Carlyle and his hat, not just that it served him during the ride and again during his sleep (and inevitably at other points in between), but rather a sense of real physical closeness that transcends the average kind of relationship experienced with one’s equipment. This closeness engenders a sense of

affinity between Thomas and his hat. For example, it is almost certain that the hat Carlyle napped under would carry some element of the scent of the world and also his own scent, would reflect the shape of his head, be an object he touched regularly. Carlyle's letter details elements of the feel of the hat – that it is exactly right – 'light as duffel' – that it makes the world 'perfectly *dark*'. Harvey in *Clothes* raises the issue of this kind of intimacy:

Because our world is so eye-obsessed we may not talk so much about feel, but even if we seldom talk about it, still, for nearly all our clothing, feel is close to everything. Our clothes are the closest companions we have; they touch us all day and perhaps all night.... There is no aesthetics of touch, but there should be.... (102-3)

It is this element of contact, of feel or touch – that one can touch or be close to something that was 'one of the closest companions' of another human being – that makes clothes an effective remembrancer. Charles Dickens, touring America, 'complained that his very coat was being torn to shreds by people reaching out to touch him, or to grab some cloth as a souvenir' (Rose 157). This aspect of a closeness that has both a physical reality (via touch) and a psychological vitality (via affinity or metonymy) is a key element in the use of clothes items as remembrancers.

Clothes as Remembrancers

In a letter to Thomas not long before their marriage Jane wrote: 'I have gotten a neck-kerchief for you. You will be forced to think of me every time you put it on– ' (*CLO* It-18250921-JBW-TC-01). Here she is clearly owning up to her intention with the gift: that the sight of it, the handling and wearing of it, would bring her to mind, serve as a reminder of her very self in her absence. Similarly, on 1 May, 1830

Thomas writes to his brother John (whose nickname is Doil) of a ‘hair cap’ (fur cap) that he says he will ride with ‘when wind is up’. He adds ‘[b]ut as for the Cap, I will prize it above all caps, and think when it hangs on the cloakpin that I hear the voice of poor Doil, saying Brother remember me! Yes, my brave Doil, I will remember thee, and thy true heart, so long as memory lives within me’ (*CLO*). Here, in light and teasing ways, Jane and Thomas Carlyle acknowledge two dynamics that can contribute to the resonant power of clothes: the act of giving with the intention or hope of remembrance (as expressed by Jane in her gift of the neck-kerchief) and the dynamic of overt association (via Thomas’ allusion to how he imagines the sight of the cap will evoke a kind of ventriloquist plea from the cap for remembrance from his brother).

Such associations between clothes and people work in a variety of ways. For example, in the early years of their marriage after Jane wrote to Thomas of a cough she caught on account of leaving her bonnet behind on a rainy evening ‘for fear of spoiling the arrangement of my hair’ – a cold that was ‘obliging me to wear a cap (a proper punishment for my fit of vanity)’ (*CLO* It-18231112) Thomas wrote back: ‘As for the cap, I do not mind it: you had on a cap the first time I saw you, and nothing could become you better. You were the loveliest creature! I shall never forget that summer’s evening while I exist’ (*CLO* It-18231113-TC-JWC-01). In this particular act of remembrance, Jane’s complaint about wearing a cap in their present tense, leads Thomas to think about another cap, one that forms part of his original (and preserved) memory of her; an object that has earned his categorical affection (or indulgence) because of its association with her body at their first meeting – a key event in their lives.

Such associations between material objects (such as the caps and the neckerchief) and the living with whom the object is associated can help generate memories (as evidenced by Carlyle's recollection); and memories such as these often become constituent parts of the more dynamic kind of remembering that happens when the beloved is no longer present or accessible. In 1854 after Thomas Carlyle's mother died he described in his journal how he had:

...a vision of the old Sunday mornings I had seen at Mainhall, &c. Poor old mother, father, and the rest of us bustling about to get dressed in time and down to the meeting-house at Ecclefechen. Inexpressibly sad to me, and full of meaning. They are gone now, vanished all; their poor bits of thrifty clothes, more precious to me than Queen's or King's expensive trappings.... (Ashton 345)

Here Carlyle is mourning the beings, the bodies and even the clothes they wore. As Gibson notes in *Objects of the Dead* '[w]e come into this world naked and in most cultures we leave with some form of covering' – in this way clothes, worn throughout our lives, become fundamental aspects of self and memory. Gibson notes that '[v]isual memories of deceased loved ones often involve specific memories of clothing or styles of dress' (104).

Juliet Ash, writing about the bereavement she was experiencing after the death of her husband, describes a contemporary version of the kind of remembrance Carlyle alludes to in her essay 'Memory and Objects': 'Clothes, their smell and texture, remind the spectator of the past-presence of the person to whom they belonged, their inhabiting them, a moment when they wore them – or a moment in which they removed the item of clothing. The garment becomes imbued with the essence of the person...' (219). This imbuing or essence is what Judith Clark (a costume curator and Professor of Fashion and Museology at the London College of Fashion) calls *animismo*. In *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* (co-written with Adam Phillips) she

states: ‘I believe in what the Italian stylist and journalist Anna Piaggi calls the *animismo*...of an object. What she is referring to is not the essence of an object but its afterlife, or rather, the afterlife of the previous owner carried within the object’ (112). This sense of clothes-as-containers of some residual essence of the former wearer (the essence Clark suggests is ‘carried *within* the object’ – emphasis added) or of clothes as evidence of that self via the clothing’s ‘material remain’ will be explored in section two.

II: Old and Empty Clothes

In J.R. Planché’s introduction to his *History of British Costume* (1834) the author states:

The true spirit of the times is in nothing more perceptible than in the tone given to our most trifling amusements. Information of some description must be blended with every recreation to render it truly acceptable to the public. The most beautiful fictions are disregarded unless in some measure founded upon fact. (xi)

Planché is referring to the perception of clothes as ‘trifling amusements’ but he is also suggesting that clothes as material objects have a factual existence – an actuality ‘founded upon fact’. Noting that Sir Walter Scott, in his 1820 novel *Ivanhoe*, had mistakenly endowed the twelfth century’s Richard Coeur de Lion with sixteenth century armour, he affirms that:

...the taste for a correct conception of the arms and habits of our ancestors has of late years rapidly diffused itself throughout Europe. The historian, the poet, the novelist, the painter, and the actor, have discovered in attention to costume a new spring of information, and a fresh source of effect. Its study, embellished by picture and enlivened by anecdote, soon becomes interesting even to the young and careless reader; and at the same time that it sheds light upon manners and rectifies dates, stamps the various events and eras in the most natural and vivid colours indelibly on the memory. (xi-xii)

It is curious to wonder if Thomas Carlyle read Planché's book around the time his first and only novel *Sartor Resartus* – a fictional conceit about clothes – was appearing in serialized form in *Fraser's Magazine*, for the Carlyles owned a copy of Planché's *History of British Costume* – a volume that still sits on a bookshelf in the Cheyne Row house today. For while Planché is describing the value of authentic costume – costume as a 'spring of information' and a 'source of effect' – he is also alluding to the way clothes can 'world': shedding light on manners, clarifying epochs, and fixing 'various events and eras...on the memory' (xi-xii).

Sartor Resartus (the 'tailor re-tailored') is Thomas Carlyle's only work of fiction. It was published periodically in *Fraser's Magazine* between November of 1833 and August of 1834 and has been interpreted as both 'a symbolic autobiography' (Damrosch 1807) and 'a work of imaginative fiction' with 'doctrinal kernels' (McSweeney viii).⁶⁸ As a novel *Sartor Resartus* employs a conceit that Carlyle acknowledged in a letter to Fraser in May of 1833 'will astonish most that read it, be wholly understood by very few; but to the astonishment of some will add touches of (almost the deepest) spiritual interest, with others quite the opposite feeling' (Carlyle, *Sartor* 228). The book's conceit was, in essence, a ruse, in that Carlyle's periodical pieces mimicked an extensive book review in which an 'Editor' (of British origin) was grappling with a 'remarkable Treatise' entitled *Die Kleider ihr Werden und Wirkin* or *Clothes, their Origin and Influence*, by a German author named Diogenes

⁶⁸ Carlyle himself also used the term 'doctrine' in describing the text and acknowledged that the text was 'put together in the fashion of a Didactic Novel; but indeed properly *like* nothing yet extant. I used to characterize it briefly as a kind of "Satirical Extravaganza on Things in General"; it contains more of my opinions on Art, Politics, Religion, Heaven Earth and Air, than all the things I have yet written. The Creed promulgated on all these things, as you may judge, is *mine*...' (Carlyle, *Sartor*, Appendix, 227–228).

Teufelsdröckh (Carlyle, *Sartor* 6). For those familiar with the Greek and German languages, the author – whose name translates into ‘Born-of-God Devil’s-excrement’ and who hails from Weissnichtwo or ‘Know-not-where’ (McSweeney 250) – is obviously fictional, but Carlyle embeds this conceit within the text, which may be one of the reasons why he expected the novel would be ‘wholly understood by very few’.

Sartor Resartus is interesting when read alongside Planché’s commentary because even though *Sartor* is a satirical novel, a meta-fiction with polemical underpinnings, it does, in places, do what Planché advocates: take clothes seriously; look at costume as ‘founded upon fact’ and as a ‘spring of information’ and ‘a source of effect’ – as a material object capable of shedding light on the culture and era under consideration. While clothing in *Sartor Resartus* is, in many instances, used as a metaphor, symbol or emblem, clothing as an actual physical thing (described in realistic detail) grounds many parts of the text.⁶⁹ For example, in imagining his mysterious author (the protagonist of the book, Herr. Teufelsdröckh) the ‘editor’ of the serial states that: ‘His Life, Fortunes, and Bodily Presence are as yet hidden from us, or matter only of faint conjecture’. The editor then declares: ‘of his wide surtout; the colour of his trousers, fashion of his broad-brimmed steeple-hat, and so forth, we might report, but do not’ (21).

Of course, here Carlyle, in the guise of the editor narrator, *is* reporting, *is* clothing

⁶⁹ Inspired in part by Jonathon Swift’s 1704 parody *A Tale of the Tub* (in which coats are used to represent religious attitudes), clothes in *Sartor Resartus* often represent or act as metaphors for various doctrines, cultural dynamics or societal roles. For example, in the chapter entitled ‘Church Clothes’ Carlyle has the Editor state: ‘Church Clothes are, in our vocabulary, the Forms, the *Vestures*, under which men have at various periods embodied and represented for the themselves the Religious Principle...’ (162) and ‘the Church Clothes are first spun and woven by Society...’ (163), and ‘those same Church Clothes have gone sorrowfully out at elbows: nay, far worse, many of them have become mere hollow Shapes...’ (164). Here, it is not the literal costume (a vestment that is never presented concretely in the chapter) that is spun by some collective or that is ‘wearing out,’ but the doctrine(s). In other instances Carlyle’s use of clothes as representational of station i.e. ‘the gold-mantled Prince or russet-jerkined Peasant’ (45) is related to larger ideologies i.e. those supported by humanist statements such as ‘Was not every soul, or rather every body...naked, or nearly so last night...’ (49). Despite this, a notable amount of attention is paid to accurately describing various types of clothing, see especially chapters 5 and 6: ‘The World in Clothes’ (28-33) and ‘Aprons’ (34-36).

the absent body in the reader's mind, and clothing it in a particular set of garments even as he says he isn't: a wide men's jacket contemporary to the era, trousers, a particular kind of hat. Here, as elsewhere, clothes are clothes first: the 'surtout', 'trousers', and 'steeple-hat' are all nouns intended to signal a material actuality, words meant to clothe the absent subject. This section's focus will be on that exact dynamic: on the use and fitness of clothes to make present an absence and on clothes as conjuring things. Beginning with Carlyle and *Sartor Resartus* and the 'Old Clothes' chapter of the book (Book III Chapter 6) and Charles Dickens's 'Meditations In Monmouth-Street' (in *Sketches by Boz*) this section will focus on the fitness of clothing to evoke the absent wearer and the apprehension of clothing as a material remain that can hold both bodily knowledge and historical knowledge. Once this reading of clothes as archives is established the idea of clothes as material witnesses to events experienced by the individual will be explored.

Clothes as Material Remains

What we can infer about Carlyle biographically or politically from *Sartor Resartus* (especially in relation to the more *bildungsroman*-like Book II) is beyond the purview of this thesis, but what *Sartor Resartus* says about clothes, and particularly about clothes as emblematic or emptied-out things (in the chapters 'Symbols' and 'Old Clothes') is of interest because it is in these sections that we see clothes described as material remains that function both emblematically and archivally – echoing Teufelsdröckh's assertion that '[r]ightly viewed no meanest object is insignificant; all objects are as windows, through which the philosophic eye looks

into Infinitude itself' (56). Most usefully both Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*' chapter 'Old Clothes' and Dickens in 'Meditations In Monmouth-Street' present clothes as resonant and powerful things that make present the absent individual, and both use a real-life setting – nineteenth-century London's Monmouth Street where used clothing was sold – to demonstrate the effect of the empty garments and accessories. Both authors also employ literary devices that help to create a sense of the dynamism of the 'Empty or... Cast Clothes' (Carlyle, *Sartor* 182) – devices such as simile, metaphor and personification all of which reinforce the connection between the cast clothes and the bodies that once inhabited them.

Monmouth Street in London was renowned in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century for its resale clothing shops, many of which were run by Jewish dealers (Wheatley 554). The area was quite poor and crime was not uncommon. Dickens's 'sketch' of the street in *Sketches By Boz* – his first published book, based on a collection of essays and stories that appeared in a variety of magazines and newspapers from 1833 to circa 1836 (Walder ix) – describes the area (in a slightly ironic tone that later begins to border on sarcasm) as 'the only true and real emporium for second-hand wearing apparel... venerable from its antiquity, and respectable from its usefulness' (96). Referring to Monmouth Street as 'the burial-place of fashions' Boz (the narrator) notes that 'the times... have changed, [but] not Monmouth-street' (98). Both Dickens and Carlyle's pieces of writing present a squalid place, but 'Boz' tempers the idea of the street through using a dichotomous mix of complimentary and base language. For example, he describes watching the 'engaging children as they revel in the gutter, a happy troop of infantine scavengers' (96). Carlyle presents a similar dichotomy but through the use of two narrative

voices. Teufelsdröckh is reported to have declared enthusiastically in his book on clothes ‘often have I turned into their Old-Clothes Market to worship. With awe-struck heart I walk through that Monmouth Street with its empty Suits...’ (183) a sentiment that the editor calls ‘overcharged,’ noting more cynically of Londoners ‘[w]e too have walked through Monmouth Street; but with little feeling of “Devotion”’ (184). Carlyle’s use of the street over the course of his chapter is both metaphorical and factual (and he winks slyly to the reader to say as much when he notes that ‘there exists nothing like an authentic diary of this his [Teufelsdröckh’s] sojourn in London; and of his Meditations among the Clothes-shops only the obscurest emblematic shadows’ (184)), still, emblematic or not, Monmouth-Street was a real place and Carlyle’s use of it to describe out-worn ideas (in *Sartor* and in his letters) was in part derived from the fact that the street, dedicated to the resale of old, used, and out-of-fashion clothing, provided him with a useful basis for his metaphor.⁷⁰

Monmouth Street

In the voice of Teufelsdröckh, Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* describes a trip to the old clothes market on Monmouth Street:

‘Often, while I sojourned in that monstrous Tuberosity of Civilised Life, the Capital of England; and meditated, and questioned Destiny, under that ink-sea of vapour, black, thick, and multifarious as Spartan broth; and was one lone Soul amid those grinding millions; – often have I turned into their Old-Clothes

⁷⁰ Monmouth Street and ‘used-clothes’ were often employed by Carlyle as a metaphor for worn-out doctrines, as in a letter to Jane written on 18 August of 1845 in which he criticizes James Martineau as ‘doomed to... look at this Divine universe thro’ distracted Jew-Greek spectacles, and a whole Monmouth Street of “ou’ cloe!”’ (*CLO*). For further Monmouth-street references and allusions see his letter to Jane of 30 April 1842; his letter to Edward Everett of 4 May, 1846 regarding ‘the dingy fetid Monmouth Street’; to Emerson on 17 July 1846 (‘Good heavens, will the people not come out of their wretched Old-Clothes Monmouth-Streets, Hebrew and other; but lie there dying of the basest pestilence...’ (*CLO*); his letter to Lady Ashburton of 28 February, 1852; to William Sterling of 9 November, 1852 and the more complimentary and literal letter of 15 July 1846 in which he says of a balmy summer evening that it makes ‘even Monmouth-Street, le jeune Monmouth-Street, sport’ (*CLO*).

Market to worship. With awe-struck heart I walk through that Monmouth Street, with its empty Suits, as though a Sanhedrim^[71] of stainless Ghosts. Silent are they, but expressive in their silence: the past witnesses and instruments of Woe and Joy, of Passions, Virtues, Crimes, and all the fathomless tumult of Good and Evil in 'the Prison called Life.' Friends! trust not the heart of that man for whom Old Clothes are not venerable....' (Carlyle, *Sartor* 183)

Charles Dickens describes the same area in *Sketches By Boz*:

We love to walk among these extensive groves of the illustrious dead, and to indulge in speculations to which they give rise; now fitting a deceased coat, then a dead pair of trousers, and anon the mortal remains of a gaudy waistcoat, upon some being of our own conjuring up, and endeavouring, from the shape and fashion of the garment itself, to bring its former owner before our mind's eye. We have gone on speculating in this way, until whole rows of coats have started from their pegs, and buttoned up, of their own accord, round the waists of imaginary wearers.... (Dickens, 'Meditations' 98)



Fig. 6. 'Monmouth Street' by George Cruickshank, from *Sketches by Boz* (Dickens 97).

⁷¹ An assembly or council, the highest council of the ancient Jews. Two explanatory notes in this passage (after 'broth' and 'called') have been omitted.

While both Carlyle and Dickens employ ironic tones in their descriptions of Monmouth Street both also evoke the present absence of the former inhabitants of the clothing that lines the street and hangs in its shops.⁷² Carlyle describes (via a simile) the visual of the street full of hanging and empty clothes as an assembly ‘of stainless Ghosts’ (183) and calls the street (metaphorically) a ‘supernatural Whispering-gallery’ (184). Dickens prepares the reader for the fantastical leap his narrator will take in imagining the former wearers of the clothes re-inhabiting them through the use of both metaphor and personification, declaring early on in his piece that ‘[w]e love to walk among these extensive groves of the illustrious dead, and to indulge in the speculations to which they give rise; now fitting a deceased coat, then a dead pair of trousers, and anon the mortal remains of a gaudy waistcoat...’ (98). Here the ‘illustrious dead’ image works in two obvious ways: the clothes themselves are the ‘illustrious dead’ (dead because they are out of fashion) but dead too because in many cases they are the fabric self of dead or unrecoverable individuals, their hanging and lifeless form also ‘deceased’, also a ‘mortal remain’.

This use of figurative language to refigure the absence the empty clothes presences is informative in that in order for a simile or metaphor to work a certain degree of congruity must be present. As a verbal way of expressing a relation between ideas, images or things in a condensed fashion (Preminger 490) metaphors

⁷² Both Carlyle and Dickens use an ironic (or slightly facetious) tone in their work, one that could be read as allowing them to avoid direct sentiment while still raising the subject of how clothes presence the dead. In Carlyle’s chapter the Editor mocks the German author’s enthusiasm and naïveté through relaying his hyperbolic sentiments and peppering them with what might be deemed an excessive use of exclamation marks, for example, of the ‘Jewish Highpriest’ [clothes-seller] the Editor records Teufelsdröckh as having written: ‘Reck not, ye fluttering Ghosts: he will purify you in his Purgatory, with fire and with water; and one day, new-created ye shall reappear. Oh! Let him in whom the flame of Devotion is ready to go out, who has never worshipped, and knows not what to workship, pace and repace, with austerest thought, the pavement of Monmouth Street...’ (183). In Dickens’s piece the narrator employs a facetious tone at the start through mixing high and low references for a privileged audience, for example, of the locals he states ‘their habitations are distinguished by that disregard of outward appearance and neglect of personal comfort, so common among people who are constantly immersed in profound speculations...’ (96). For more on narrative tactics and irony in these works see “‘Shadow-Hunting’: Romantic Irony, *Sartor Resartus*, and Victorian Romanticism’ by Janice L. Haney and ‘The Narrator in *Sketches by Boz*’ by Julian W. Brislow.

(and similes) work best when the images or ideas brought together have some form of overlap, congruity, or fitness. In Carlyle's case where the street of empty clothes evokes ghosts it is the shape of the body (the absent body and the fabric material remain) that overlaps. For Teufelsdröckh empty clothes are both 'Shells and outer Husks of the Body' – external forms that are 'the pure emblem and effigies of man' (182). In Dickens's use of dead clothes it is the pastness and uselessness of the items that generates a kind of synchrony: the clothes are no longer vital, have no life or relevance – as with the anonymous former inhabitants whose time has come and gone.

It is this tension or duality – the presencing emptiness of the clothes and the material absence of the person that marks both pieces even though Carlyle's tactic is ultimately one that foregrounds the clothes themselves and Dickens's is to foreground the former wearer. For example, in *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle celebrates the materiality of the thing (while also employing personification) when he has Teufelsdröckh attest to the purity of the clothing without the complexity of the individual:

That reverence which cannot act without obstruction and perversion when the Clothes are full, may have free course when they are empty....

What still dignity dwells in a suit of Cast Clothes! How meekly it bears its honours! No haughty looks, no scornful gesture; silent and serene, it fronts the world; neither demanding worship, nor afraid to miss it. The Hat still carries the physiognomy of its Head: but the vanity and the stupidity, and goose-speech which was the sign of these two, are gone. The Coat-arm is stretched out, but not to strike; the Breeches, in modest simplicity, depend at ease, and now at last have a graceful flow; the Waistcoat hides no evil passion, no riotous desire.... (182)

Here Carlyle presents clothing that retains the form of the body but not the muddled complexity of its inhabitant. Dickens chooses instead to bring the dead back to life through repopulating the clothing with the dead to whom the clothes belonged, a

‘conjuring up’ that leads to Boz’s being ‘struck’ and ‘convinced’ by a series of impressions the clothes generate (98-99):

This was the boy’s dress. It had belonged to a town boy, we could see; there was a shortness about the legs and arms of the suit; and a bagging at the knees, peculiar to the rising youth of London streets. A small day-school he had been at, evidently. If it had been a regular boys’ school they wouldn’t have let him play on the floor so much, and rub his knees so white. He had an indulgent mother too, and plenty of halfpence, as the numerous smears of some sticky substance about the pockets, and just below the chin, which even the salesman’s skill could not succeed in disguising, sufficiently betokened. They were decent people, but not overburdened with riches, or he would not have so far outgrown the suit when he passed into those corduroys with the round jacket; in which he went to a boys’ school, however, learnt to write—and in ink of pretty tolerable blackness too, if the place where he used to wipe his pen might be taken as evidence. (99)

Unlike Carlyle’s *Teufelsdröckh* whose focus in the above section is on the material remain of the clothes as things in-and-of-themselves, Boz, in using the clothes to re-figure the former inhabitant, uses clothes as conjuring things – as an archive of both bodily and historical knowledge. As Boz states ‘There was the man’s whole life written as legibly on those clothes, as if we had his autobiography engrossed on parchment before us’ (99). Here the material archive presences the former wearer, a technique Boz applies not only to the detailed reconstruction of the life of the young man described above, but also to numerous other characters whose clothes he sees. In every instance it is the clothes that hold the key to the biography, giving us, as with the boy, a body derived from the clothing’s shape (i.e. ‘the full symmetry of a boy’s figure’ (99)) but also information about his life and habits – what kind of school he went to, the ‘blackguard companions’ of his later years and so on (100).

This ‘filling-in’ of a life from the marks and wear of a variety of sets of clothing ‘ranged outside a shop-window’ (98) mimics the way visitors to a writer’s house/museum might ‘fill-in’ or ‘read’ the text of the surviving garment. In the case

of Thomas Carlyle's smoking cap or Sir Walter Scott's gloves, or Dickens's court suit, we might sense the corporeal actuality that filled those items. This is the case with Charlotte Brontë's going-away dress wherein the outline of her small frame is evident in the empty garment, a garment that allows visitors to observe her sense of style, imagine her form, her habits, and, because of the context of the dress (known to have been worn on her honeymoon) imagine related events from her life.⁷³ Teufelsdröckh suggests a similar correspondence in the 'Old Clothes' chapter of *Sartor Resartus* when he notes of a hat that '[t]he Hat still carries the physiognomy of its head...' (182). Here, as with Carlyle's smoking cap in its case in the upstairs study of the Cheyne Row house, the shape of the wearer's head is still palpable, and as such it offers up clues, allows the stranger viewing the hat to conjure some aspects of the wearer. As a material remain clothes are what's left of the body's form. As Virginia Woolf noted on her visit to Haworth 'Her [Charlotte's] shoes and her thin muslin dress have outlived her' (Woolf, *Guardian*). Crucially, they outlive her in a particular way, through presencing some sense of her physical form and the events of her life. Boz, for example sees 'a jolly, good-tempered, hearty-looking pair of tops [boots]' and conjures 'a fine, red-faced, jovial fellow of a market-gardener' declaring '...we knew all about him; we had seen him coming up to Covent-garden in his green chaise-cart, with the fat, tubby little horse, half a thousand times...' (102). He also conjures a 'coquettish servant-maid'; a 'very smart female, in a showy bonnet'; a 'very old gentleman with a silver-headed stick' (102) and so forth. In each instance the former inhabitant of the clothing or footwear is given a presence and a life – a

⁷³ As the Parsonage Museum guide book notes in a section on Charlotte's dresses: 'From her surviving dresses, we can estimate that Charlotte was less than five feet tall and possibly as small as 4'9" or 4' 10" tall (1m 45cm)... As a young girl, her clothes sense was described by Ellen [Nussey] as very old-fashioned. Later in life, she favoured simple, elegant clothes' (29). These suppositions are the result of both narrative evidence and the physical remains of the clothes themselves. As one visitor to Haworth notes in the comment book 'I liked the shoes – fascinatingly small' (July 2011), others mention Charlotte's dresses, another describes the clothes as 'evocative' (May 2011).

sense of being-in-the-world that makes the absence that the clothes signal imaginatively present.

Clothes as Witnesses

The idea that clothes can be material witnesses to people's lives is not limited to the nineteenth century. In a 2013 *Guardian* newspaper article on a new French exhibit on Napoleon and Europe, Maev Kennedy describes how Horatio Nelson's uniform 'viewed as a sacred relic of English history' was sent to join the exhibition in Paris.

Kennedy describes how the coat was:

...soaked in blood on the day that saw one of the greatest naval victories, at Trafalgar, over the combined fleets of France and Spain, and the disaster of the death of the vice-admiral. The hole in the shoulder was pierced by the musket ball of a French sniper perched high in the rigging of the Redoubtable.

The sniper's bullet passed through Nelson's chest and lodged near his spine, paralysing him and leaving him drowning slowly in his own blood. (Kennedy 'Nelson')

This description is telling because, while Nelson's chest and spine and death are clearly described as his, the fatal shot is experienced not just by Nelson, but by the coat whose 'shoulder' is 'pierced by the musket ball'. Nelson's body may be buried, but evidence of the fatal shot in the form of a 'hole in the left shoulder, and some of the gold on the epaulette torn away' remains (Kennedy 'Nelson'). This distinction between what an item of clothing experienced and what its wearer experienced is useful because while it limits the experience of the bullet passing through Nelson's chest to Nelson, the experience of the shot in the shoulder belongs both to Nelson and to his coat. His coat was not only *there* when he was fatally wounded, but it experienced, first-hand, the event, becoming damaged and blood-soaked in the battle.

Interestingly however, according to the *Guardian* article (metonymically titled ‘Nelson engages the French again as uniform goes on show in Paris’), Nelson’s death wasn’t the only thing the uniform witnessed. In describing how the coat has ‘blood on the sleeve and the hem’ Kennedy describes how it is believed they ‘got stained as he [Nelson] stooped to find [his secretary John] Scott dying on the deck at his feet’ an hour before Nelson himself was shot (Kennedy ‘Nelson’). Here again the coat is described as an impacted witness to an event; a witness so involved and marked by the event that, as in Boz’s imaginings, various aspects of the event can be read through the clothes’ particular markings; a kind of access granted by and through the material remains of the coat.

But Kennedy’s article isn’t just useful for how her writing supports the reading of the coat as a witness; it’s also useful because of what she reports others as saying about the coat, and for the authenticating narratives that come with the uniform. For example, Kennedy reports that: ‘The uniform was sent back to England, with his blood-soaked silk stockings and the breeches that had been cut off to spare him pain when he was carried below deck...’ (Kennedy ‘Nelson’). The uniform was then given to Nelson’s brother William. The story goes that Nelson’s mistress Emma Hamilton, ‘excluded from all the ceremonies, including the funeral – wrote to the family begging for a loan. A neighbour’s child, Lionel Goldsmith, remembered all his life being taken to see the uniform laid out on the bed she had shared with Nelson...’ (Kennedy ‘Nelson’). This anecdote prefigures the movement of a material remain from use to display, an idea that will be considered in section three of this chapter, but it also mirrors the stories about how Queen Victoria had Albert’s clothing laid out for him regularly after his death (Hubbard 200) albeit with one

crucial difference – in Albert’s case the clothes signified him and his body; making present an absence, in Nelson’s case the clothes signified both him and his body *and* a very particular heightened event – his violent death and the battle of Trafalgar. In this way certain clothes, especially ones that have been present at events with a high degree of what might be called ‘psychic residue’, seem most susceptible to being read as material witnesses. As Kennedy reports in the *Guardian* article, both Amy Wilson, the costume curator at Greenwich who escorted Nelson’s uniform to France, and Nicky Yates the conservator ‘unconsciously referred to the coat as “him” as they moved it carefully from the packing crate into the display case’ (Kennedy ‘Nelson’). This is metonymy of the highest order; the transposition of self to shell; the kind of transposition that seems to come more readily when the object has witnessed something dramatic.

This idea of witnessing things harkens back to Mona Körte’s suggestion in ‘Bracelet, Hand Towel, Pocket Watch: Objects of the Last Moment in Memory and Narration’ that an ‘object of the last moment’ can take on a ‘special role in the remembrances and narratives’ of the recipient (110). As an object of the last moment, Nelson’s coat exemplifies the complexity of associations, the thematic clusters that Körte describes, for tied up within the uniform is not only the battle, the death, the politics of the larger war and the Nation (of which Nelson himself became an emblem), but also Nelson’s mistress’s love for him and his legacy.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Displaying objects with such complex historical associations (and emblematic resonance) seems to require careful consideration, as was made clear by Emelie Robbe, the Paris curator of the exhibit displaying Nelson’s uniform. Robbe is quoted in the *Guardian* article as saying: ‘We have placed the uniform of Napoleon so that he looks towards the uniforms of the emperors of Austria and Russia, who he absolutely crushed.... But at his back, there was always the shadow of Nelson, and so we have placed him there’ (Kennedy ‘Nelson’). This quote is further evidence of the metonymy inherent in the uniform (‘placed *him* there’) while also suggestive of the complexity of the uniform as an emblem or symbol.

While clothing present at or involved in dramatic events or remarkable occasions may be more easily ‘read’ as a remembrancer, Dickens’s ‘Monmouth Street’ sketch and Carlyle’s chapter on ‘Old Clothes’ both describe clothing as material reminders of, and witnesses to, everyday lives. Writers’ museums embody both these kinds of experiences – a fact evidenced by Carlyle’s smoking cap and Dickens’s court suit – one an object that would have been used regularly in relation to Carlyle’s smoking ritual and therefore associated in his biographical narrative with the garden and Nero and thoughtfulness, and the other an object supposed to have been present at a particularly powerful (and unrepeated) moment in British literary history – Charles Dickens’s one meeting with the Queen.

III: The Temporal Past and the Absent Body

One of the amusing components of Elizabeth Paulet’s caricature of Carlyle’s trousers ‘Hero worship reduced to “faute de mieux”’ is the possibility that Carlyle (depicted as a silhouette sitting out in the garden) might, at some point, actually be in want of that particular item of his clothing. One of the effects that Carlyle’s presence in the sketch has is to generate the sense that the trousers on display hang there almost dually – as both practical wear or equipment and as a makeshift monument or material representation in want of the real thing. In this section I will consider the effect of the removal of objects of clothing from the circuit of use and the resultant dynamics of display. Referencing the ‘Symbols’ chapter of Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* and John Harvey’s closing chapter (in *Clothes*) on ‘dream clothes and future clothes’

I will argue, as I did in relation to hair, that clothes are particularly fit remembrancers because of their evocation of both a temporal past and the absent body.

Dickens's Monmouth Street sketch and Carlyle's chapter on old clothes demonstrate that clothing removed from the circuit of an individual's use and displayed emptily can be a potent conjurer of the person with whom the object(s) of clothing may be associated. But it is worth noting that the perception of emptied-out clothing on display as an object for potential re-circulation (such as those items hanging along Monmouth Street which are displayed in order to be purchased and utilized by others) differs from that of those items of clothing removed permanently from the circuit of use and put on display as an artefact or a work of art. Objects in this latter category, such as those items found in the writers' museums considered in this thesis, no longer circulate as pieces of equipment accessible in a way that reflects their original utilitarian use, rather, these items of clothing are now static or preserved things; material embodiments of both a temporal past and a once-present human being.⁷⁵

The idea that an article of empty clothing has the ability to presence or evoke not only the absent individual but events in which the clothing was worn is supported by the practice in writers' museums of associating items of clothing with events on museum labels and in souvenir guides. Charles Dickens's 'court suit' becomes not just any suit, but the one made in 1870 and 'believed to have been worn for his only private audience with Queen Victoria on 9th March the same year' (Dickens Museum label, 2013). Charlotte Brontë's wedding bonnet and veil become '...the only items of her wedding clothing to have survived' (Parsonage label, 2011); her silk going-

⁷⁵ Lydia Marinelli's essay 'Fort, Da: The Cap in the Museum' about the theft of a cap of Freud's from his Vienna Museum begins by referencing the superadded quality that can come from an autographic object's removal from the circuit of use. The essay begins by noting 'Simple headgear can hardly be seen as an enticement to commit a crime. In order to awaken criminal energy, a cap must go through a series of transformations: only so ennobled can it become the object of a crime' (117).

away dress becomes the one she wore when she left on her honeymoon tour in 1854 (Dinsdale, Laycock and Akhurst 20). Similarly Freud's overcoat becomes not just a coat worn on a daily basis as an instrument to keep him warm or dry, but, as the sign at the Freud Museum notes, 'the overcoat Freud wore on his journey from Vienna to London in 1938' an event that was particularly resonant because of the dangers he faced in fleeing Nazi-occupied Austria (Freud Museum label, 2013).



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Fig. 7. Charles Dickens's Court Suit, Charles Dickens Museum, London, photograph by the author with permission.

Fig. 8. Charlotte Brontë's Wedding Bonnet © Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth (Dinsdale, White 41).

Implied in such labeling is an act of witness as described in the previous section i.e. this court suit or this bonnet *was there when*. But embedded within encounters with objects that have experienced particular events is the fact that such objects of

witness (i.e. Dickens's court suit, Charlotte's bonnet, Freud's overcoat) were themselves in contact not just with a person in the historical instance, but were, rather acting or functioning in tandem with a person whose whole biography existed within them. This is implied for example in the label for Dickens's court suit, which goes on to add additional context to the author's meeting with Queen Victoria. Not only did Dickens meet Queen Victoria on the ninth but also, during that meeting, according to the museum label, Queen Victoria 'thanked Dickens for showing her photographs of the American Civil war battlefields he had acquired during his tour there' (Dickens museum label, 2013). In this instance the label as an authenticating narrative works not only to place the suit at a particular event, but also to add a narrative context that extends the encounter beyond a connected series of instants. Implied in this label is not only Dickens in his court suit in that moment, but Dickens's experience on his tour, and by extension, his life *up until that moment* in the court suit. Which is to say that the court suit itself is always already encountering a Dickens within whom a whole biography (right up and into the unfolding present) is inherited.

Clothes attached to particular events are therefore still clothes that have encountered people with whole histories – whether the clothes have been part of that history or not. Clothes understood in this way might be read as threshold objects – objects whose encounter with a whole biographical being ceases at the moment their contact with that being is permanently severed. When Charlotte Brontë wore her going-away dress it was a Charlotte Brontë whose whole life (art, hopes, dreams, failures, successes) was in encounter with the dress and the event it was required for. After her honeymoon the dress remained hers whether it was worn or not because within the dress, even if closeted away, was the possibility of further encounters or

contact; a possibility that could only be severed by the giving away of the dress, its destruction, or the death of Charlotte herself. This severance, for an autographic object such as Charlotte's dress (severed most likely by her death), is one threshold; the placement of the dress into the stasis of a museum display case (which effectively brings the dress's own biography to a halt through its removal from circulation in both place and time) is another.⁷⁶

This question of the object of clothing's own biography is one that is often overlooked even though it can contribute to the temporality of the object. When objects such as Lord Nelson's uniform do circulate after severance with the former wearer (as his recently did between museums) the merging of the uniform's ongoing biography with Nelson's (as when the uniform is metonymically referred to as 'him') supports a sense of not only the on-going present-absence of a 'Nelson' figure (represented by the presence of his uniform), but also a continued temporality in the form of experiences had by the material and metonymical thing. While in truth most articles of clothing in writers' museums did circulate 'out in the world' after their respective authors' deaths (Charlotte Brontë's going-away dress, for example, wasn't purchased until 1907 – fifty-two years after her death) such elements of the thing's biography rarely figure prominently in the public narrative even though the object biography is often central to issues of provenance.⁷⁷ When such material biographies do figure, as with Lord Nelson's uniform – purchased forty-five years after Nelson's

⁷⁶ Museum displays do, of course, change, and accordingly clothes items can be moved about, put on loan, placed in storage etc. While climate controls in museums help to preserve textiles and slow down rates of decay clothing does of course 'age'. In referring to the object of clothing's placement in 'stasis' I am attempting to delineate between two kinds of existence for the object: its more dynamic narrative-life (as a thing that moves through the world and has encounters) and its more static display life.

⁷⁷ Lydia Marinelli's essay 'Fort, Da: The Cap in the Museum' references this fact through her description of the suppression of the post-Freudian biography of a cap belonging to Freud. The tweed cap in question was the one worn by Freud on his escape from Vienna and then, later returned to Vienna to the new Freud Museum as a gesture by his daughter Anna. The cap originally left on display in the entry (without a case or other kinds of security) was stolen in 1977, worn by the thief for a couple of years (during which time it, as Marinelli notes, 'regained its functional value' (119)) before being returned to the museum by the thief. According to Marinelli '[a]ll these events left no visible trace on the item or its presentation. The name of the new owner was not added to its small identifying card, since this might have given rise to unpleasant questions' (120).

death by Prince Albert in order to save it from being sold to a waxworks museum (Kennedy 'Nelson') – it is usually because the narrative that supports the provenance adds, as with Nelson's uniform, new dynamics of historical or cultural interest – such as Emma Hamilton's affection for the uniform, and its eventual purchase by the Prince. However in both cases – regardless of whether an item of clothing's biography is deemed to be static or on-going (as when an object like Nelson's uniform circulates physically between museums thus accruing its own series of encounters or events) – displayed clothing as such is no longer regarded as equipment in the traditional 'worn' way in which most articles of clothing are originally intentioned, the objects instead become artefacts or works of art, and through that further frame of reference, are employed anew as repositories of memory.

In the 'Symbols' chapter of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's protagonist Teufelsdröckh draws a correlation between symbols, time and a work of art. He begins this process by first distinguishing between those kinds of symbols that have both extrinsic *and* intrinsic value, and those that only have extrinsic such as coats of arms and flags. He remarks: 'Have not I myself known five hundred living soldiers sabred into crows' meat, for a piece of glazed cotton, which they called their Flag...' (168).⁷⁸ It is important to note here that Carlyle's use of the word 'symbol' in this

⁷⁸ Under the category of symbols that only have extrinsic value Teufelsdröckh includes not only the Flag, but also: '...the stupidest heraldic coats-of-arms; military Banners every where; and generally all national or other sectarian Costumes and Customs: they have no intrinsic, necessary divineness, or even worth; but have acquired an extrinsic one. Nevertheless through all these there glimmers something of a Divine Idea; as through military Banners themselves, the Divine Idea of Duty, of heroic Daring; in some instances of Freedom, of Right' (168-169). Lord Nelson's uniform provides an excellent example here. It would, according to Carlyle's narrator, fall under the category of 'national or other sectarian costumes' because it is a costume that identifies Nelson as belonging to the British navy and, by extension, the British nation. (The fact that the *Guardian* article calls the uniform a 'bloodstained relic of English naval history' (Kennedy 'Nelson') implies that it is credible to read the uniform as such: a symbol of a nation and of particular historical battles.) It is also an object that has become associated with some of those traits Carlyle cites: 'the Divine Idea of Duty, have heroic Daring; in some instances of Freedom, of Right...' (169).

chapter often correlates to material things. A ‘piece of glazed cotton’ is as much a material thing as a flag; the difference comes from how the object is read and from what meanings have been superadded to its material reality. This idea of superadded meaning is Carlyle’s. In the voice of Teufelsdröckh Carlyle describes a process wherein certain symbols with intrinsic meaning attain new significance. This section is worth quoting at length because it supports a number of hypotheses that parallel arguments in this thesis: first of all that symbols (or things) that are intrinsically meaningful might have a ‘fitness’ that makes them worthy of consideration by the collective; second, that time can play a role in ‘superadding’ to a symbol’s ‘divinest’ (or resonance), and third, that resonant symbols can provide a window through time and render visible the incorporeal. As Teufelsdröckh states:

‘Another matter it is, however, when your Symbol has intrinsic meaning, and is of itself *fit* that men should unite round it. Let but the Godlike manifest itself to Sense; let but Eternity look, more or less visibly, through the Time-Figure (Zeitbild)! Then is it fit that men unite there; and worship together before such Symbol; and so from day to day, and from age to age, superadd to its new divineness.

‘Of this latter sort are all true Works of Art: in them (if thou know a Work of Art from a Daub of Artifice) wilt though discern Eternity looking through Time; the Godlike rendered visible. Here too may an extrinsic value gradually superadd itself: thus certain *Iliads*, and the like, have, in three thousand years, attained quite new significance. But nobler than all in this kind are the Lives of heroic, god-inspired Men; for what other Work of Art is so divine?’⁷⁹ (169)

Captured within Teufelsdröckh’s rapturous declamation are three key ideas I will elaborate on below: 1) the idea that symbols with intrinsic meaning have a fitness that merits the kind of consideration one might find in a museum display (wherein objects are taken out of circulation so that men might ‘unite there; and worship together before such Symbol’) 2) the idea that such symbols can have meaning

⁷⁹ I have retained the quotation marks to indicate that the text quoted is speech.

superadded through time and 3) the idea that all true works of art have within them both a sense of timelessness and of the God-like rendered visible (169).

The question of 'fitness' in relation to intrinsic meanings and clothes begs the pun: clothes, of course, are meant to 'fit' their wearer, there is a certain degree of satisfaction in a good 'fit'. Thus clothes already have within them an intrinsic relation to the body and therefore an innate fitness for presenting the absent individual. This stasis of the frame of the former body in the museum setting is part of the potency of the displayed object. No longer circulating or 'in use' as clothing, the object, severed from tool-use, becomes instead an object of contemplation; a hanging absence. In the display model access to some semblance of the clothing's attendant social and cultural clues are made available for consideration, but so too is the ghostly sense of the body. Especially for those items of clothing displayed on dress frames, forms, or hangers, the object of clothing can be read as a container that references the absent body in the form of a hollowed-out shape, gaping neck and wrists etc. Clothes as symbols – from the noun *symbolon*, "mark", "emblem", "token" or "sign"... an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or "stands for" something else' (Cuddon, 885) – thus intrinsically represent or have a fitness for representing and 'standing in for' the body of the absent being their material remain or 'fabric self' marks.

The idea that meaning can be superadded to symbols through time and Teufelsdröckh's assertion that within a work of art there can be found some sense of 'Eternity looking through Time; the Godlike rendered visible' are two points worth considering together because time is major factor in the display culture of the

museums considered here, and it is this sense of time *within the objects* that contributes to an object's readability as an artefact or a work of art.

As the previous section of this chapter has suggested, imbued within the survival of an object of clothing is the passage of time and the events the costume has witnessed. In *Clothes*, John Harvey notes of 'truly old clothes' that they

...have a curious atmosphere when we visit them now, meticulously preserved, invisibly restored. It is partly because they are made by outmoded techniques, of yarn spun and woven by hand, with seams stitched by candlelight. But also they were once so close to their wearers that they are a little like ghosts. Pausing by them, we glimpse a vanished world.... (122)

Comparing new and old clothes, Harvey suggests that 'the big difference between gazing through time in one direction, and gazing in the other' is that '[t]here are no fore-ghosts of people yet to be'. Of old clothes he notes that '[a]t times time itself seems woven in the fabric. New clothes are poised above the innumerable maybe-futures, like a series of parallel universes, whereas old clothes *are* the past, although clothes are also changed, in their nature and value, by the passage of time' (123). It is this sense of the past and of the passage of time as a series of events bridging 'then' and 'now' that is superadded to clothes in writers' museums.

True works of art, according to Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh manifest a sense of both 'Eternity looking through Time; [and] the Godlike rendered visible'. Time is, as this chapter has demonstrated, *in* the clothes – in the markings, event-encounters and pastness of the object and in its presencing-forth as both a metonymical thing and a witness. The 'God-like rendered visible' as Teufelsdröckh employs it could easily stand for those 'divine ideas' he associates with symbols (169) or for man's soul, or those immortal qualities that may outlive us. In his chapter on 'Natural Supernaturalism' Carlyle's protagonist provides us with one possible reading. Here

Teufelsdröckh asks of the dead: 'Is the lost Friend still mysteriously Here, even as we are Here mysteriously... the real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, *is* even now and for ever... believe it thou must; understand it thou canst not' (198). The Godlike in this reading is the present absence of being, of even, prophetically, Carlyle's own being as it resides in the 'Here' of his smoking cap in his former house in London and in the perceiver's memory. Clothes in this way are potent remembrancers of the dead, both as material remains and as repositories of memories made locatable in space and time.

Chapter Five: The Writers' Tools

The mahogany desk and walnut chair upon which Charles Dickens wrote a number of his later novels including *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865) are on display in the study of the Doughty Street Museum named for him in London. Until very recently both were accessible to the public, which is to say that they were not – as with Darwin's and Freud's desks – located in a room that was cordoned off by a rope / partition. While visitors were cautioned not to touch Dickens's desk and chair via signs and notices that read 'Please do not touch. Even clean hands will damage these special objects' the desk and chair were largely situated in a way that reflected their purpose – meaning that their identification as tools that *could* be used for the purpose of writing was still palpable.

This chapter will focus on those things acknowledged as tools central to, or used by, Victorian writers in relation to the material production of their work. While Dickens's desk and chair will form the locus of this chapter it should be noted that a writer's tools can include a wide-array of things: furnishings such as desks and chairs, travel desks, notebooks, pens, ink stands, blotters, paper, spectacles, and – in cases like Darwin's or Ruskin's – jars, vials, labels, shell collections, and dead specimens. As *actual tools* used in the production of these writers' works (works for which these individuals are now commemorated or famous) these objects are especially apt models with which to read things *as tools* via Heidegger. As this thesis argues, part of what makes an object meaningful as a remembrancer in the context of the writer's house/museum is its suspension or withdrawal from one kind

of tool use (in Heidegger's terms 'the ready-to-hand') and the opening-up or access-making – through display, suspension or 'stasis' – of another kind of ready-to-handness, one that is conducive to evocation or remembrance. However, in order to make the case for this shift in a thing's modality, the thing's original designation or state – as equipment for writing – must first be demonstrated. Reading Dickens's desk and chair alongside Heidegger's description of equipment in *Being in Time* (especially his 'Analysis of Environmentality and Worldhood in General', pgs 95-122) and some of Dickens's own writing about furniture in Chapter XIV of *The Uncommercial Traveller*, this chapter will establish that a writer's tools are a kind of 'ready-to-hand' equipment and that, as equipment connected to a set of powerful references (the writer and the act of writing) they are key players in the creation of the kind of affective encounters or resonant experiences being considered in this thesis.

I – Writers' Tools and The Ready-to-Hand

In 'The Worldhood of the World' (Part I, Division I, Chapter 3 of *Being and Time*), Heidegger begins his explication of the kinds or types of things we encounter in the world. This section of *Being and Time* and, in particular, Heidegger's description of the ready-to-hand nature of equipment, is often referenced by contemporary philosophical thinkers on things, mostly notably by Bill Brown in his seminal essay 'Thing Theory', Graham Harman in his book *Tool-Being* and in his essay 'The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object-Oriented Literary Criticism', Peter Schwenger in *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, and Steven

Connor at the start of ‘Thinking Things’ and, more obliquely, in his Introduction in *Paraphenalia: The Curious Lives of Magical Things*. Heidegger’s thinking about things as equipment is important because aspects of Heidegger’s consideration of things (those obdurate entities we bump into and encounter materially) inform this thesis’s understanding of resonant objects. Usefully, one of the things that Heidegger does with things is to situate them in the horizon of human care. As discussed in chapter two, Heidegger demonstrates that things are not free-standing entities that we engage with from some separate or regimental plane of perception, rather, things belong to larger sets of references and concerns, and as such, have the ability to *world*. (To put it another way: Heidegger suggests that things are not ‘mere things’ existing in some sort of unconnected free-floating manner, instead they are part of a series of relations and concerns that make present not just the landscape or *mis-en-scene* of the physical entities before us, but the whole ground from which we exist.) In order to establish that a writer’s desk, chair, or pen is a piece of equipment with its own sets of relations, Heidegger’s definition of the ready-to-hand must first be explained.

In ‘The Worldhood of the World’ Heidegger begins by stating that ‘entities within the world are Things’ (91) and that the things we encounter have, and are founded on, ‘substantiality’ (92). He suggests that while we can discover various things by *looking* at objects such as ‘houses, trees, people, mountains, stars’ (91) – however penetrating the discoveries, we are still unlikely to transcend a largely descriptive knowledge of the fully phenomenological world, or of Being.⁸⁰ At this point Heidegger suggests a new tactic:

⁸⁰ In his words (trans. Macquarrie and Robinson): ‘Neither the ontical depiction of entities within-the-world nor the ontological Interpretation of their Being is such as to reach the phenomenon of the ‘world’ (92 italics his) and “Nature”, as the categorical

Should we then first attach ourselves to those entities with which Dasein [Being] proximally and for the most part dwells – Things ‘invested with value’? Do these ‘really’ show us the world in which we live? Perhaps, in fact, they show us something like the ‘world’ *more penetratingly*. (92 emphasis added)

Here Heidegger is outlining his intention to use the things of the world that we ‘invest with value’ – that we use or engage with out of our everyday concerns – to outline his case for a new reading of Being, a condition that he sees as the fundamental state of existence; a condition that he believes has been forgotten, overlooked, or misinterpreted by philosophy. What is most useful for this thesis in this epic existential project is that Heidegger – in attempting to reveal the world of things as tools or ‘markers’ that can help illuminate a larger set of intrinsic or existential relations – first undertakes an analysis of two different compartments of things: the ‘ready-to-hand’ and ‘the present-at-hand’. As these terms, along with ‘equipment’ and ‘gear’ will be employed throughout this chapter I will clarify them here.

As noted above, in *Being and Time* one of Heidegger’s aims is to move toward a more comprehensive understanding of the question and issue of Being. He does this through a series of propositions and arguments related to how Being is encountered. His method is phenomenological, a mode of engagement he outlines in Part II of his Introduction. In summary he states (and here we see early evidence of Heidegger’s use of repetition i.e. ‘the worldhood of the world’) that phenomenology means ‘...to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’ (58). In other words he suggests a way of seeing that de-centres the subjective ‘I’ in order to see things as they are in themselves (as they show

aggregate of those structures of Being which a definite entity encountered within-the-world may possess, can never make *worldhood* intelligible’ (94). These ideas are related to Heidegger’s suggestion that aspects of Being are best revealed not through standing back and ‘looking’ at the world (which is merely descriptive, like learning about a place through a postcard) but by how we are *in* the world in our everyday actions, encounters and Being.

themselves) rather than seeing things via a theoretical comportment. Later he further clarifies his method stating that: ‘We must make a study of everyday Being-in-the-world; with the phenomenal support which this gives us, something like the world must come into view’ (94). For Heidegger everyday Being in the world includes our encounters with everyday things. This is why he begins to look at the things of the world and how we encounter them.

In his analysis of encounter Heidegger observes that everyday Being-in-the-world includes our encounters (or ‘dealings’) with things or ‘entities within-the-world’ (95). Among such entities Heidegger cites encounters with *vorhandenheit*, which Macquarrie and Robinson translate as the ‘present-at-hand’. Present-at-hand is a term that means, essentially, that which we see objectively as a physical form in the world; a ‘what’ (67) or a present ‘thing’ that may not form our concern or be understood in the context of our dealings. Heidegger notes that things (and Beings) can, if disregarded, ‘be *taken* as merely present-at-hand’ (82) which suggests that whether we see a desk or a person as something merely present-to-hand (as a set of physical properties) or as part of a larger set of connections and relations is partly up to the observer. *Das Zeug* on the other hand – translated by Macquarrie and Robinson into ‘equipment’⁸¹ – is defined as ‘something-in-order-to’, a thing with an assignment or ‘structure’ that inherently incorporates an ‘*assignment* or *reference* of something to something’ (97).

⁸¹ While I retain Maquarrie and Robinson’s use of the word ‘equipment’ for the most part in this thesis I will also sometimes employ the translators’ footnoted acknowledgement of the ‘relatively specific “gear” (as in “gear for fishing”)...’ (97). This is in part because ‘gear’ (to my thinking) more vitally implies a connection between the thing and the person (gear-as-for or as engaged with) whereas equipment – again, to my thinking – can more readily be conceptualized as something apart from the event-context or the body. While I use these terms interchangeably gear seems to me to be used less and therefore may be more conducive to capturing the dynamic relationship between Thing and Being in an environment together – even if the object is physically distant. This preference for ‘gear’ will become most notable when considering images of Dickens at his desk. As Graham Harman notes in relation to his reading of Heidegger in *Tool-Being*: ‘The analysis of equipment is *not* a limited regional description of hammers, saws, toothpicks, and other technical devices. Rather, the famous tool-analysis holds good for *all* entities, no matter how useful or useless they may be. *Beings themselves* are caught up in a continual exchange between presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand.... It is vital that we not be misled by the usual connotations of the word “tool”’ (4).

For Heidegger ‘equipment’ (his examples – wonderfully for the purposes of this thesis – include things such as an ‘ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room’ (97)) always already exist in ‘a totality of equipment’ (98). When we apprehend an object such as a hammer (his most cited example) it shows itself out of the totality of tools in the workshop, and when we take it into hand to hammer with it we change our relation to it. Now, instead of just apprehending it we use it. As Heidegger states ‘...the less we stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is – as equipment’ (98). This encounter, Heidegger insists, is ‘not grasped theoretically at all.... The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [*zurückzuziehen*] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically’ (99). This means that, in Heidegger’s analysis, ‘ready-to-hand’ gear generally withdraws from view in order to be authentically usable (see especially 99, 102).

Applying Heidegger’s definition of the ready-to-hand to Dickens’s desk and chair one could say that in order for the desk and chair to be usable for ‘writing’ the desk and chair would have to withdraw from the forefront of Dickens’s perception and, so, logically, from his ‘concern’ (as the desk and chair I am currently using are withdrawing for me until I cast my attention purposefully onto them, an act which disrupts my actual concern – the ‘for-which’ of writing and thinking about this thesis). In this way the ‘ready-to-hand’ is not (when it *is* ready-to-hand) foregrounded as a materially obdurate or conspicuous thing. As Heidegger later notes, the spectacles a man might use to see a painting on the wall are

‘environmentally more remote from him than the picture on the opposite wall’ (141), just as we are generally unaware of the street we use as equipment for walking (141-142). With this idea of foregrounding in mind it is logical to hypothesize that Dickens (or Scott or Darwin etc.) would not have consistently encountered their desk and chair as ‘the point’ or the ‘main thing’ in-and-of-themselves (with a ‘for-which’ involving pure contemplation of the furniture), but rather would have encountered them as ‘ready-to-hand’ things or ‘gear’ *with-which* they engaged as a means towards ‘writing’.

The ‘Towards-Which’

The second aspect of Heidegger’s thinking about equipment that is useful for the purposes of this thesis is his suggestion that equipment or the ‘ready-to-hand’ is always already part of a larger set of references. Even while we are engaging with the hammer (or a pen and paper) Heidegger notes that what we are really concerning ourselves with in our dealings is the project we are undertaking and the end-result or ‘that which is to be produced at the time’ (99). For Heidegger, ‘[t]he work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered’ (99). Here Heidegger does not differentiate between the kind of Being that ‘equipment’ has (a desk and chair in our case) and the kind of Being that belongs to the ‘towards-which’ or work of the equipment (in Dickens’s case, a novel):

The work to be produced, as the ‘towards-which’ of such things as the hammer, the plane, the needle, likewise has the kind of Being that belongs to equipment. The shoe which is to be produced is for wearing...; the clock is manufactured for telling the time. The work which we chiefly encounter in our concerned dealings—the work that is to be found when one is ‘at work’ on something... —has a usability which belongs to it essentially; in

this usability it lets us encounter already the ‘towards-which’ for which *it* is usable. (99)

Here Heidegger is outlining the outward or encompassing nature of tool-use, a sort-of cascading or interconnected towards-which that is encountered in equipment. The hammer relates to the nail, and to the wood, and to the building being built, and to the idea of shelter and winter and so on. In the Dickens example, the desk and chair gear facilitates (is usable for) Dickens’s ‘writing’ of a ‘work’ which itself has a ‘towards-which’ quality – one that might be deemed communicating, telling, conjuring, storytelling and so forth. Using Heidegger’s model of a system of relations (see esp. *Being and Time* 120) and following David Cerbone’s interpretation of the series of relations of a hammer (‘A hammer = something with-which to hammer in nails in-order-to hold pieces of wood together towards the building of something for-the-sake-of Da-sein’s self-understanding as a carpenter’ (Cerbone 40)) one could propose a series of relations around Dickens’s desk as follows: a desk is that *with which* one organizes other tools *in order to* write *towards* the creation of a narrative (or book) *for the sake of* communicating with others. Heidegger refers to this relational or ‘primordial totality’ as ‘*be-deuten*’, which Maquarrie and Robinson have translated as ‘significance’ (120).

Of course part of the significance of Dickens’s desk for the museum visitor is that it was *his*. There is an autographic quality that adheres to the desk, especially because of the context of the writer’s house/museum. This makes a double reading of Heidegger’s ‘references’ or relations possible: we could first read references or relations as Heidegger articulated them: that a thing such as a hammer or desk is always already part of a larger set of relations: to other tools, to intentions, outcomes and so on, but we could also read these references through the lens of Mary

Douglas's notion of the 'autographic' – which is to suggest that as enviroing objects or tools, Dickens's desk and chair can reference, among other things, the desk and Dickens's shared biography: their time together, or coinciding life-history. In this reading the desk and chair are accordingly able to reference (or foreground) a specific relation – to Dickens himself – his body, his life, and the work once written with the still present / remaining tools.

To further this reading of the equipmental and 'worlding' nature of the desk and chair and to elaborate on what kind of 'world' might be referenced, a return to the objects themselves – to the furniture Dickens wrote with – is necessary. Through a consideration of both the things themselves and images of the desk and chair (Robert William Buss's painting *Dickens's Dream* and Luke Fildes's etching *The Empty Chair*) two kinds of relations will be suggested: 1) the relation between the desk and chair and Dickens's writing (the work he did there) and 2) the relation between the desk and chair and Dickens himself.

II – Dickens's Desk and Chair



Fig.9. Dickens's desk and chair at the Charles Dickens Museum, London © The Charles Dickens Museum.

As important objects in the Dickens museum⁸² Charles Dickens's mahogany desk and walnut chair serve to locate both a general sense of 'where Dickens worked' and also more specifically, as the museum's signage indicates, the place where three great novels were penned. That the desk and chair were, at the time of the novels' composition, situated some thirty miles away 'in the bay window of the study at his home Gad's Hill Place...' (CDM display sign) is, it seems, not enough to disrupt the sense of location-association the desk and chair invite: the 'here' where he wrote, the 'here' where the books were written.⁸³ Described in a 2009 newspaper article on the sale of the furniture as a 'genuine piece of literary history' (Osley) the desk and chair themselves (even though historically asynchronous to the study and house) become a key plane or space of literary or artistic creation – rising to the task of presenting both Dickens (his bodily self) and the work he did while seated at his desk. This makes Dickens's desk and chair an interesting case study because of how strongly the desk and chair *as furniture Dickens wrote on and sat on* mark a site of production – of his imagination conjuring, and his hand scribing, the three works the museum emphasizes.

This sense of a connection, despite the furniture's remove from Gad's Hill, implies a kind of foregrounding or hierarchy, as if to say: *This is the wood he sat on and leaned against and scribbled over, which matters more than the fact that this is*

⁸² Dickens's desk and chair, while central to the Doughty Street museum collection, are currently on loan to the museum. They were auctioned off by Dickens's descendants for charity (The Great Ormond Street Hospital with which Dickens himself was affiliated) and purchased by the Irish collector Tom Higgins in 2008 for £433,250.00. Christie's press release announcing the sale described the pieces as 'two of the most important relics related to Charles Dickens ever offered for public sale' (Christies).

⁸³ While Dickens's desk and chair form the focus of this chapter, the trope of the writer's desk and chair as gear necessary for, or part of the act of writing, occurs frequently across the museums considered in this thesis and in related images from the Victorian era – in particular for the male authors considered here (see figs. 11-16). The Brontë sisters did not have their own studies but had portable writing desks (Emily's still surviving). In drawings the sisters are often depicted writing in the Parsonage's domestic spaces, as in Emily's 1837 diary paper (see Fig #2). The Dickens House Museum, in its museum guide, emphasizes the opposite case for its author – differentiating between the domestic sphere and the sphere of literary-production quite clearly.

not the exact room he wrote on this desk in; not the same air, not the descendants of the exact dust motes that surrounded him in the act of writing on this furniture.

Implied in such a hierarchy is the furniture's pivotal role in the creation of the work, a suggestion supported by the 2009 news article on the desk and chair in which Richard Osley, employing metonymy, writes: '... from this desk and chair came the magical characters of *Great Expectations*...' and '[a]lso born on this hunk of mahogany and oak was Sydney Carton and the rest of the doomed protagonists of *A Tale of Two Cities*...' – as if Dickens himself had little to do with the production at all.

This section, on Dickens's desk and chair, will explore the powerful connection that has been drawn between Dickens and his 'gear' through a consideration of two works of art that feature Dickens's desk and chair. If these 'tools' are capable of evoking whole sets of references and relations around Dickens's written work and his life they must first become associated with him, *connected* to him – a sense of connection that is fundamental in the creation of resonance in the writer's house/museum.

Dickens's Dream

Robert William Buss's (1804-1875) unfinished painting *Dickens's Dream* (fig. 10, below), currently hanging in the Dickens Museum (facing Dickens's actual desk), establishes the desk and chair as a vital site of literary creation and as a plane of references for the work created by the individual who works at the desk. It also provides us with a strong visual example of tool-use and worlding.



Fig. 10. Robert William Buss's unfinished *Dickens's Dream* (1875) © Charles Dickens Museum, London. Web. <<http://www.dickensmuseum.com>>

In this painting Dickens is stationed on his chair in the midst of remembering, imagining, or conjuring a scene or narrative. Directly within his line of sight and perched on his knee is the figure of Little Nell from *The Old Curiosity Shop*. She seems to be regarding him as he regards her. Further to this particular conjuring or focus are other conjurings or scenes: over two-dozen small vignettes arranged ethereally around his study: on the carpet, the walls, in front of the windows. In one locale two dancing figures stand on a book on Dickens's desk while at the opposite end of the desk a cluster of characters from *Bleak House* converse. This is an active painting. For all of Dickens's repose (his eyelids are heavily hooded, but his eyes are open) a plethora of action is occurring.

Buss, in this painting, seems to have been attempting to make visible the largely invisible act of writerly dreaming or conjuring – the dream-state surrounding the act of taking up gear such as a pen and paper. Most useful for the purposes of this thesis is the fact that Dickens is sitting in his desk chair and facing his desk, that he has, for lack of a better term, already arranged himself in relation to his gear or ‘plugged himself in to’ the tools whose ‘towards-which’ (the creation of a narrative) we can clearly see enacted. While the writer at his desk – and the writer’s desk itself – are fairly iconic images (see, for example, figs. 10-16 below) what Buss has done is portray a larger set of relations: relations between the writer, his gear, and the literary world created through the writer and gear together.



Fig. 11. *Charles Dickens* by Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), oil on canvas, 1839, Tate, London; on loan to the National Portrait Gallery, London © Tate, London. Web. <<http://www.npg.org.uk>>

Fig. 12. *Charles Dickens* by (George) Herbert Watkins, albumen print, 1858NPG © National Portrait Gallery, London. Web. <<http://www.npg.org.uk>>

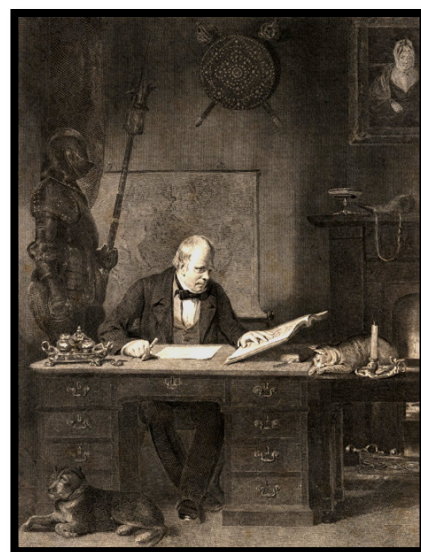


Fig. 13: *Sir Walter Scott, 1st Bt* by Sir Edwin Henry Landseer, oil on panel, circa 1824 © National Portrait Gallery, London. Web. <<http://www.npg.org.uk>>

Fig. 14. *Sir Walter Scott in his Study* (Castle Street, Edinburgh) by Robert Charles Bell, after a painting by J. Watson Gordon © The University of Edinburgh Image Collections. Web. <<http://images.is.ed.ac.uk>>

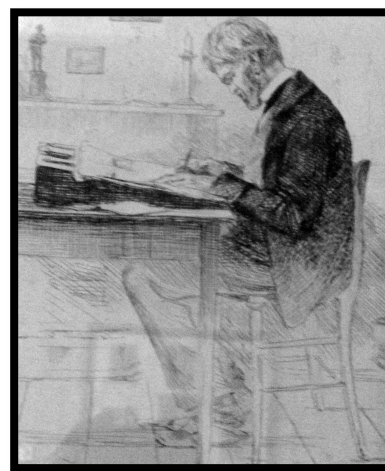
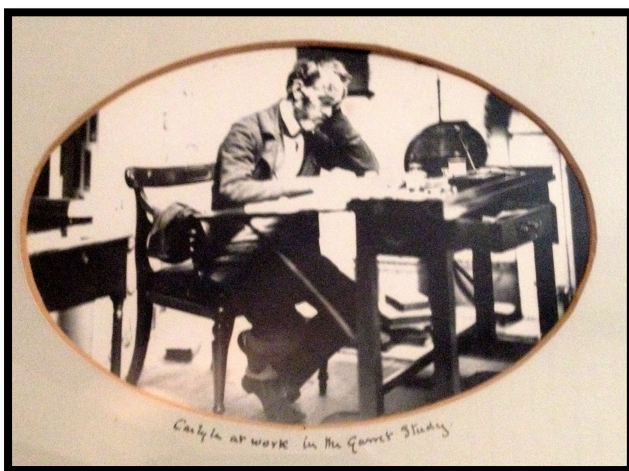


Fig. 15. 'Carlyle at work in the garret study' © Carlyle House, London, photograph by author with permission.

Fig. 16. Carlyle working, a drawing by R. Tait © Carlyle House, London, photograph by author with permission.

The Buss painting is useful because it makes visible (and visual) the kind of thematic cluster that might be evoked in viewing the desk and chair in the writer's house/museum: even though Dickens himself is gone, the site of the work he created (and the work itself) remains. In perceiving the desk and chair autographically as the site of Dickens's work a viewer may have access to some sense of the act (or acts) of literary creation that occurred there *even though Dickens himself is now absent*. A visual analogy for this could involve picturing the Buss painting exactly as it stands but without Dickens in it. That the 'spirit' of the work might remain attached to the study and the furniture is already implied by Buss's composition. Surely Dickens is not sitting there in that instant holding all of those different novels and scenes and narratives (and costumes and conversations) in his head at once – scenes that represent at least seventeen different works (Clack). No: he is looking at Nell and the rest of the figures are outside the immediate range of his concern. In this way, the work once done, the characters once created, might be said to dwell or linger – which means, in Buss's visualization, that they have their own sort of after-life or resonance in relation to the site; one that does not require Dickens's concentrated evocation to bring them to the fore of the desk and chairs' set of environmental relations.

In *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move*, Ann Rigney makes a similar observation in terms of how the site of the study at Sir Walter Scott's home (Abbotsford) became connected to the sites of Scott's literary work:

The intimate connection between Abbotsford, Scott's life, and his other creative activities meant that tie-in publications dealing with the 'original' sites in Scott's novels and poetry were often supplemented by images or descriptions of Abbotsford as the site where the writing itself took place. *The Land of Scott: A Series of Landscape Illustrations, illustrative of real scenes, described in the novels and tales, of the author of Waverley* (1848) included a drawing of the study at Abbotsford alongside images of the

various sites that had figured in his historical fiction, as if the writer's home were a natural extension of his writing. (148)

This supports the general sense in the writer's house/museum of 'this is where it all happened' but it also supports the idea that 'these are the particular things it happened through or with'. One of the central motifs of a writer's house/museum is the identification of those things that were *employed as tools in the making*. Hence labels such as 'Pen with which CARLYLE wrote the last chapter of "FREDERICK"' beside the pen in Carlyle's House (CAR/Misc/34), or, of Sir Walter Scott's armchair and desk at Abbotsford: 'Armchair and Desk at which the later Novels were written and where he laboured to pay off the Debt, incurred in 1826...' (Abbotsford sign). These labels whirl and world the things and the events together; they give contexts that require two components in the enacting: the individual and the gear. As Osley states in his article on the sale of Dickens's desk and chair: 'No wonder admirers of author Charles Dickens see much more than office furniture' (Osley). This statement reflects aspects of Buss's painting, as if what is seen in apprehending the gear is what the writer and the tools make together: a space of creation, the ephemeral but vital world of the writer's work.

Chairs

In the book *Ruskin's Relics*, published in 1903, the late John Ruskin's (1819-1900) secretary W.G Collingwood begins Chapter I 'Ruskin's Chair' by quoting a visitor to Brantwood – Ruskin's home from 1872 until his death in 1900 (in a bed that is still on display):

‘This is all very well,’ said a visitor, after looking over the sketches and books of the Ruskin Museum at Coniston, ‘but what the public would prefer is to see the chair he sat in.’ Something tangible, that brings before us the person, rather than his work, is what we all like; for though successful workers are continually asking us to judge them by what they have done, we know there is more....We want to know their lives by signs and tokens unconsciously left... (3).

What is interesting about this quote is the implication that the chair presences the person or the body. While I have treated the desk and chair as ‘gear’ working in a kind of tandem or agreement up until this point it is prudent to consider the chair (even the desk chair) as a separate entity in that, as Collingwood’s ‘visitor’ suggests, it seems to be the chair that makes tangible the person.

In Collingwood’s quote the (alleged) visitor is asking Collingwood for a particularly ‘fit’ stand-in for Ruskin. Not the sketches and books which might be reproduced or reproducible elsewhere, which might be one-off jottings, but rather *the chair he sat in*, the thing ‘that brings before us the person’ (versus the product), a person made even more viscerally present by the ‘signs and tokens unconsciously left’. In this chapter Collingwood then proceeds to describe a scene at Brantwood that echoes the Luke Fildes engraving of Dickens’s chair and desk, which I will examine in the section below. Collingwood notes: ‘In his study you see two chairs; one, half-drawn from the table, with pen and ink laid out before it, where he used to sit...’ (3). Here we see the half-drawn chair situated as if the body has just left. A chair that presences the body and the obdurate nature of the chair that has been held in stasis because it was last used by Ruskin, in stasis because it is positioned in such a way as if to indicate, perhaps a sad moment of assumption on Ruskin’s part that he would be using or needing the chair again. A tool left in use, left as if it would be returned to. (This motif can be seen again in a postcard of the Parsonage

dining room – fig. 17 below – in which writing materials ‘as if’ in use are located on a table around which chairs are pushed back – as if making room for or holding bodies, rather than being tucked up against the table to signify disuse.)



Fig. 17. Brontë Parsonage Museum postcard, dining room © Brontë Parsonage Museum.

In Sir Walter Scott’s case we see the same reverence afforded to the chair again when Ann Rigney notes, in her deconstruction of the cultural iterations of Scott’s legacy, that Scott’s study is central to Abbotsford and that the well-worn chair he used (fig. 18, below) (located in the study) is an object that presences Scott’s physical being:

Abbotsford is, in the first instance, a place you can visit in order to see where the famous Waverley works were written: the book-lined study is maintained as a shrine to the site of his literary creativity even though many of the major works were written elsewhere. When I first visited in 2005 there were postcards on sale of ‘The Study’ with pride of place given to the chair upon which Scott sat when working at his desk (this chair is a recurrent topic in the representations of Abbotsford arguably because it is the closest one can get to the physical presence of the man himself in the act of writing). (Rigney, *Afterlives* 139)

Here, Rigney is asserting that the chair is an important marker of the body of the writer in the act of writing. In Scott’s case the chair is especially resonant because of

its wear marks and tears and the way the leather folds and bears the effect of holding a body – evidence of use and of a long and involved relationship between the thing and the man who used it.



Fig. 18. Sir Walter Scott's chair in the study at Abbotsford, photographs by the author.

The power of the writer's chair comes in part from the fact that the chair is regarded as fundamental for, and intrinsically related to, the act of writing in the nineteenth century and also because the chair is part of the physical site wherein the imaginative act occurred – a physical bolster that was a party to the production of the works created on the desk.⁸⁴ The fact that Charles Darwin had casters from a bed attached to his chair so it could assist him to move more fluidly between the other tools arranged in his study (rather than leaving the chair as it was and getting up repeatedly) speaks to the role of the chair as equipment. The fact that the writers we are considering here were also culturally consecrated as 'writers' means that the chair they used *for writing* was one of the most logical material objects for a

⁸⁴ Other than Charlotte Brontë's dress and shoes the most resonant object for Virginia Woolf (then Stephen) at the Brontë Museum in 1904 was Emily's stool: 'One other object gives a thrill; the little oak stool which Emily carried with her on her solitary moorland tramps, and on which she sat, if not to write, as they say, to think what was probably better than her writing' (Woolf, 'Haworth'). Here the portable stool for engaging with the world as a writer (whether as a writer thinking or a writer writing) makes the stool a powerful locus of Emily's creative self.

powerful material metonymy to take hold in.⁸⁵ In the nineteenth century pens and paper might come and go, quills need to be changed, but chairs and desks once physically fit for the task of the writer's work tended to be long lasting (see fig. 18 above for the wear on Scott's 'elbow chair'): the chair has to work well as a tool in order for the writer to write while in it, meaning it must recede in the act of writing, a feat that is not universal to every chair but one which requires a certain congruity between the chair and the body writing in it. This fitness is one of the components that makes Fildes' engraving, examined below, so 'haunting' because the chair is not just Dickens's chair it is *the* chair that fit his body, the tool that his body could 'disappear' with or recede into when his imaginative work took over.

The Empty Chair

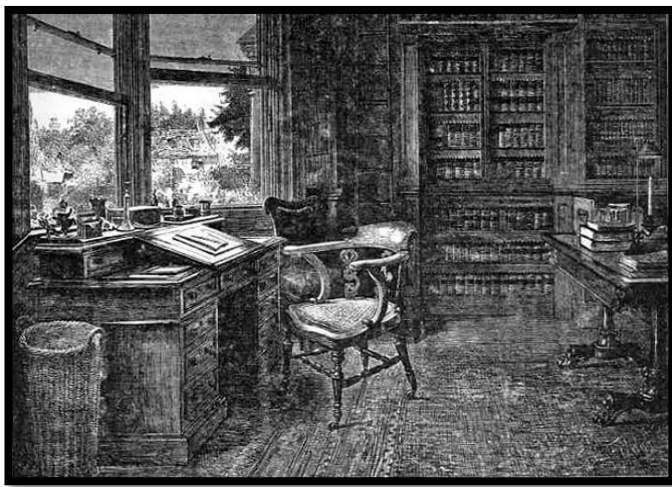


Fig. 19. Luke Fildes' *The Empty Chair*, *Ninth of June*, 1870, The Charles Dickens Museum, London © The Charles Dickens Museum.

⁸⁵ An interesting counter-example / comparison can be found in Freud's (famous) couch: 'possibly the most famous piece of furniture in the world' (Kennedy 'Interpretation'; see also *20 Maresfield* 53). As the site of analytic treatment (in the form of the talking cure / free association therapy) the couch held or supported the bodies of innumerable patients. Where the writer's chair has a sense of the daydreaming or working writer adhered to it (which is to say the reinforced sense of a singular individual), the couch has the opposite. In need of repair Maev Kennedy in *The Guardian* noted that it is now 'sagging under the weight of more than a century of dreams, terrors, traumas and phobias...' which implies a sense of the furniture's multiplicity – as equipment for many and not just (as with Charles Dickens's desk and chair) for one. That said the couch is still powerfully attached to Freud conceptually as equipment that he used to care for his patients. As Dawn Kemp, the acting director of the museum noted in the Kennedy article: 'Many people visit the Freud Museum as a sort of pilgrimage, and the couch is the object they most associate with him' (Kennedy 'Interpretation').

The Dickens Museum also highlights another image of Dickens's desk and chair. The engraving *The Empty Chair, Ninth of June, 1870* (fig. 19, above) by the artist Luke Fildes (1843-1927) is not only located in Dickens's study, but it is also reproduced in one of the museum guides, and for sale (in a slightly modified version) as a postcard in the gift shop. The image, set in Dickens's last home (Gad's Hill) on the date of Dickens's death, depicts the desk and chair in the window of his empty study. Museum signage (in the form of a small booklet placed in the room) describes the work's context by stating that '[t]he desk and chair were honoured in this haunting engraving entitled *The Empty Chair* by artist Luke Fildes. Lamenting his death, it shows Dickens's writing chair abandoned in his study' (CDM display sign). Here we see the furniture personified as 'honoured' and 'abandoned', while the engraving is described as 'haunting'. In this version of the engraving Dickens's chair is pushed back and turned slightly in what might be described as a three-quarter view so that the plane of the empty seat is prominently displayed, as if Dickens has just stepped away from his desk and no one has straightened the chair or tucked it back up against the desk as one might do when tidying. This position – one intentionally facilitated by Fildes⁸⁶ – works to solidify the relationship between the desk, the chair and the author by presencing his bodily absence.

By removing all trace of Dickens's *body* from the scene *The Empty Chair, Ninth of June, 1870* (the date implies that the scene was apprehended or made *on the day* Dickens died) attests to the power of the desk and chair – as metonymical equipment

⁸⁶ In a letter written to Howard Duffield (president of the Dickens Fellowship in New York) by W.H. Chambers on 28 November, 1927, Chambers claims 'Fildes told me that Dickens always[s] pushed his chair close up to his desk after writing and it was his, Fildes' idea to place the chair where it is in the picture and so give it the title' (Chambers, Ms 5227).

– to evoke Dickens – even, in this case, in his absence.⁸⁷ Here, the chair becomes a subject (as per the title of the engraving) in and of itself – an idea supported by a letter written some forty-eight years later (in 1918) by Luke Fildes to one of Dickens’s successors. In the typed letter Fildes is attesting to the identity of the chair, writing: ‘Dear Mr. Dickens, / When I saw the Chair again – so long since I made the drawing of The Empty Chair – I without hesitation recognized it’ (Fildes, Ms B369, CDM). Here the chair is clearly autographic and individual (Fildes doesn’t use ‘a’ and underlines his typed ‘the’) but it is also designated as a subject: capitalized to signify it is not a generic thing. Which is to say that as ‘the Chair’ Dickens wrote in the chair maintains some semblance of power even in (and to some extent, because of) the author’s absence.

Whereas the Buss painting foregrounds the worlding of Dickens’s work (that which is produced with the featured tools), the Fildes engraving emphasizes the opposite: the absence of Dickens and the absence of any work to come. These relationships: between the desk and chair and the written work and between the desk and chair and the writer’s body (absent or present) present just two of the many ways the gear contributes to the literary act and engages with its creator. While Buss’s image shows us the residual effect of the events occurring at the desk – how some sense of that work and those worlds reside around the gear – Fildes’ image

⁸⁷ Fildes’s biography (written by his son) acknowledges that he apprehended the desk in a visit ‘soon’ after Dickens’s death based on ‘Dickens’s desk and chair as he had left them’ (L.V. Fildes 16) even though it is almost certain that he did not go to the house on the day in question. It is salient to note here that the museum foregrounds the connection between the desk and chair in the Doughty house space and the desk and chair in its larger biographical ‘life’. Means of promotion include the display of the two works of art discussed, as well as the placement in the museum of a (replica) wicker basket that matches the one in the Fildes engraving from Gad’s Hill – a suggestion that implies a kind of continuity of use or ‘sameness’ across sites. The museum’s *Plan and Visitor Guide* establishes (on the page that relates to the ‘Study’) that Dickens’s desk was a primary site for him, noting that ‘his writing day followed a strict routine. His writing time was between breakfast and lunch and there were no distractions *that could pull him from his writing*’ (emphasis mine). This assertion of the strength of the tether between Dickens and his work (and, by extension, his desk and chair in so much as they are repeatedly identified as the place where his writing is sited) is further supported by another quote in the museum’s booklet which notes that the ‘author drew much inspiration from exploring his surroundings and meeting people, so even when he was not at his writing desk his mind was creating new plots and characters’. This assertion does two things: it de-centralizes the site of inspiration (to the streets, the larger world) but it also relates that decentralization geographically to a centre – ‘even when he was not at his writing desk’ – a centre that is implicitly considered the focal point of production; a tool central to the physical manifestation of the work.

gives us the absent referent. The conspicuous nature of the absent referent is worth considering at length because in every case in the writers' houses/museums considered here the authors are *physically absent* (in so much as they are, to put it bluntly, dead). How Fildes' engraving works to evoke, or point to, the absent Dickens is important because, as the next section will show, tools (again, via Heidegger) can become conspicuous when they cease to be ready-to-hand – much like the desk and chair in the Fildes' engraving, and much like the desk and chair in the museum itself.

III – Conspicuous Tools

When the desk drawer is jammed and won't open, when the nib of the pen squirts out too large a blob of ink on the paper, or when the paper itself cannot be located these tools – the desk, the pen and the absent paper – become conspicuous. In Heidegger's consideration of the un-ready-to-hand nature of equipment in *Being and Time* he suggests a scenario:

When we concern ourselves with something, the entities which are most closely ready-to-hand may be met as something unusable, not properly adapted for the use we have decided upon. The tool turns out to be damaged, or the material unsuitable. In each of these cases *equipment* is here, ready-to-hand. We discover its unusability, however, not by looking at it and establishing its properties, but rather by the circumspection of the dealings in which we use it. When its unusability is thus discovered, equipment becomes conspicuous. (102)

One of the things Heidegger is referencing here is how in our relations with equipment use is often primary. To further my examples: the pen nib is rarely inspected before it is employed; the drawer is rarely regarded suspiciously before it is pulled and expected to open; the paper is usually expected to be residing in the

place where it was last. Part of the nature of tools is that they are expected to fulfill their purpose. Still, for Heidegger there is a play that can occur in equipment. Things can be read as equipment while still not being the correct or fit equipment for our dealings. In a survey of one's material environs for things fit for a purpose (such as unjamming the desk drawer) it may be possible that some things are seen as unusable (not fit for the task) while others may be so unfit as to be reduced conceptually to purely present-at-hand objects – objects we gaze across, fail to regard due to what Heidegger calls a 'deficient mode of concern' (103).⁸⁸ In this way things are both the concepts we meet them with and things themselves – discrete entities with particular properties; entities that can malfunction, break, or go missing.

Heidegger briefly introduces three types or categories of the un-ready-to-hand in Part One, Division One, Chapter III of *Being and Time*. The first two are useful in reading the Fildes' engraving. I will begin with the first type, which involves 'conspicuousness' and then move to the second type, which involves what the translators call 'obtrusiveness' (Macquarrie 104). Put succinctly, the first type involves equipment that cannot be used or which does not fulfill its purpose; the second type involves 'missing' equipment; and the third type involves equipment which may be usable but which is not wanted and is, therefore, a kind of 'obstacle' or in the way (104).

⁸⁸ While this section focuses on the unready-to-hand it is important to note that there is always a potential play within things, that things may be brought to the fore of consciousness for a moment and regarded differently: if paper is what's needed, a discarded envelope with writing on it may or may not do, which is to say that it may come to the fore of concern and then be reduced, due to its lack of fitness, to a mere present-at-hand object. As Heidegger notes: 'Pure presence-at-hand announces itself in such [conspicuous / unusable] equipment, but only to withdraw to the readiness-to-hand of something which one concerns oneself – that is to say, of the sort of thing we find when we put it back in repair' (103).

Conspicuousness

Part of the poignancy of Luke Fildes's *The Empty Chair, Ninth of June 1870* engraving is how, contextually, it evokes the opposite of what Buss's work evokes because in the Fildes' work the desk and chair's larger set of relations are disrupted. The '*with-which* to organize tools *in-order-to* write' functionality is still there in Fildes' engraving (we can see that we are looking at a desk and a chair for writing), but the larger *implied* assignment – furniture '*with which* Charles Dickens organizes his tools *in order to* write *towards the* creation of his books' can no longer be fulfilled.⁸⁹ Here, in the engraving, the gear hovers between an unusable tool and what might conventionally be called a symbol: a 'thing' standing in for some other thing, especially in that case where a material object might stand in for an immaterial or abstract idea or entity (in this case, Dickens).

Crucially however, the desk and chair are not just symbols in the form of a representation. Rather, they are depicted as tools that cannot be used (un-ready-to-hand), because they have lost the explicit assignment (*Dickens's* writing) that they have become inextricably connected to both materially (through their thingly life-history) and in the popular imagination. To employ Heidegger's terminology, the equipment here has become 'conspicuous' (102) although not, as Heidegger tends to suggest, through actual unusability (the chair can still be sat in, the desk written at) but rather through context and association, and, I would add, taboo. As Heidegger

⁸⁹ Even though I have italicized 'implied' in reference to the larger implied assignment in order to acknowledge subjective readings of the set of references described it is interesting to consider that as furniture *owned* by Dickens the autographic nature of the with-which assignment is, to some extent, factually or 'legally' implicit. Dickens's will (framed and hanging on a wall of the Doughty street museum) is evidence of this, demonstrating Dickens's right to bequeath his property including 'the little familiar effects from my writing table' his private papers, library and various sums of money ('Charles Dickens's Will' CDM). Similarly, an 1831 draft of Sir Walter Scott's will 'Rough Notes of Testamentary Dispositions' in Alexander Macdonald's hand, dated and signed by 'WS' at Abbotsford 7 January 1831, includes instructions to bequeath or bestow or 'appoint' (sometimes to creditors) 'my furniture at Abbotsford including my valuable library paintings prints furniture medals rings arms and curiosities of every kind' (Scott, *Rough*). A testamentary disposition that, wonderfully, includes the phrase 'gear', as in '[m]y other moveable goods and gear' (3).

notes in *Being and Time*, a work produced or the ‘towards-which’ of gear may have ‘an assignment to the person who is to use it or wear it’ (the shoe is ‘for’ the wearer) (100). In the case of Dickens’s desk and chair this is also true, as evidenced by how deeply connected the desk and chair and Dickens were in the popular imagination: all Fildes had to do is depict the gear without the author to whom they are assigned (an author who, as implied by the death date in the engraving’s title is not temporarily absent but gone forever), and for those who understand the context a sense of melancholy settles over the engraving; it becomes, as the museum text states, ‘haunting’ – a tenor evoked by the way that the furniture has become conspicuous. Here, in the Fildes’ engraving, the sense of the desk and the chair’s readiness-to-hand recedes, it ‘takes its farewell, as it were, in the conspicuousness of the unusable’ (Heidegger, *B&T* 104) – conspicuous because an intrinsic part of its constituent make-up is gone.

Absence

The second special case of the un-ready-to-hand that Heidegger proposes relates to absence. This idea of the absent thing as un-ready-to hand is also useful here. In considering that which is missing as un-ready-to-hand Heidegger notes how sometimes that which is not present, not ‘to hand’ is akin to coming across the un-ready-to-hand (103). Here Heidegger is referring to the kind of experience one might have looking for one’s errant car keys when late for work. The keys are not ready-

to-hand because they are missing; they become ‘obtrusive’ in their absence (Macquarrie 104).⁹⁰

While applying this point to Dickens himself – as missing ‘equipment’ for the writing of novels with a for-which that could incorporate variations of ‘being read’, ‘being shared’, ‘being enjoyed’ – extends Heidegger’s argument in this section of *Being and Time* beyond its intended focus, I would argue that Dickens’s work (what he produces through writing), and Dickens himself, can be read together as a kind of ‘for-which’ unity. A connection supported by one of the most common cases of metonymical usage: the author for the work (‘Have you read Dickens?’). As Lakoff and Johnson note in *Metaphors We Live By*, metonymical thought – such as the ‘producer for product’ model described here (38) – is systematic, not random:

Metonymic concepts allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else. When we think of *a Picasso*, we are not just thinking of a work of art alone, in and of itself. We think of it in terms of its relation to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc. We act with reverence toward *a Picasso*, even a sketch he made as a teen-ager, because of its relation to the artist. This is a way in which the PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy affects both our thought and our action. (39)

Here we see that the author-for-the-text / producer for product metonymy not only binds the author and the text but also worlds in a Heideggerean way Dickens’s sets of relations – his novels, his style, his epoch in history and so forth. As Lakoff and Johnson suggest this field of relations extends even to sketches made before the artist (in their case Picasso) was a (or ‘the’) famous artist.

What Lakoff and Johnson don’t express, however, is the way that things (like purposeful gear) can become bound up conceptually in metonymical structures.

⁹⁰ This phrase wonderfully illustrates a fascinating dualism: ‘because they *are* missing’ – ‘are’ as in the verb ‘to be’ paired with ‘missing’ signifying that which *is* absent i.e. to *be* absent) as in a palpable being of not-being. If we apply this to Dickens in the Fildes engraving we could say ‘Dickens is absent’ which achieves again, the same kind of imagistic negative: a form or shape given to that which is palpably missing.

When we think of *a Picasso* we are less likely to link the work with an image of him in a field holding a butterfly net and more likely to link the work with an image of him employing those objects that facilitated the work – objects such as a paintbrush, canvas and easel. By extension the thing most likely to link Dickens the man and Dickens as a (metonymical) work are his writerly implements: his desk, chair, pen, paper etc. This to suggest that the metonymical concept of ‘producer for product’ can carry within it a material vitality or extensionality, one that links the producer and product through the medium of the equipment the producer employed in making the product. If, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, in seeing ‘a Picasso’ we are not just thinking of Picasso’s work of art alone but rather thinking of it ‘in terms of its relation to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc.’ then rolled into this thinking must be things, for what is technique without a medium?

In his paper ‘Porous Memory and the Cognitive Life of Things’ the philosopher John Sutton explores what he calls ‘cognitive artifacts’ in relation to some of the ways in which we materially conceptualize memory. He begins by describing ‘an exotic European fantasy of the early 1630s’ which held that local people in the South Seas had a sponge that could be used to carry messages over long distances. According to Sutton it was believed that ‘a message spoken into one of them would be exactly replayed when the recipient squeezed it appropriately’ (1). Sutton uses this analogy to explore how we sometimes scaffold memory through things. Using a sketchpad as one example of how a thing can be part of a cognitive dynamic he argues in support of the idea that ‘external cognitive scaffolding and tools of many varieties supplement our relatively unstable internal memories’ (2). It is this idea –

of a material scaffold – that I would like to import. As Sutton suggests of the artist’s sketchpad:

The sketchpad here isn’t just a convenient storage bin for pre-existing visual images: the ongoing externalizing and re-perceiving is an intrinsic part of artistic cognition itself. The artist and the sketchpad may be so tightly coupled that it’s possible to see them more as a single temporarily integrated system than as an agent operating on a distinct passive medium. (2)

While this example might seem more readily analogous to the sheet of paper the writer writes and rewrites on⁹¹ I would argue that it can be extended to the desk and chair. For most writers the chair is a near-literal scaffold for their body and the desk a scaffold for their materials – paper and pens – and for the act of writing. What the desk and chair do, as useable tools, is disappear from the writer’s consciousness so that the imagined world can come to the fore. In such cases the material things work in an integrated fashion as gear that performs its function so well it ceases to be regarded as present (in Heidegger’s terms it is ready-to-hand). The desk and chair position the writer in such a way as to facilitate the work, and the paper and ink record it. This is one of the reasons writerly tools seem to hold such a strong sense of the writer’s absent presence – because they contribute to, and are part of, the creative act.

This reading of Dickens’s desk as a kind of equipment inextricably linked to Dickens and his work stems in part from a consideration of the poignancy, power (and popularity) of the Fildes engraving (an engraving that sold thousands of prints after it appeared in 1870 in *The Graphic*). In the Fildes’ engraving Dickens is

⁹¹ For an example of the enigmatic potential state of writerly blank paper see Clark Collis’s account in *The Guardian* of the novelist Jonathan Safran Foer’s collection of blank pieces of paper that famous writers would have written on next (a collection that includes paper from authors Susan Sontag, Paul Auster and Isaac Bashevis Singer as well as a blank card from Freud’s desk). In his essay ‘Emptiness’ Safran Foer describes looking at his blank page from Bashevis Singer’s unused typing paper. He states: ‘Looking at what? There were too many things to look at. There were the phantom words that Singer hadn’t actually written and would never write, the arrangements of ink that would have turned the most common of all objects—the empty page—into the most valuable: a great work of art. The blank sheet of paper was at once empty and infinite’ (‘How We Work’).

himself absent, the work he will create is also a gaping absence, but the desk remains and as a remain it signals both Dickens absent-presence (that of both his body and his mind) and the lacuna made by the work that will no longer come from this work-station. As the Dickens Museum 1990 souvenir guide states: ‘This engraving was done for *The Graphic* magazine’s Christmas number in 1870 (Dickens having died the previous June) and lamented the fact that there would be no more Christmas “messages” from the author to his readers. It was accompanied by a description of Dickens’s study at Gad’s Hill as he had left it’ (10-11).

This idea of Dickens’s absence – his death, his study ‘*as he had left it*’ (11 emphasis added) the image of the desk as uninhabited and the work or messages that will no longer be delivered – reflects Heidegger’s idea about the unready-to-hand. Heidegger writes:

The more urgently... we need what is missing, and the more authentically it is encountered in its un-readiness-to-hand, all the more obtrusive... does that which is ready-to-hand become – so much so, indeed, that it seems to lose its character of readiness-to-hand. It reveals itself as something just present-at-hand and no more, which cannot be budged without the thing that is missing. (103)

This reading of obtrusiveness, of the thing that loses its sense of readiness to hand, that ‘cannot be budged without the thing that is missing’ can be applied to Dickens and his desk in Fildes work. Dickens’s absence is fundamental to the desk and chair’s appearance of unready-to-hand (borne from Dickens *own* unready-to-handness) and this obtrusiveness is what makes the image ‘haunting’ (CDM signage) and an embodiment of lament (CDM *SG* 1990). Here, Dickens’s absence is palpable, a reading of a present absence that has resonances with Sartre’s analysis of ‘Pierre’s’ absence in *Being and Nothingness* – an analysis of negation that has an ‘I’

arriving fifteen minutes late to a café where he looks for Pierre with whom he has an appointment; Pierre, however, is not there (Bille, Hastrup, Sorensen 5; Sartre 40-43).

Sartre's analysis of negation in Part One, Chapter Two of *Being and Nothingness* explores, in part, what it means to say 'He is not here' (41). While the 'Pierre' of Sartre's analogy is eventually believed to have left the café, and to therefore have an actual presence elsewhere (unlike the deceased Dickens) – his absence in the café is still palpable because Pierre is the figure which is sought. As Sartre suggests: 'When I enter this café to search for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the café, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear' (41). For Sartre, this 'concern' (Pierre) makes the other things and people in the café marginal or neutral: 'I am witness to the successive disappearance of all the objects which I look at – in particular of the faces, which detain me for an instant (Could this be Pierre?) and which as quickly decompose precisely because they "are not" the face of Pierre' (41). When it is realized that Pierre is 'not here' Sartre attests that:

This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment. In fact Pierre is absent from the *whole* café; his absence fixes the café in evanescence; the café remains *ground*; it persists in offering itself as an undifferentiated totality to my only marginal attention; it slips into the background; it pursues its nihilation. Only it makes itself ground for a determined figure; it carries the figure everywhere in front of it, presents the figure everywhere to me. This figure which slips constantly between my look and the solid, real objects of the café is precisely a perpetual disappearance; it is Pierre raising himself as nothingness on the ground of the nihilation of the café. (42)

This reading of an experience of absence (or of that slippage between presence and absence) illuminates some aspects of the apprehension of Dickens's absence in relation to his desk and chair, even though aspects of Sartre's analysis are inversions of the house/museum scenario. For example: first of all, unlike Pierre, Dickens is not elsewhere – except insofar as he may seem to reside in / be encounter-able

through his books. Second, whereas Sartre's café is a glazed-over ground – the things and people falling away because they are not a concern / not 'Pierre' – the writer's house/museum is a foregrounded ground, one that has the potential to hold the writer's absence in every room and on every seat or sofa surface, at every empty table setting. Whereas Pierre's absence is not located in a precise spot, the material things of the museum (and some of the attendant signage) *create* such spots for the visitor ('here is the desk he wrote X text at' or 'here is the bed he died in' or 'this is the suit he wore to court'). Dickens is absent from his whole house/museum but he is *especially absent* in those locations where he was known or believed to once have been bodily present. The café pursues nihilation (totally receding from concern) whereas the house/museum pursues embodiment through things: through *markers* of absence. But like the café, the house/museum makes itself ground for 'a determined figure'. As Sartre suggests: 'it carries the figure everywhere in front of it, presents the figure everywhere to me' (42).

Citing the philosopher Patrick Fuery's suggestion that absence can be read as having two registers – primary absence and secondary absence, wherein the first case is pure absence without presence, and the second is 'derived from, and defined by, its relational connection to presence' (Bille, Hastrup, Sorensen 5) – and citing Sartre's use of the café scene, the editors of *An Anthropology of Absence*, Bille, Hastrup, and Sorensen write that Fuery's 'secondary absence' seems to apply to the social world (and to Sartre's use of Pierre) because it is connected to notions of presence (5). While Dickens's bodily presence is not possible in the way that Pierre's is, his bodily presence is still marked by the shapes and things that once held it; it is therefore conceptually presentable or affectively presentable. In the

same way that the (now almost cartoonish) outline of a figure on the pavement after a crime-scene creates a negative space which illuminates, signifies and locates a former presence, so too do Dickens's desk and chair in both his museum and in Fildes's work illuminate his absence. In his house/museum and in his desk and chair Dickens is, perpetually, not there now. Again, as Sartre said of Pierre: 'This figure which slips constantly between my look and the solid, real objects of the café is precisely a perpetual disappearance; it is Pierre raising himself as nothingness on the ground of the nihilation of the café' (Sartre 42). Dickens is the figure that slips constantly between a kind of ghostly or felt-presence and a near-concrete absence, Dickens 'raising himself as nothingness' or being raised as nothingness by things against a meaningful set of relations.

Of course, crucially in this scenario, no total negation is possible: for even as Dickens is raising himself, or is raised, as nothingness, as absent, as dead and gone, he is still always raising or being raised as *himself* – a self that carries with it all the attendant knowledge of Dickens that a visitor might bring to the encounter or gain in the environment. As Angus Wilson wrote of Fildes' engraving in *The World of Charles Dickens*: 'Luke Fildes's "Empty Chair" was not, as we have come to think, a sentimentalism, but a fitting tribute to the void left by this untimely parting' (297) – a void that I would argue is fitting because the chair locates it exactly.

What this description of Dickens's absence and the gear's *conspicuous* presence does is support the reading of the desk and chair as material objects that are still somehow connected to the person with whom they are associated even after that person is gone – a connection that is accentuated by the way the tool's ready-to-hand nature recedes. The gear is meaningful as a representation in art and as gear

encountered in a house/museum because it forms an actual ground, one that designates or locates an act (writing) and a being (Dickens) deemed worthy of commemoration. Crucial to this location is a sense of residual and ongoing connection between a thing and a being. An analysis of Charles Dickens own writing about 'haunted' furniture in Chapter XIV of *The Uncommercial Traveller* further supports this idea of a residual connection between a person and their things, in the case of this narrative via the endurance of autographic ascription.

IV – *The Uncommercial Traveller*

Charles Dickens's *The Uncommercial Traveller* is a series of tales published together for the first time in 1860. The tales are generally told in first-person or first-person peripheral point of view from the perspective of a town and country traveler. Dickens alludes to the literary conceit of the series by stating up front: 'Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human Interest Brothers' (Dickens, *TND*, 283) – thus alluding to his use of figurative language in the form of a metaphor, the house of Human Interest Brothers signifying 'human interest' stories. Many of the stories in *The Uncommercial Traveller* relay other people's stories or encounters as told to, or happened upon by, the narrator. As the narrator states in his brief introduction: 'I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent-garden, London—now about the city streets: now, about the country by-roads—seeing many little things, and some great things, which, because they interest me, I think may interest others' (283).

Chapter XIV of *The Uncommercial Traveller* – entitled ‘Chambers’ – is of interest to this chapter for what it says about furniture and the person to whom the furniture belongs. This section of the writers’ tools chapter will employ Dickens’s narrative as evidence of the popular perception of the strong connection that can form between a person and their pieces of furniture, and how that relationship can carry forward through time.

In the chapter entitled ‘Chambers’ the narrator of *The Uncommercial Traveller* becomes aware of a series of chambers in London. At the start of the chapter the narrator relays a story about some of the occupants of Gray’s Inn Square before moving on to the Lyons Inn. Here he begins the story of a man who occupies ‘chambers of the dreariest nature’ going on to describe how:

...his name, however, was not up on the door, or doorpost, but in lieu of it stood the name of a friend who had died in the chambers, and had given him the furniture. The story arose out of the furniture, and was to this effect:—Let the former holder of the chambers, whose name was still upon the door and doorpost, be Mr. Testator. (427-8)

After from the clever coining of the name Testator (a ‘testator’ being a person who has given a legacy or made up a will) the story that arises ‘out of the furniture’ continues on with Dickens’s own particular blend of supernatural-realism. Of Mr Testator we are told that he had taken ‘a set of chambers in Lyons Inn when he had but very scanty furniture for his bed-room, and none for his sitting room’ (428). One wintery night in search of coal in the cellar, he comes upon a room (which his key fits) which contains ‘a confused pile of furniture. Alarmed by this intrusion on another man’s property, he locked the door again, found his own cellar, filled his scuttle, and returned up-stairs’ (428).

Still, the furniture starts to preoccupy him. We are told almost immediately after his encounter that '[h]e particularly wanted a table to write at, and a table expressly made to be written at, had been the piece of furniture at the foreground of the heap' (428). This comment is notable for how Heidegger's structure of experience is exemplified so overtly: the piece of furniture he notices is 'at the foreground' of both the cellar and his concern, which is to suggest that what he sees is, in part, shaped by his concern; furthermore he sees in it a *potential* ready-to-handness – it is, he notes, 'a table *expressly* made to be written at' (428 emphasis added) – but it is not fully ready-to-hand as equipment because he ascribes it to another – it is, in short, not *his*.

At this point the tenant begins to enquire about the furniture to no avail. He surmises the owner might be dead or might have forgotten about his pieces as the things seem so long out of use. Eventually 'he became desperate, and resolved to borrow that table. He did so, that night. He had not had the table long when he determined to borrow an easy-chair; he had not had that long when he made up his mind to borrow a book-case; then, a couch; then, a carpet and a rug' (429). Two or three years pass over which time we are told that Mr Testator has 'gradually lulled himself into the opinion that the furniture was his own' (429). One night there is a knock on the door. A strange and 'shabby-genteel' man is discovered and he begins to ask a question: '...he said. "I ask your pardon, but can you tell me—" and stopped; his eyes resting on some object within the chambers' (429). Shortly thereafter he asks '...—"do I see in there, any small article of property belonging to *me*?"' (429). He then examines, 'in a goblin way... first, the writing-table, and said, "Mine;" then, the easy-chair, and said, "Mine;" then the bookcase...' and so on to the carpet and

‘every item of furniture from the cellar’ (430). An attempt to sort matters out calmly with a bottle of gin ensues and eventually the (now-drunken) visitor to whom the furniture originally belonged agrees to return the next day – though he does not. The narrative moves towards its conclusion by stating the following in the uncommercial traveller’s voice:

Whether he was a ghost, or a spectral illusion of conscience, or a drunken man who had no business there, or the drunken rightful owner of the furniture, with a transitory gleam of memory... he never was heard no more. This was the story received with the furniture and held to be as substantial, by its second possessor in an upper set of chambers in grim Lyons Inn. (430-1)

This story does two things to support the idea of an enduring tether between a person and their furnishings: one, it differentiates, throughout the story, between ‘owner’ and ‘borrower’ and later (in the lines quoted above) – even after the owner seems to have forfeited his claim – ‘possessor’ – as if the furniture’s assignment or tether to its owner has not been fully severed. Second, the conclusion allows for a variety of possible scenarios: that the man was a ghost (drawn in the form of ‘mine’ to his things), that he was an imagined manifestation of guilt made visceral because of the act of taking over another’s things, or that the visitor was, perhaps, just a random drunk man, or the rightful owner of the furniture out of his proper mind who has some form of memory or self awakened through the perception of familiar things.

What almost all of these scenarios support is the autographic potential of furniture as an encountered thing: furniture that not only belonged *to* someone, but furniture that can, even after it is passed on – as the cleverly named ‘Mr Testator’ passes it on after he dies – *still refer back to* the person to whom it last ‘properly’ belonged.

Whether this idea of belonging is ‘rightful’ ‘legal’ ‘fiscal’ or more integral (as per Dickens’s own mahogany desk which is not only ‘property’ but a ‘site’ of a

particular set of events) – or some mix of all the above – there is still, palpable in the taking on or over of someone’s ‘gear’ a sense of the thing’s previous engagements and entanglements. Which is to suggest that one of the pleasures of ‘Chambers’ is the implication that the new ‘possessor’ of the furniture has been given more of a legacy than just the things themselves, for it is easy to read into the outcome the idea that the rightful owner of the furniture might also figure into the legacy of the writing table, easy-chair et cetera; that one day *he* may show up at the door again.

V – Stasis

The next part of this chapter will consider the idea of stasis as it relates to a writer’s tool’s original assignment. Although almost every object discussed in this thesis will have been placed in some form of unready-to-hand state or stasis, a consideration of the implications of stasis for an object that is so readily recognizable as a piece of equipment *for writing* will, perhaps most visibly, help to reveal the initial change of status museum display objects undergo. Through this analysis a more clearly delineated illustration of what ‘stasis’ implies will be established.⁹²

⁹² It should be noted here that while nineteenth-century objects like paintings, dresses, wedding bonnets and jewelry *are* equipment in Heideggerian terms, objects like these, at least as displayed in contemporary museum culture, can often be read as aesthetic objects: objects whose assignment, is, in part, or to some degree, to be of interest to the eye. An ink blotter, a pen, piece of paper, or even a desk and chair, while possibly ‘beautiful’ or interesting to look at, do not *tend* to forefront their aesthetic ‘face’, rather they tend to point to a larger set of references or assignments: ink to write with, paper to write on, a desk and chair for writing. While aesthetic encounters are obviously subjective (a carpenter might see Dickens’s desk as primarily aesthetic whereas a student of English Literature might see it primarily as a generic piece of furniture used *by Dickens*) I think that in general a case could be made that certain categories of tools (a hammer is an extreme example) are infrequently encountered as *primarily* aesthetic objects. This is not to say that an aesthetic consideration does not occur, only to suggest that many writers’ tools carry a strong for-which modality. Another argument for suggesting a division between the types of objects that I suggest have become more readily *read* as aesthetic objects (objects like paintings, dresses, wedding bonnets and jewelry) versus objects that I suggest are more readily regarded as tools (an ink blotter or a pen, or even a desk or chair) relates to contemporary perceptions of allographic versus autographic object types in the Victorian era (that which is perceived to be customized or made individually versus that which is perceived to be made *en masse*. (See, Benjamin, Walter: ‘Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ in *Illuminations* for more on this.) A final argument is display-related. My observations from writers’ houses/museums over the years have led me to believe that objects with foregrounded aesthetic values are often given space in museums (Charlotte Brontë’s going-away dress is not, for example, displayed on a mannequin in her cluttered bedroom posed as if she is busy packing suitcases for her honeymoon) whereas tools are often clustered thematically in purpose-oriented displays (i.e. as part of a set of tools with the potential to be used even though presently in stasis).

In *Being and Time* Heidegger notes that ‘...when an assignment has been *disturbed* – when something is unusable for some purpose – then the assignment becomes explicit’ (105). The desk and desk chair’s assignment are, in the cases of the lives of the writers considered here, for writing on or with. Following on from Heidegger’s previously cited example of the shoe as equipment – ‘This shoe which is to be produced is for wearing’ (99) – I will suggest that this idea of a disturbed assignment can be uniquely registered in writers’ houses/museums by unused writing tools such as the unoccupied chair and desk, the abandoned pen or ink blotter. While objects such as a dress for general wearing or a lock of hair can presence the absent body no longer engaged with it and foreground that *person’s* absence and /or death, tools such as pens, ink blotters, desks and desk-chairs presence the body and being *in the context of a particular act* – and not just any act, but the act with which the individual as ‘a writer’ is so closely identified.

In order to illustrate the idea of stasis it might be useful to start with an analogy stemming from Heidegger’s shoe example. (This analysis will also lay the ground for the set of interrelated examples surrounding the worlding power of unused tools at the end of this chapter.)

In one of the rooms in Auschwitz-Birkenau (the memorial museum and former concentration camp located in Poland) there is a room containing a mountain of shoes (fig. 20, below).



Fig. 20. Shoes at Auschwitz, photograph by Pawel Sawicki ©www.auschwitz.org. Web. <<http://en.auschwitz.org>>.

Here, the mountain of once worn, and now, unworn shoes, signifies the disturbance of their assignment (for protecting feet, for walking in, for the living to wear) in a way that profoundly (and, for many, horrifically) makes their original assignment explicit. What the shoes at Auschwitz are also capable of evoking, even in their number, is some sense of their *particular* assignment (an individual human for whom the particular shoe once fulfilled these purposes) *along with* that individual's murder/death/absent-presence and present-absence. These tools, this gear, in its unused and static state (tools, it could be argued, that are made with the *opposite* of stasis in mind: for walking or moving in) are so 'disturbed' or removed from their assignment that they are, in fact, disturbing. It is very difficult to read this mountain of used shoes as primarily 'aesthetic'. Even if the profundity of the context is reduced or removed from the viewer's encounter – by which I mean the murder of more than 1,100,000 individuals at Auschwitz-Birkenau – or if the shoes themselves were located elsewhere, I would argue that the shoes (if recognized as tools for human wearing) in any context would still beg questions – likely borne from their

implied / understood assignment, questions such as: *Who left this pile of shoes here? Why? Where are the people to whom they belonged? Is this an art installation? What is it trying to say?*

Which is to suggest that when confronted with an object in stasis that is contextually aesthetic (agreed-upon as primarily aesthetic, such as a tapestry on a wall) the object, if one reads it as an aesthetic object, is less likely to raise these sorts of questions because it is, as an object, *fulfilling* its purpose – to be regarded as aesthetic, to be viewed and seen. So, if ‘stasis’ (from the Greek for ‘standing’ or ‘stoppage’) can be taken as *the perception of a thing suspended from its assignment* (which means again, to differentiate between a painting in the National Gallery with its more intrinsic ‘to be viewed’ assignment and a pen with its intrinsic ‘to scribe with’ assignment) then a writer’s tools (that with-which they scribe) can be viewed in the house/museum context as standing in stasis. This is not only because the tools are not being used (the quill Charles Dickens wrote with is not being used casually at the cashier’s stand in the souvenir shop) or because they are tools that have survived their writer, but also because they are *removed* from use: are on display, or in a case, or in a removed setting (not to be touched). In this way it could be argued that the gear in question (whether an ink-blotter or a desk chair) might be perceived as dormant or sleeping, as if their use has been put on hold. The visitor views the ink-well on Thomas Carlyle’s desk and may understand what it was for when it was used by Carlyle *while also* assuming (rightly) that there is likely no ink in the ink stand for current use, and that, inkless, the ink stand has been removed so far from use as to be, in that instant, an ornament, unusable for its original purpose. As Heidegger notes, however, even when something is not ready-to-hand some sense of

a thing's usability or its ready-to-handness can still sometimes be perceived – a state that is most palpable, I would suggest, in those instances when one feels a certain compulsion to sit in their writer's chair when the museum staff leave the room or to check the ink-well (as I did) for ink.

Heidegger's ideas around the un-ready-to-hand status of tools are useful here in that they can reveal the shimmering status of stasis more clearly: stasis as a state that is flexible or mutable, as a state that *seems* obdurately true (the pen is perceived as unused and unmoving and inaccessible and therefore as un-ready-to-hand) even as it is philosophically or phenomenologically dynamic. In Part I, Division III Section 16 of *Being and Time* Heidegger notes: 'To the everydayness of Being-in-the-world there belong certain modes of concern' (102). It bears repeating the quote from section four of this chapter here, while also developing it further. In this case Heidegger states:

When we concern ourselves with something, the entities which are most closely ready-to-hand may be met as something unusable, not properly adapted for the use we have decided upon. The tool turns out to be damaged, or the material unsuitable. In each of these cases *equipment* is here, ready-to-hand. We discover its unusability, however, not by looking at it and establishing its properties, but rather by the circumspection of the dealings in which we use it. When its unusability is thus discovered, equipment becomes conspicuous. This *conspicuousness* presents the ready-to-hand equipment as in a certain un-readiness-to-hand. But this implies that what cannot be used just lies there; it shows itself as an equipmental Thing which looks so and so, and which, in its readiness-to-hand as looking that way, has constantly been present-at-hand too. Pure presence-at-hand announces itself in such equipment, but only to withdraw to the readiness-to-hand of something with which one concerns oneself – that is to say, of the sort of thing we find when we put it back into repair. This presence-at-hand of something that cannot be used is still not devoid of all readiness-to-hand whatsoever; equipment which is present-at-hand *in this way* is still not just a Thing which occurs somewhere. (102-3)

Here we can take Heidegger's philosophical analysis and modify it slightly to illustrate the kind of transfer that I am suggesting occurs in the case of those tools in stasis in writers' houses/museums. What Heidegger is saying is that even if you happen upon a broken hammer, or a pair of spectacles with missing lenses, or a cracked cup, even as the thing is recognized as un-ready-to-hand it is recognized as such not just by looking at it objectively but also by considering its set of references (the cracked cup is only un-ready-to-hand if it cannot hold water or if it will cut a lip; the spectacles are not just understood as un-ready-to-hand by seeing them but also by understanding that they are no longer useful for helping a visually-impaired person to see what is in front of them). This is when the thing becomes conspicuous: we see it more clearly (we notice it) and its objective presence or present-at-hand nature is highlighted, meaning that we may, in such a state, examine the crack in the cup to see if it goes all the way through, if it can be glued and so on. Still, Heidegger suggests, even in the present-at-hand perception, that a sense of the thing's usability, assignment and equipmental nature is there, even if only in the potential of its use when it is repaired.

Heidegger's passage on the withdrawing nature of the present-to-hand in relation to a concern that evokes the tool's relations is useful for us because applied to the writers' house/museum model it can suggest that the unready-to-hand object (the desk chair, the desk, the ink blotter, quill and spectacles) is, as with Heidegger's tools, not reduced in its stasis to some mere present-at-hand thing, rather it is a thing that still holds within it a sense of its equipmentality, its ready-to-hand nature. Here is where I will depart from Heidegger's model. He suggests that: 'Pure presence-at-hand announces itself in such equipment, but only to withdraw to the readiness-to-

hand of something with which one concerns oneself – that is to say, of the sort of thing we find when we put it back into repair’ (103). Here he implies repair: a scenario where, for example, one has picked up a broken hammer and wants to use it, but then cannot – a scenario where one retains the same concern they had originally: to nail the shingle back onto the roof with a working hammer. For Heidegger this consistency of concern is useful because it is a relatively simple model on which to build his hypothesis, but what if I insert ‘time’ and a change of context into this model? What if the tools under consideration might be read as more culturally malleable in a given context than the hammer? What if in this model of concern in which ‘[p]ure presence-at-hand announces itself...only to withdraw to the readiness-to-hand of something with which one concerns oneself’ – the concern changes? What if on seeing a desk chair that is in stasis and upon registering its conspicuousness and present-to-hand/objective presence rather than just forecasting its return to its original ready-to-hand state one understands its potential for *another kind* of equipmental use? And what if the new use – imagined or intuited – for that object involves evocation or remembrance?

I am suggesting that even as the present-at-hand / materially objective nature of an object like Dickens’s desk announces itself in the stasis of the writer’s house/museum that its present-at-hand nature withdraws against a visitor’s ready-to-hand awareness of the thing as a desk with an historical and autographic assignment (the desk that was for Dickens’s writing). Here the autographic ascription, the thing’s stasis and conspicuousness allow the thing to come to the fore as a remembrancer. Where Heidegger suggests a forecasting of a return to usability in relation to the thing’s future repair and its traditional use (wherein one sees the

readiness-to-hand of the thing because of an awareness of its potential repair or return to its former assignments) I am suggesting that in the context of the writer's house/museum we see instead a ready-to-handness lingering within the equipment because of our awareness of its potential use as a tool, a tool for writing *and* a tool for remembering the writing, the writer and the set of relations that is the writer's 'world'. Where Heidegger sees a return to the thing's original with-which and in-order-to, I see a metamorphoses.

This deviation may seem simple: a comparison between Heidegger's reading of the perceptual shift (or oscillation) in Being's awareness of equipment set alongside my reading of the perceptual shift (or oscillation) in a museum visitor's encounter with a writer's things; a divergence that is based, in this analogy, on concern: Heidegger's Being wants the hammer to work, my visitor reads the cues of the museum space and 'goes along with' the shift many of the writers' museums embody – a shift from seeing things as pure equipment to seeing things as loci of a particular kind of knowledge – of the past, of the writer, of the writer's world. This metamorphosis is an important element and theme in this thesis but it is not the whole story. This thesis is suggesting that the work of how things arise out of suspended tool use to 'world' does not belong solely to the dynamics envisioned by the museum or to the acquiescence of the visitor, but also belongs to the things themselves. *Things* world. The affective state of encounter that can occur in a writer's museum is one that is profoundly affected by what is doing the worlding. It is also profoundly affected by the idea and perception of stasis. Stasis is not just a removal from touch or from soiling or, as in the Dickens's museum signage - hands that will damage these special objects – it is a state of preservation: literal

preservation (sometimes temperature controlled) but also preservation of aura or of contiguity. As this thesis suggests, these writerly things are often regarded as *the* things that either had repeated contact with the writers themselves or a last (and lasting) kind of contact. To reaffirm this idea of last things Mona Körte's idea of last objects will be returned to briefly in relation to writers' tools.

VI – Last Objects

In 'Bracelet, Hand Towel, Pocket Watch: Objects of the Last Moment in Memory and Narration' Mona Körte, in describing the beloved objects that *kindertransport* children held onto after being forcibly separated from their parents at the start of the holocaust, Körte notes that through 'preserving and caring for the object one remains loyal to it, perhaps, because there is an intuitive awareness that memory is constantly reshaped by the demands of the present. Remembering means renewing in the present the affect that is tied to the image or object; as such these mementos become aids to mourning' (111-112). That the shoes at Auschwitz fulfill the needs and functions of memorializing is probably more readily understood than the suggestion that a writer's desk and desk chair can also create an affective feeling and/or bridge memory or reveal 'in a flash entire thematic clusters' (110).

I have drawn attention to the shoes at Auschwitz not because they are a widely acknowledged symbol or because I think the shoes' resonance is analogous to the desk and chair's, but because the shoes – widely accepted as mnemonic remains – help delineate the path I am taking with the desk and chair, a path that leads from tool to remembrancer. What sets these shoes apart however, is not only their

collectivity (the mass of them and the number of individuals the shoes stand in for) but also their association with what Körte calls ‘the last moment’. The fact that these shoes were in proximal relation to the physical bodies of those individuals who were killed at Auschwitz is not lost on the viewer. This kind of heightened aura, one that can come from the sense that a material thing is a ‘bracket for an event’ (110) or was witness to an event is also prevalent in writers’ houses/museums. We see this in relation to the Dickens collection in a number of objects on display in 2007: the chalet writing table that has two plaques on it – an older brass plaque stating that the table is ‘The writing table from the chalet used by Charles Dickens...Gad’s Hill Place’ under which a more modern plaque was affixed stating: ‘Table (from the chalet) upon which Charles Dickens penned his last words’ (CDM).

This idea of the last object and of the objects as witness is also affirmed in the label below the Bennett clock – ‘This clock was in the hall of Gad’s Hill Place Rochester until Dickens died in 1870’ – a statement that suggests two things: 1) that the clock was there ticking away as Dickens lived, wrote and as he died, but also 2) that upon his death it somehow also came to a kind of closure (evidenced by the past tense ‘was in the hall’ and the use of ‘until Dickens died’) – a wording that implies that it too ceased in some way, ceased perhaps to be employed or to have a biography worth noting. Which is to say that the sign does not state that it ‘is’ the clock, or that it was moved, or that it broke-down or was taken down; rather just that it existed in its meaningful context until Dickens died. Even if the act of disassembling a house is to be read into the text, the text still proposes something else, some form of resonant contiguity between the clock as a tool and Dickens. This was also evident in relation to a worn and thinly feathered quill on display in the

museum in 2007. Its explanatory note stated: ‘with this pen Charles Dickens wrote a portion of...his unfinished novel “Edwin Drood”...’ a narrative that places the quill in proximal use near the end of Dickens’s days, a tool whose assignment as a pen ‘to write with’ likely ceased around the time of the author’s demise.⁹³

With the idea of the last object hovering in the midst of the desk and chair the suggestion that there is a lasting entanglement between the body of the author and the desk and desk chair becomes more readily apparent, which is to say that as fundamental tools used repeatedly there may be a deeper sense of spatial contiguity in the desk and chair than there may be with other things and locations in the house/museum. Furthermore, the wear marks on most of the writer’s desks and chairs are visual reminders of the body, illuminating the way many of these writers would have engaged physically with the objects, sliding up and under the desk’s surface, scribbling on its plane, spilling ink on it (as Carlyle did), storing objects in its recesses and drawers.

Things that were repeatedly used in a person’s life tend, in their disuse, to point to a severance – much in the way that the static desks and chairs acknowledge and attest to the thoughts and books that the death of the writer has rendered un-writable. This is what made Fildes’ image so suitable for a mourning public, or, at least, for a public that was clamouring for, or lamenting, the loss of more of Dickens’s thoughts and work – because the image suggests a severance, and, as we see materialized in

⁹³ Writers’ pens are often deeply metonymic objects. According to George Mell in *Writing Antiques* a pen nib with Charles Dickens’s likeness on it was made and sold abroad in the Victorian era (5). Mont Blanc (the renowned / contemporary pen company) currently has a limited edition Charles Dickens pen which features the author’s signature and Onoto pens recently released four Dickens-themed pens for the two-hundredth anniversary of the author’s birth. Dickens’s *actual* quill pen recently went on display in 1995 at the Serpentine Gallery in Cornelia Parker’s exhibit ‘The Maybe’. The Dickens Museum guest shop also capitalizes on the inherent relationship between the writer and his most handy tool in that they were selling (in July 2014) a plethora of pen-themed souvenirs: quill pens (£4.50), a calligraphy wallet (£5.50), a pheasant quill (£2.50), a feather biro quill (£2.50), a nib pen and ink set (£10), dipping ink (£4.50), a regular / modern pen with the museum logo (£2.25), and other related items such as a box of five ink set, blotting papers etc. Whether one reads this category of souvenirs as commercialization or kitsch the fact still remains that of all the objects (save books) that the museum could have chosen to embody the museum experience or visit, the pen, at the Dickens House Museum was selected as most fit for the task.

Buss, a severance that doesn't just involve the man Charles Dickens, but whole thematic clusters that include both the man and the writer's creative work.

So far this thesis has largely considered the desk as a plane on which imaginative or literary work occurs. It has tied the desk, or desks, to the writerly act of inscribing on surfaces. Of course, desks are also containers. They often have slots or drawers (locked or accessible) in which further tools or equipment can be stored. Travelling desks or portable writing boxes of the sort on display in the Parsonage, Darwin, and Carlyle museums are also containers in that they often consist largely of a compartment or compartments for holding stationary, or trays for nibs, holders and ink; there may also be, even in travel desks, secret drawers or compartments (Mell 29). Desks in this way, large or portable, might be read as private or personal locations, locations where more than the writer's best or most useful tools are kept – places with the potential to hold secrets or meaningful totems or objects. This hypothesis is supported by findings in the desks of the writers considered in this thesis and by the objects associated with the desks.

Sir Walter Scott's desk (on display in the study at Abbotsford where it was used) was made in 1810 by Gillow of London, and was a commissioned near-copy of a desk owned by Scott's friend John Morritt of Rokeby Park. This was the desk at which Scott struggled to write in his last weeks of life, a scene described in John Gibson Lockhart's (1795-1854) *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1837-1838) and remembered by Dickens at Abbotsford when he saw Scott's last clothes. According to Lockhart (who was Scott's son-in-law), as Scott's weakness grew the author was sometimes taken outside at Abbotsford to be 'wheeled about on the turf'

(Vol IV 321). One day, Scott, complaining of idleness and of the likelihood that he would ‘forget what I have been thinking of, if I don’t set it down now’ (321) asked that the keys to his desk be fetched, at which point his daughters went into his study and ‘laid paper and pens in the usual order’ (321). Lockhart then took Scott to the desk:

...into the spot where he had always been accustomed to work. When the chair was placed at the desk, and he found himself in the old position, he smiled and thanked us, and said, ‘Now give me my pen and leave me for a little to myself.’ Sophia put the pen into his hand, and he endeavoured to close his fingers upon it, but they refused their office – it dropped on the paper. He sank back among his pillows, silent tears rolling down his cheeks.... (321)

Scott is then taken outdoors again, but then asks to be returned to bed, after which Lockhart notes ‘Sir Walter never, I think, left his room afterwards, and hardly his bed, except for an hour or two in the middle of the day; and after another week he was unable even for this’ (321).

Here the death of the ‘writer’ (of the man’s capability to write) is akin to a first death – one that corresponds to Scott’s withdrawal from the world and Scott’s eventual bodily death. The desk, as a survivor of Scott, then becomes a last thing with its own relics. As Lockhart noted:

...perhaps the most touching evidence of the lasting tenderness of his early domestic feelings was exhibited to his executors, when they opened his repositories in search of his testament, the evening after his burial. On lifting up his desk, we found arranged in careful order a series of little objects, which had obviously been so placed there that his eye might rest on them every morning before he began his tasks. These were the old-fashioned boxes that had garnished his mother’s toilette, when he, a sickly child, slept in her dressing-room – the silver taper-stand which the young advocate had bought for her with his first five guinea fee – a row of small packets inscribed with her hand, and containing the hair of those of her offspring that had died before her – his father’s snuff-box and etui-case, and more things of the like sort, recalling ‘The old familiar faces.’ (Lockhart, *Memoirs Vol 4*, 335)

Lockhart's reading of Scott's desk artifacts – specifically the use of the phrase 'domestic feelings' potentially diminishes the affective power inherent in Scott's remembrancers. While this term may have been used to signify his childhood home life or affection for his mother and family, the term, to my mind, still carries in it some sense of sentiment (as does the phrase 'little objects'). For Scott, these talismans or remembrancers may have been part of his consolidated identity, may have been reminders of his past, his loved ones, his own grounding narrative (looking up from my own desk I have a similar set of identity-solidifying things arranged around me, meaningful and worlding things that connect me to the larger world and to my past). Crucially however, Lockhart, a familiar of Scott's, sees these things not just as things but also as material markers of larger sets of relations or events. He recognizes that the taper marked both relations and an event and that Scott seemed to be employing it accordingly as a kind of remembrancer. This is part of the power of the desk as a site of creation: it is not only the site or plane of the writer working but also a site that *contains* aspects of that writer's identity beyond the work that happens there.

While the objects Lockhart describes were discovered immediately after Scott's death, it took over a hundred years (until 1935) for two secret drawers to be discovered in Scott's same desk – one drawer containing some fifty love letters from his wife before and after their marriage in 1797 ('Scott's Study'). This is the desk as a container of secrets, as a container of a narrative that represents a less-than public self.

Dickens's desk, like Scott's, had its attendant objects. In the *Dickens House Guide and Illustrated Souvenir* (n.d.) they describe a 'china monkey' as 'one of the objects

which Dickens always had standing on his desk, wherever he happened to be, and without which he could not settle down to work' as well as describing some of the objects on the desk when he died, objects that included a paper knife, green cup (for flowers), an ink bottle and a quill pen 'with which he always wrote' (11).

If, as in Bachelard's model, the house is a location for dreaming, then it is possible that the desk – for a writer who engages with the desk frequently – might also be a dreaming place, a site of imagination, memory or reverie (as in the Buss painting), a site for totems and talismans, remembrancers of who one is. Such items locate the desk as a place of charged connections, as a meaning-full place – a container for meaningful things.

In Charlotte Brontë's rosewood and mother-of-pearl workbox the contents that have survived her are generally 'work' (textile) related: thread, needles, buttons, silk, textile fragments, ribbons (Dinsdale, *Brontë Relics* 10). Her paint box contains paint-related objects, whereas her portable writing desk contains a mix of things: wallpaper patterns, patterns for a collar and cuffs, an autograph poem, and a plait of her sister Anne's hair (Alexander, *The Art* 267-269). At Darwin's Down House a small writing desk belonging to Darwin's daughter Annie (who died in 1851 at the age of ten) was filled by her mother with some of her most 'treasured possessions...to remember her by: needlework, letters, trinkets and a lock of her hair bound in paper and dated the day of her death, 23 April 1851' (Reeve 36).⁹⁴

All of which is to suggest that desks can be both surface locations and containers and that one aspect of the fitness of a writer's house/museum thing as a remembrancer is that it can contain: have the capacity to 'store' or hold the transient

⁹⁴ The writing box lay undiscovered until sometime around 2000 when it was discovered by Charles Darwin's great-great grandson Randal Keynes. His book about it *Annie's Box* was published by Fourth Estate in 2002.

and the ephemeral. As Hallam and Hockey suggest in *Death, Memory and Material Culture*: ‘Metaphors of memory often highlight the notion of containment and so the ability to remember is frequently represented as the act of storing something in a vessel or structure’ (27). They note that, of the two prominent metaphors for memory, one focuses on fixity and stability (storage), and the other on fading or fleeting memory and transformation (27). Desks are containers, they store things and ground memory; are solid and lasting markers of both the body and the work made there.

When the British Library states of the Brontë family’s Cuban mahogany and oak table that it ‘witnessed the creation of *Wuthering Heights*, [and] *Jane Eyre*’ the thought is of a surface, of ‘a real writer’s work-place, stained with ink spills and scarred in the centre with a large candle burn’ (‘Brontë Table’); the thought is of the imaginative acts that occurred there, which is why placing original manuscripts of those works on top of the table in a display is considered meaningful. As Chris Fletcher the curator of the ‘Chapter & Verse’ exhibition at the British Library stated: ‘to reunite the manuscripts with the table on which they were created – and which seemed to play such an essential part in their creation – is a remarkable and powerful thing’ (‘Brontë Table’). These ideas recognize both the object as equipment (‘a real writer’s workplace’ and as a site of imaginative acts. They also recognize the power of the ink-stain mark or mar or scar – the proof of the work and the acts that occurred there. This is a theme chapter six – on handwriting – will now explore.

Chapter Six: Handwriting

In the Brontë Parsonage Museum collection there is a letter dated 9 July 1857 in Patrick Brontë's hand to a Miss Atkins from Bath (P. Brontë, *Letter to MA*) The letter begins 'Dear Madam, / The annexed scrap / is all I can spare of the / autograph of my dear / daughter Charlotte...'. In the letter Reverend Brontë explains the modest size of the 'scrap' by stating that he has had 'so many applications' for his daughter's handwriting that his stock is nearly 'exhausted'. Attached to his letter is a small rectangular section of Charlotte's handwriting cut from a letter written in her hand.

The Parsonage collection also contains a scrapbook that belonged to a Mary Jesup Docwra of Kelvedon. Docwra's scrapbook contains a number of pasted autographs and, on the seventeenth page, a similar note from Patrick Brontë with a sample of Charlotte's writing attached. His note to Mary Dowcra of 23 September, 1858 reads: 'Dear Madam, / The enclosed is / all I can spare of / my dear Daughter Charlotte's / handwriting. / Yours, very respectfully / P. Brontë'. The small square of Charlotte's writing he included is a fragment that reads: 'my book – no one / ious than I am to' (P. Brontë, *Letter to MJD*).

Charlotte Brontë would have been dead approximately two years and three months by the time Patrick Brontë wrote to Miss Atkins of the deluge of applications for samples of his daughter's handwriting and about three and a half-years by the time he wrote to Mary Docwra, but as many as thirty years later collectors were still seeking 'the gift of a specimen of Charlotte Brontë's handwriting' (Shorter). Manuscripts or ephemera in Charlotte Brontë's hand sometimes go on sale today: in

2011 an autographed letter to Ellen Nussey signed ‘C.B’ (almost intact save for a cut-away on the third page) sold at Sotheby’s in New York for \$28,750 (USD), and in 2013 a single sheet of Brontë’s French homework fetched £50,000 (the Brontë Society bought it after subjecting it to a handwriting analysis).

An author’s autograph⁹⁵ or a sample of their handwriting was a much sought-after object in the Victorian era; handwriting is also one of the predominant artefacts in the writer’s house/museum space today. This chapter will demonstrate that authenticity, autographic ascription, contiguity and metonymical fitness are – as with hair, clothing, and writing tools – fundamental aspects of handwriting’s ability to evoke the mind and body of its author. Beginning with an overview of Victorian attitudes and beliefs about handwriting this chapter will assert that handwriting was regarded as a thing with resonant properties and that authentic and (literally) ‘autographic’ samples of handwriting were perceived as especially contiguous and metonymic. Charlotte Brontë’s treatment of handwriting and letters in her novel *Villette* will then be considered for how the novel challenges traditional readings of writing as a semiotic expression of a personality. Through foregrounding the materiality or fact of writing over its semiotic meaning in a number of instances in her narrative, Brontë’s novel brings to the fore the thingness of the written word: writing as a mark or site of thought, of someone’s having-been.

This chapter will then analyze the perception of written words as ‘thought’ through a reading of an artwork based on a small section of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* manuscript (a section that was selected, photographed and put on display as a

⁹⁵ ‘Autograph’ (from the Greek self + written) was frequently used in the Victorian era in relation to the broader definition of the word as ‘1.a. A manuscript written in the author’s own handwriting’ (OED). Although the use of the word to refer to ‘2.a. A person’s own signature, esp. one written by a well-known public figure for a fan or collector’ (OED) was in use in the Victorian era the use of ‘autograph’ as a synonym for signature was not consistent. In this chapter I have generally retained ‘autograph’ in my own words as a synonym for a signature and have used other references such as ‘handwriting’ or ‘manuscript’ or ‘letter’ for written text that exceeds the signature.

‘Brontëan abstract’ by the artist Cornelia Parker for her 2006 Parsonage exhibition) in order to demonstrate how both the original Dowcra fragment of Charlotte’s writing and Parker’s artwork convey the worlding or resonant power of handwriting.

A brief consideration of the surviving fragment of Thomas Carlyle’s lost draft of Volume 1 of his history of the French Revolution will further support the idea that handwriting evokes a sense of a lived thought – though his fragment points to a different kind of event, one signaled more directly by the material properties of the paper / fragment itself.

Once the idea of handwriting as a vestige of lived thought has been established I will then proceed to read handwriting in its most thingly aspect: as a mark. This section will argue that as a material ‘mark’ or ‘site’ Victorian writers’ handwriting, at its most fundamental level, resonates a sense of the individual’s *being* and of their *having-been*, and that, as an artefact that makes present an absence, handwriting brings the viewer into a sense of contact with the writer. In this way the material mark is a dwelling site conveying a sense of the author-as-trace through the medium of a mark in time.

I - Handwriting in the Victorian Context

The idea that one’s penmanship was congruous with one’s person appears frequently in the Victorian era. For some penmanship could reveal aspects of one’s class/breeding, gender, or nationality (Ingram 2-8; Beeton 73; Littell 88-89) an assertion that presumed that as a unique expression of an individual one’s handwriting was as a telling visual metaphor for one’s attributes or character (Floreay

113). Beeton's *The Young Englishwoman* (1875) acknowledges that it is 'not without the pale of probability that these [styles of writing] should be taken to indicate certain peculiarities of national and individual character' (73). The magazine also reiterates D'Israeli's idea that emotional states can affect handwriting: 'Who is there who in grief shapes his letters and writes as he does in joy?' (73) For his part, D'Israeli in his section on 'Autographs' in the second series of his *Curiosities of Literature* (1823), bemoans the loss of individual characteristics in writing due to overzealous instruction – though he does draw correlations between writing and character and states that 'the vital principle must be true, that the handwriting bears an analogy to the character of the writer, as all voluntary actions are characteristic of the individual' (280). He also acknowledges the role of one's vocation in one's penmanship, stating that '[t]he merchant's clerk will not write like the lawyer or the poet' (280).

In Littell's *Living Age* of 1865, the writers are more suspect of drawing correlations between a writer and their writing, stating that chiromancy 'though practised with apparent success by individuals, seems to us rather random and uncertain' (88). While their deconstruction of handwriting and characteristics figures on international differences, they do note that '[p]eople of the same, or nearly the same, period write more alike than people of the same character' citing an affinity between the writing of Shelley and Byron despite the notable differences in their personalities (89).

Beeton's *The Young Englishwoman* references the resurgence of autograph collecting at the start of the nineteenth century alongside the establishment of shops

for the sale of autographs (73; see also *Littell's* 129-131; Clayton 269).⁹⁶ Dating the practice of keeping autograph albums back to the end of the sixteenth century (Beeton 73, see also Phillips iii) *The Young Englishwoman* cites an essay on the subject by Thomas Byerley (1789-1826) who was an editor of the *Literary Chronicle* and who wrote on characteristic signatures in *Relics of Literature* (1823, published under the pen name Stephen Collett). Byerley's long article on 'the art of judging the character of individuals from their handwriting' was reprinted in 1875 (Cooper, T) around the time Beeton's entry on 'Autographs' appeared in *The Young Englishwoman* and four years before John Henry Ingram's *The Philosophy of Handwriting* appeared.

John Henry Ingram's pen name was Felix de Salamanca. His 1879 publication *The Philosophy of Handwriting* supports the assertion that autograph collecting, the 'literary souvenir' and handwriting analysis were popular in the Victorian era. For Ingram's *The Philosophy of Handwriting* combined all of these elements in that it featured 135 autographic 'treasures' (including Thomas Carlyle's and Charles Darwin's signatures) in which the chirography of distinguished individuals and celebrated contemporaries 'whose reputation is not likely to prove ephemeral' (5) was analyzed for correspondences or dissimilarities between the penmanship and the person, an analysis based on the belief that 'a strong analogy exists between a man's personal character and his calligraphy' (1). Promoting the value of handwriting as a substitute for an absent person, Ingram suggested in his introduction that there is an established hierarchy between self, writing and image. He stated: 'It has been declared that next to seeing a distinguished man we desire to see his portrait and, after that, his autograph. But an autograph has this advantage over a portrait, *it must*

be faithful, which a portrait rarely is' (3). Ingram's comments suggest that the problem with portraits is that while they may capture a *likeness* they are drawn from a source that necessarily involves another perspective – whereas a signature can only come from the individual him or herself. The 'faithfulness' Ingram's suggests is contiguity of the highest order: a reference to the mind that moves a hand and pen across a surface in order to make markings on paper via a series of unbroken contacts. Autographs, for Ingram, are especially potent. He states that the autograph, more than any other kind of writing: 'may generally be accepted as truly characteristic of its writer. It is often written more carefully—always more fluently—than the remainder of his manuscript; and from these very circumstances—from the extra care, deliberateness, and frequency of its use—acquires a settled form that better portrays its author's idiosyncrasies...' (2).

Because of this perceived connection between self, signature and handwriting a number of autograph books and collections featuring the handwriting of renowned figures were published in the Victorian era.⁹⁷ These books reflect more than just a layperson's interest in the handwriting of renowned people (writing as a curiosity or as a way of judging character) but the importance of authenticity in relation to the public record vis-à-vis the value of having a guide or verified samples of the handwriting of distinguished men and women on hand as a way of checking the authenticity of the signatures and handwriting of those figures who might be especially appealing to (potentially gullible) collectors – especially in an era where

⁹⁷ Among them: J. Netherclift's *A Collection of One Hundred Characteristic and Interesting Autograph Letters* of 1849, The English engraver Charles John Smith's *Historical and Literary Curiosities* of 1852, T. Watt's *The Autograph Miscellany* of 1855, Lawrence Barnet Phillips' *The Autographic Album: A Collection of Four Hundred and Seventy Fac-similes* of 1866 (lithographed by F.G.Netherclift) and Edward Lumley's *The Art of Judging the Character of Individuals from their Handwriting and Style* of 1875. During this period the lithographer and facsimilist Frederick George Netherclift published a number of titles including: *The Autograph Miscellany: a collection of Autograph Letters, interesting documents etc...* (with Richard Sims of the British Museum) published in 1855, *The Hand-book of Autographs: being a ready guide to the handwriting of distinguished men and women of every nation...* (with Richard Sims) (1858-62), *The Autograph Souvenir: a collection of autograph letters, interesting documents etc* (again with Sims) of 1863-1865, and *The Autographic Album: a collection of four hundred and seventy fac-similes...* of 1866.

material remnants of historical persons were becoming increasingly valuable. F.G. Netherclift who published a number of titles mid-century (often with Richard Sims of the British Museum) including *The Hand-book of Autographs: being a ready guide to the handwriting of distinguished men and women of every nation...* was, in this way, more than just an assembler of autographs for publication and public consumption, he was also considered to be an expert on handwriting, giving testimony before Parliament in 1865 in relation to a case involving possible forgeries on a petition (*Parliamentary Papers*, iii-48). Authenticity in relation to autographs was important enough for Beeton's *The Young Englishwoman* to advise its readers never to mix 'original specimens' and 'facsimiles' but rather to have separate albums for each (195).

Autograph collecting was ridiculed by some (the former poet-laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843) announced that he was entering into a 'Society for the Discouragement of Autograph Collecting') but defended by others. *The Young Englishwoman* asserted that autograph collecting 'tends materially to the increase of knowledge. Biographical knowledge in an especial manner, for we can hardly possess the autograph signature of any individual without being induced by it to find out something of his life and history' (194) – an idea that suggests a correspondence between the collection and keeping of an autograph and knowledge of the individual whose writing one treasures, collects or keeps. This comment is interesting in relation to the issue of material agency and handwriting as a thing because it suggests a sort of circular relationship: one collects the autograph out of an *already given* interest in an individual and is *then* inspired by the possession of the autograph to further their biographical knowledge. Here, in this model, the agency is with the

collector who, while inspired by the object, *decides* to further their knowledge. But *The Young Englishwoman* article also goes on to suggest that the materiality of writing reveals something of the writer: '[a]lmost everybody will admit that our handwriting is made to bear the impression of our feelings at the time, and even to reveal them' (73) – an assertion that supports the idea that handwriting was regarded as more than just a passive object we meet with a concept (i.e. this is Charlotte Brontë's writing, she is the author of *Jane Eyre*) but that handwriting as a material trace, as form, could also evoke something non-textual but palpable about the individual when they wrote it, something that springs from the materiality and form of the writing itself.

II – Contiguity and Metonymy

Although there were obviously many reasons to collect autographs or writing samples in the Victorian era (archival, commercial, personal etc.) one factor underlying the collection and display of writers' handwriting is the sense of a connection between the signer/writer and the signed/written thing – an idea rooted partly in cultural and legal practice wherein the signature is able to stand-in for the self – but also rooted in notions of congruity and contact⁹⁸ and the idea that, in

⁹⁸ Sympathetic magic as described in Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (see esp pages 11-48) and by Marcel Mauss in *A General Theory of Magic* (see especially 15-16; 79-92; 121-26) (and as discussed in chapter three of this thesis) is based on two laws: the Law of Similarity – that 'like produces like' (see Florey 113 in relation to this law and handwriting) and the Law of Contact or Contagion (wherein it is believed that things once in contact with a person retain some kind of contact even after they are severed, or that things once in contact but now severed retain some element, residue or trace of the originating individual from whom they've come). The first law, 'like produces like' is most often evident in relations between handwriting and persons, for example, the physiognomist Lavater (1741-1801) in his book *Physiognomic Fragments* (1775-1778) promoted the idea that there was a strong relation between handwriting and the self, as did the 'father of graphology' (Landau 1) the Frenchman Jean-Hippolyte Michon (1806-1881). Michon authored two books on graphology: *Système de graphologie* in 1875 (Paris: Bibliothèque graphologique) and *Méthode pratique de graphologie* in 1878 (Paris: Bibliothèque graphologique). He also published a book that read Napoléon the first's biography alongside his handwriting: *Histoire de Napoléon 1er d'après son écriture* (1879) (Landau 8). In her essay 'Michon and the Birth of Scientific Graphology' Shaik Landau notes that Michon described handwriting as 'soulwriting' and that he believed that '...the manifestation of the soul through graphic signs is based on the intimate connection which exists between each sign...which emanates from the human personality, and the soul, which is

relation to Victorian writers, ‘writing’ is not only what one *does*, but strongly associated with who one *is*. This section will provide evidence that a powerful sense of trace can adhere to handwriting and that as a token or remain that stands in for the individual in question handwriting is metonymical – a metonymy suggested by Ingram in his introduction to *The Philosophy of Handwriting* when he states that ‘[i]n perusing the veritable handwriting of a celebrated person we seem brought into personal contact with him...’ (3).⁹⁹ Through reading Charlotte Brontë’s ‘letter’ narrative in *Villette* and revisiting Patrick Brontë’s letters to Mary Dowcra and Miss Atkins this section will demonstrate that in some cases the perception of handwriting’s materiality can prioritize its thingly nature over its semiotic meaning, and, when the materiality is thus heightened, allow writing to be read as representative of a person’s self – a metonymy that allows handwriting to stand-in for the individual whose present-absence it traces.

In Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Villette*, Lucy Snowe struggles to come to terms with her unreciprocated romantic affection for Dr John Graham Bretton an English doctor and former acquaintance also living in Villette. Over the course of the novel Dr John writes several letters to Lucy as her friend. The treatment of his handwriting in the novel (compared to references to M. Paul Emmanuel’s letters where the writing’s materiality isn’t prominent) supports this chapter’s hypothesis that as a thing in the

the substance of that personality’ (9). This link between sign and soul (later, Michon identified the brain as the seat of the writing impulse) was described by Michon as a law, he wrote: ‘Here is the first law of graphic physiology to which there is no exception: **a graphic sign never expresses the opposite trait to the one it represents.**’ (Landau 10, emphasis hers). Here we see one of the founding principals of graphology reflecting the law of sympathetic magic, that like produces like, to the extent that Michon rejects the possibility that any kind of oppositional trait can exist between an individual and their writing style. The implications of the second law – which in handwriting would seem to suggest that access to a person’s handwriting is a way of coming into contact with some aspect of them (when the real being is not accessible) will be considered in more detail throughout this chapter.

⁹⁹ In her introduction to her novel *The Professor*, Charlotte Brontë, in seeking to clarify that *The Professor* was her first novel (despite being published after *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*) employed metonymy: ‘A first attempt it certainly was not as the pen which wrote it had been previously worn down a good deal in a practice of some years’ (3). Here the pen that writes stands metonymically for Charlotte: a pen employed in the act of inscribing, a pen that is a conduit that links (through contiguity) Charlotte and her written words. This sense of the metonymy between writer and writing via the medium of a writing tool creates a sense of presence that can make possession of writing feel like a form of contact.

Victorian era handwriting was strongly associated with whom one was as a person, and that this association could be metonymic in nature: the writing standing in for the writer. Crucially, in *Villette*, writing is metonymic to different degrees: sometimes being treated as a likeness and sometimes being treated as a material embodiment of the writer.

Writing as a likeness is exemplified in *Villette* by a number of scenes, including one in chapter eighteen in which there is a discussion between Graham and Lucy wherein Graham is seeking information about a student of Lucy's – a Miss Fanshawe. In the scene he inquires after her handwriting and his enquiry implies that her handwriting must match the person he perceives her to be. He asks: 'And her handwriting? It must be pretty, light, ladylike, I should think?' (219).

Later, in chapter thirty-two, Paulina reports to Lucy that she's been sent a note from Graham: '...addressed to Miss de Bassompierre. I spied it at once, amidst all the rest; the handwriting was not strange; it attracted me directly' (433). Here, her attraction to the writing reflects her attraction to Dr Bretton. Instead of giving the letter to her father as she thinks she should have, Paulina keeps it on her lap during breakfast and then takes it upstairs to read it. She describes the material aspects of the letter to Lucy afterward:

'...Graham's hand is like himself, Lucy, and so is his seal—all clear, firm, and rounded—no slovenly splash of wax—a full, solid, steady drop—a distinct impress; no pointed turns harshly pricking the optic nerve, but a clean, mellow, pleasant manuscript, that soothes you as you read. It is like his face—just like the chiselling of his features: do you know his autograph?' (434)

Here Paulina conflates aspects of Dr Bretton's handwriting (and even his manner of stamping his seal) with his person – 'clean, mellow, pleasant' – going so far as to align the aesthetic of his script with the features of his face. Here the script, as in the

query about Miss Fanshawe's writing, is representative of him as a likeness. In contrast, for Lucy, her engagements with Dr Bretton's writing read as a stronger form of metonymy, perhaps because she does not 'have him' in the way Paulina does, as a romantic possibility.

In order to best demonstrate the foregrounded materiality of Bretton's letters for Lucy, a reference to a set of letters mentioned in the closing scene of the novel (written by M. Paul Emanuel, Lucy's eventual suitor) is useful. Here the writing is described as content-based, as delivering of emotion, and the analogy Lucy draws is between the *content* of the letters and the person. She notes:

...he wrote as he gave and as he loved, in full-handed, full-hearted plentitude. He wrote because he liked to write; he did not abridge, because he cared not to abridge. He sat down; he took pen and paper, because he loved Lucy and had much to say to her; because he was faithful and thoughtful, because he was tender and true. (571)

This summary of M. Paul Emanuel's letters alludes subtly to the shape of his writing in the form of the word 'full-handed' but the emotional content or tenor of his words is what is deemed worthy of comment. In comparison, earlier in the novel when Lucy first received a friendly letter from Dr Bretton – who had promised a week earlier to write her so that she would not be lonely (264) – the materiality or thingliness of the letter, seal and handwriting are deeply considered: 'A letter! The shape of a letter similar to that had haunted my brain in its very core for seven days past. I dreamed of a letter last night. Strong magnetism drew me to that letter now...' (276). Shortly thereafter she describes the 'clean, clear, equal, decided hand' that had inscribed 'Miss Lucy Snowe' on the envelope, and the seal with the author's initials which is regarded intently for having been in contact with his hand:

‘deftly dropped by untremulous fingers...’ (277; see also Crowther 130). These materialities so deeply affect Lucy that she states:

I experienced a happy feeling—a glad emotion which went warm to my heart, and ran lively through all my veins. For once a hope was realized. I held in my hand a morsel of real solid joy: not a dream, not an image of the brain, not one of those shadowy chances imagination pictures, and of which humanity starves but cannot live.... (277)

For Lucy the letter – as yet unopened or read – is already a kind of nourishment, an affective object that physiologically effects her through its material presence alone – a presence that she relates more than once (‘decided hand’ ‘untremulous fingers’) to the hand and body of the person who authored it. Lucy goes on to state that ‘[t]he cover with its address; the seal, with its three clear letters, was bounty and abundance for the present’ (277) then, ‘having feasted my eyes with one more look’ she presses her lips against Dr Bretton’s seal and returns to class thinking about the letter as ‘the source of my joy’ (278).

This motif of touching the name, initials or writing of the writer appears again at another point in the novel when Paulina (Dr Bretton’s eventual wife) sees a book from Graham’s childhood in which he’d inscribed his name in a ‘schoolboy hand’ (335, see also Crowther 131). Lucy observes Paulina as she looks at the signature:

She looked at it long; nor was she satisfied with merely looking; she gently passed over the characters the tips of her fingers, accompanying the action with an unconscious but tender smile, which converted the touch into a caress. Paulina loved the Past; but the peculiarity of this little scene was that she *said* nothing: she could feel, without pouring out her feelings in a flux of words. (335)

This scene further demonstrates the power of contiguity between the remain that is handwriting or a signature and the individual who scribed it. Pauline, in touching Dr Bretton’s youthful signature, is able to express her tenderness toward him – allowing his signature to stand metonymically for his body. In addition to this extension

(writing as stand-in for the self) Brontë's narration suggests that in this context Bretton's signature also presences or allows a kind of access to a moment or time (in this case 'the Past') which signals both Bretton's childhood and the instance the inscription was made.

In her essay 'Charlotte Brontë's Textual Relics: Memorializing the Material in *Villette*' Kathryn Crowther reads this act of caress metonymically. She states that Paulina 'runs her fingers over the handwriting which connects it physically to Graham, effectively caressing his body itself' (131). She further suggests that 'handwriting maps the body onto the text' (131) which as a literal truth (the body, in the form of the hand, scribing and marking as it goes) supports the metonym of writing for body and of caress of text for caress of body/trace. For Crowther, however, the letters are 'relics'. Throughout her analysis of the letter narrative she reads Brontë's use of what she calls 'textual relics' in *Villette* as reflective of Charlotte Brontë's own anxiety about the commodification of her work (128-135) and defines relics (through Brontë's use of the word in chapter sixteen – a scene described in chapter two of this thesis¹⁰⁰) as things bearing a physical trace. Crowther states, of Brontë's use of the word 'relic' in relation to furnishings:

The choice of the word 'relic' is compelling here, because it is only when Lucy realizes that she knows these objects, created them even, that they turn into relics, highlighting the idea that it is the physical trace of the body in an object which grants it reliquary status. Although these objects are not textual [because they are furnishings], they serve as narratives of Lucy's past, in the way that all relics do. (134-135)

Crowther's reading of letters and handwriting in *Villette* promotes the letters and the handwriting within the novel to relics and something approaching the fetish.¹⁰¹ She

¹⁰⁰ The reference, in chapter sixteen of *Villette*, reads: 'Upon the mantel-shelf there were two china vases, some relics of a diminutive tea-service, as smooth as enamel and as thin as eggshell...' (Brontë, *Villette* 193).

¹⁰¹ Although I disagree with the central hypothesis of this essay – that the treatment of textual relics in *Villette* is a psychological reflection of Brontë's own anxiety around the movement of her own text into the commodified world of a publication – a

states: '[i]n fact, hand-written letters figure so strongly in *Villette* that they become almost fetishized for the connection they carry to the person who composed them' (130). This reading supports my suggestion that the presence and materiality of both handwriting and the letters enact a sense of connection, but Crowther's use of 'relic' is problematic for how it subtly undermines the affective power of the object and, thus, the agency of the thing that is handwriting. In order to best express the metonymical relationship between the written and the writer – and to support my reading of the Brontë fragments Patrick Brontë sent as vital remembrancers – a brief look at the term 'relic' in the context of *Villette* will be useful.

Crowther's use of 'relic' to describe the letters contrasts Brontë's own use of the word 'token' to describe them. One of the central letter narratives in *Villette* involves Lucy's burial of the letters she received from Dr Bretton ('A Burial' see esp 338-344). In order to move past her infatuation with him, in order to let him go Lucy must bury the 'tokens' he has given her. Lucy – and by extension Charlotte Brontë – never uses the word relic to describe the letters, rather she describes the cessation of Bretton's letters as a lack of tokens: 'The letter, the message, once frequent, are cut off; the visit, formerly periodical, ceases to occur; the book, paper, or other tokens that indicated remembrance, comes no more' (308). Shortly thereafter Lucy describes the previous seven weeks which had seen a lack of letters: '[s]even weeks as bare as seven sheets of blank paper: no word was written on one of them; not a

reading that I would argue over-analyzes an unknowable set of psychological reactions to a complex process (writing / publishing) – see for example the suggestion near the beginning of Crowther's essay that Charlotte was 'simultaneously addressing the implications of personal versus professional writing as well as memorializing her own investment in the book-making process' (130) – this essay is valuable for how it reads the treatment of handwriting and letters linking the material object or thing that bears the trace of the body to the presence of the 'artist's original "hand"' (129). Throughout her paper Crowther reads textual relics as objects that connect the reader to the body of the writer as a kind of metonymical thing: a 'synecdochal representation of the body' (129) while also demonstrating that the narrative is filled with 'text and objects which bear the mark of their producer' (129). Here Crowther provides a reading of the things of *Villette* as autographic vis-a-vis her suggestion that the texts and objects 'bear the mark of their producer...[and] memorialize a time when the work of art was always a singular, unique creation and the hand of the artist was preserved in her art' (129).

visit, not a token' (309). Shortly after this Lucy in securing her letters describes how she 'had hardly time to recasket my treasures' (311). Here the letters are tokens and treasures. By contrast, in the burial scene, she describes building materials as relics: '[i]n a tool-shed at the bottom of the garden, lay the relics of building-materials, left by masons lately employed to repair a part of the premises' (343).

While the word relic carries within it metonymical aspects based on contiguity and contact – 'relic' as a person or thing 'believed to be sanctified by contact'; 'something kept as a remembrance, souvenir, or memorial; a historical object relating to a particular person, place, or thing; a memento' the difference between the word 'relic' with its implications of pastness, of a person or thing as an 'historical object' as '[t]hat which remains or is left behind' as 'residue' as '[a]n object vested with interest because of its age or historical associations' (OED) troubles Brontë's representation of handwriting and letters as powerful actors in the drama, capable of creating affect. Whereas 'relic' carries the implication of a thing surviving from an earlier time, kept out of a kind of reverence, and met with veneration – a thing valued and 'sanctified' for its former connection to an individual – Brontë's use of the word token implies a more active mode of engagement. Unlike 'relic,' carried within the word 'token' are ideas of active employment, of a thing that *serves*: '[s]omething that serves to indicate a fact, event, object, feeling, etc.'; '[s]omething serving as proof... an evidence' and elsewhere '[s]omething remaining as evidence of what formerly existed; a vestige, trace, "sign"' (OED). Because Bretton's letters are tokens that *serve* as a visible or tangible representation of a fact, event, or feeling – even in the evanescence of those feelings – they must be buried. Even though they are buried they remain objects of remembrance attached to the author, tokens, not relics: tokens

because they are still capable of enacting a strong presence, capable of standing in for and affectively presencing whole clusters of feelings and events. As Kate E. Brown notes in ‘Beloved Objects: mourning, Materiality, and Charlotte Brontë’s “Never-Ending Story”’ Lucy’s ‘attachment is (and always has been) to the letters as things, material and tangible objects’ (398). Burying the letters she keeps them ‘from material decay; as such, they can *retain their meaningfulness* even in the absence of the relationship they memorialize’ (398 emphasis added). This retention makes them treasures, tokens that can be reactivated – a bridge between two people, one that tethers the two through material proof (his scribing her name, sending his thinking to her) – remembrancers that can be exhumed at any time, buried by the marker of the pear-tree where Lucy can find them. More than almost any other aspect of Brontë’s narrative I would suggest that it is this burial which most directly attests to the power of the object that is handwriting to presence and evoke – provoke – the individual for whom it stands. Charlotte must put her affection for Bretton behind her and so must remove the letters and his hand from her presence, not only protecting her treasure from other prying eyes but ensuring her own safety from the powerful effect the very materiality of the letters and his handwriting have on her.

If Lucy had truly wished to sever herself from Bretton fully she could have burned or otherwise destroyed the letters, but instead she stoppers them, preserves them and ensures their *vitality*. Even buried they remain (serve as) a link to a time, narrative and person in her life. While tokens of Bretton’s remembrance of Lucy may ‘come no more’ – as per the scene where she feels he is not thinking about her (308) – the tokens and trace of his remembrance of her (and care for her) remain vital, a proof in ink inscribed by his hand.

III – Writing as Evidence

In *Villette*, Graham's letters are proof that he is thinking of Lucy. Which is to suggest that the letters are a kind of evidence: of his care for her, of their relationship, and the kinds of discourse they had. In the same way the snippets of Charlotte Brontë's handwriting sent by Patrick Brontë to Miss Atkins and Ms Dowcra are also a kind of evidence: of Charlotte's life and the physical fact of her having-been. Handwriting in this way is evidence of existence in the form of a mark.

Crowther's suggestion that 'handwriting maps the body onto the text' (131) is useful for how it informs the dynamic expressed by Patrick Brontë's letters to Miss Atkins and Ms Dowcra. In both letters, written a year and some six weeks apart (again, the first letter, about two years and three months after Charlotte's death) he uses similar phrasing, specifically the word 'spare'. To Miss Atkins he writes: 'The annexed scrap / is all I can spare of the / autograph of my dear / daughter Charlotte...' (P. Brontë, *Letter to MA*) and to Mary Jesup Docwra: 'The enclosed is / all I can spare of / my dear Daughter Charlotte's / handwriting' (P. Brontë, *Letter to MJD*). The word 'spare' – with its intimations of giving or granting some thing from a stock or quantity (OED); of the valued but extraneous that can be given away so long as a fundamental amount, degree, kind or essence is retained – is poignant in this context. 'Spare' here implies both the retention of something and the acknowledgement of excess, that which can be spared and, so, in this case, given away. The use of 'dear' in both letters is a further indication that what is given (the autograph of his dear daughter / his dear daughter's handwriting) is valuable to the

giver. What these two letters suggest is that the handwriting (as that which was requested and severed from its context and given to the individuals who asked for it) is *of a part*, meaning: part of a larger font, a font that can be read as ‘all of the extant writing left behind by Charlotte’ or ‘all of the ephemeral writing left behind by Charlotte’ (this, assuming Mr. Brontë wouldn’t have cut up the manuscript of *Jane Eyre* for autograph seekers) and, even, I would suggest ‘Charlotte herself’. If Charlotte’s handwriting was wholly divorced from Charlotte’s mind and body, if it wasn’t a token or trace that presenced her vitality, I believe it wouldn’t have been sought or given and that the language of the giving wouldn’t have included the concept of what could be spared. Here Charlotte’s handwriting has mapped her mind and body on to the text, has left an indelible and particular trace.

While I cannot intuit Reverend Brontë’s motivations in responding favourably and obligingly to the numerous applications he received for a scrap of Charlotte’s handwriting (although I suspect the motive was not profit in the case of Miss Atkins and Mary Jesup Dowcra) his obliging of such requests seems far from trivial. Far from relics commemorating some distant past or the long dead, these fragments were tokens: objects generated by the hand and mind of a writer, material remembrancers capable of presencing or affectively connecting the recipient or viewer with Charlotte herself – a ‘connection’ that would allow Patrick Brontë to commemorate his daughter through the dissemination of a small and shareable part of her – a ‘connection’ based on contiguity and metonymy. In Lakoff and Johnson’s terms this the metonymy of ‘producer for product’ (38) and here the case is the same: writer for writing, Charlotte’s body mapped onto the page even in the form of Dowcra’s fragment: ‘my book – no one / ious than I am to’. A mapping that the writer Miranda

K. Pennington's description of a Brontë scrap suggests remains with the thing. In writing about the sale of a Brontë fragment in *The American Scholar* she states:

Imagining myself holding Charlotte's scrap of poetry sends tingles up and down the backs of my arms. This would be as close to a personal message from her as I'd ever get. I picture my hands in the same place where Charlotte's hands would have been. Our fingerprints might line up. It would be thrilling to be united, even if just for a moment. (Pennington)

This sense of contiguity over time brings with it a sense of access and closeness, of a direct 'personal' address. Writing in this way closes a gap, presencing the sender for the recipient.

In 2005 the Brontë Parsonage Museum commissioned the British artist Cornelia Parker (1956-) to produce work inspired by objects connected to the Brontës. The resultant work was displayed on site in the Parsonage in late 2006 and included a number of imagistic 'abstracts' related to the act of writing. One (fig. 21, below) is a silver gelatin print of Emily Brontë's quill nib as seen through a scanning electron microscope – a close-up that results in an almost surreal taxonomy of the used nib – an image that shows, as the last chapter suggests, a tool: in this case an amplified nib that bears the wear marks of its employment.

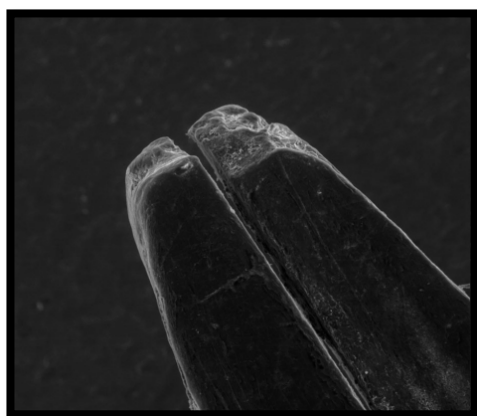


Fig. 21. Brontëan Abstract (Emily Brontë's quill pen nib) 2006, silver gelatin print of an SEM image © Cornelia Parker (Parker, *Brontëan* 23).

Another of the abstracts Parker produced and displayed at the Parsonage was part of a series featuring twenty-four images of deletions or revisions from Charlotte Brontë's original *Jane Eyre* manuscript including the image below (fig. 22) – a work of art that is useful for how it selects, emphasizes and promotes a reading of writing as an event or 'trace' – not just of the body (in the form of the hand and the pen that move over the page together) but of writing as a trace of thought itself.

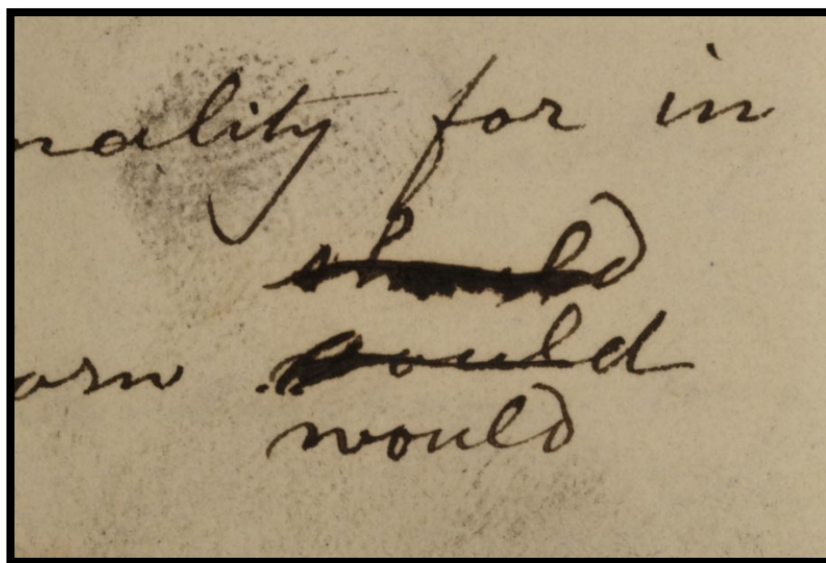


Fig. 22. Brontëan Abstract (deletions from the original manuscript of *Jane Eyre*) 2006, c-type colour print of scan © Cornelia Parker (Parker, *Brontëan* 26).

This digital scan of a revision from the original *Jane Eyre* manuscript features a double edit, likely from Chapter XIV of *Jane Eyre* (a scene in which Jane and Rochester are becoming acquainted) wherein Charlotte Brontë changed a word two times. If the placement of the words and strikethroughs are properly indicative of the order of thought it appears she has changed 'could' (in line with her sentence) to 'should' (written above and then struck-through) and then 'should' to 'would' (written below). These edits represent a series of instances in Charlotte's life in

which she was likely considering the implications of each word in relation to her scene and her character Jane's thinking; words that would have meant very different things to both Jane as a speaker in the scene and to the book's readers.¹⁰²

What makes Parker's work useful in this analysis (compared to looking at an original manuscript as a thing with the weight of its larger narrative and its own status as a narrative work of art) is how Parker's fragment (like the Dowcra fragment) highlights the obdurate materiality of writing pared off from sentence, scene, story, or larger semiotic contexts. This foregrounding of a fragment of the manuscript, of the materiality of writing, expresses a number of things that an encounter with the whole manuscript might not evoke as clearly, in particular the idea of writing (and revision) as an event in the writer's life: an event that consists of a series of thoughts or subsequent instances wherein Charlotte as a writer worked through a mental process of what each selected word might mean or imply in the context of her scene and her own politics or ideology.

Parker, of course, is making her own set of statements or opening up her own questions through the photographing and cropping of the section selected in this work – it is possible, for example, that she is highlighting words that can be read as particularly loaded for women in the Victorian era: words – 'could, should, would' – that evoke issues of ability, desire, convention and agency, words that might be read as particularly resonant in relation to certain aspects of the Brontë sisters' lives.¹⁰³

¹⁰² The sentence appears to be one wherein Jane and Rochester are beginning to formalize the rules of their conversation. Rochester has almost forgotten Jane is a paid employee and in their back and forth he says: 'And will you consent to dispense with a great many conventional forms and phrases, without thinking that the omission arises from insolence?' to which Jane replies: 'I am sure, sir, I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other nothing free-born would submit to, even for a salary' (158). Parker's fragment shows the last part of the word formality and the first part of the word insolence and the 'orn' of born.

¹⁰³ Gender and convention especially in relation to being women writers was certainly an issue for the Brontë sisters. At the start of their careers Charlotte, Emily and Anne felt it necessary to publish under male aliases (respectively: Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell) as a literary career was not generally deemed suitable for women. This is evidenced by the letter Charlotte received from the poet laureate Robert Southey (dated 12 March 1837) in which he advised: 'Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure she will have for it even as an

One of Parker's stated aims for the project – 'taking the objects that the Brontës owned, or actual physical traces like locks of their hair, and examining these very closely to try to see something that they might not even have witnessed themselves' (Wilcocks 'Myths') – supports a reading of the abstract as a kind of archeological find: as an uncovered and exhumed instant of resonant thought and meaning, one wherein the moment of meaning might be even greater or more 'loaded' for contemporary viewers of the fragment than it might have been for Charlotte herself.

One of the themes of Parker's abstract series is the idea of the microscopic or telescopic: of seeing Brontë things close-up, in a way that even the Brontës wouldn't have been able to have seen them¹⁰⁴ in this case seeing, in a removed fashion, a kind of thinking – Charlotte changing her mind as she revised her scene, the tracks of her thinking evidenced on paper. What the 'could / should / would' abstract emphasizes then is doubly biographical: first it emphasizes the material trace of a series of moments related to an event called 'writing' instances where handwriting as trace presences the movement of both Charlotte's body and her mind, acts of thinking, of revision that give us a sense of her embodied self in all that that implies: her physical form and physical action, as well as her politic and her care for language and its meanings. Second, the abstract emphasizes a series of moments in the biography of the book that became *Jane Eyre*, each strikethrough a recension of a possible version of the book. Here Charlotte and the book are 'worlded' in a Heideggerean way because the revisions reveal Charlotte both thinking *and* rethinking – a writing activity comprised of a series of instances manifested by movements of the mind and

accomplishment and a recreation' (Southey).

¹⁰⁴ Other objects magnified, photographed and exhibited at the Parsonage include: the shaft of Charlotte's quill pen and pen nib, Anne Brontë's needle, a darn in Anne's stocking. Anne, Emily and Charlotte's hair, Charlotte's left glove, Emily's burnt comb, Charlotte's picushion, marks in the margins of Emily's lined paper, Emily's blotting paper, Charlotte's blotting paper and Branwell's wallet (Parker, *Brontëan Abstracts*).

the pen, instances that have a duration and which therefore start to place the event in an even larger series of imagined or conjured relations that might include the act of writing (and its implements), environments and locations and so on.

While Parker's abstract from Charlotte's manuscript illuminates handwriting's ability to evoke a larger set of relations (in this case acts of imagination, writing and revision in Charlotte's creation of a novel) Thomas Carlyle's original fragment from Volume I of his history of the French Revolution is useful for how it signals another kind of event – one less tied to the author and the imaginative act and more tied to the material thing that is handwriting on paper. Accordingly, the next section of this chapter will briefly examine how the surviving fragment of Thomas Carlyle's manuscript signals an event related to the biography *of the manuscript itself* – and how, like the things that survive the writer in the writer's house/museum, the manuscript as a 'remain' anchors absence.

The surviving fragment of Thomas Carlyle's manuscript of Vol I of The French Revolution

In 1896 a visitor to the newly established Carlyle House Museum could find a variety of writing-related objects in the house's attic study including Thomas Carlyle's writing chair, an inkwell, two of his pens – including the pen '[w]ith which Carlyle wrote the last chapters of "Frederick the Great"' (*Carlyle's House Catalogue* 98-99) – and examples of his handwriting in the form of letters, manuscript pages, proof corrections, a petition and annotated books. There were also a few facsimiles or photographs of important letters including one written to James Fraser in 1835 – a

letter that has become famous in its own right because it details Carlyle's response to John Stuart Mill's devastating news that through an accident the only copy of the first volume of Carlyle's manuscript on the French Revolution had been destroyed.

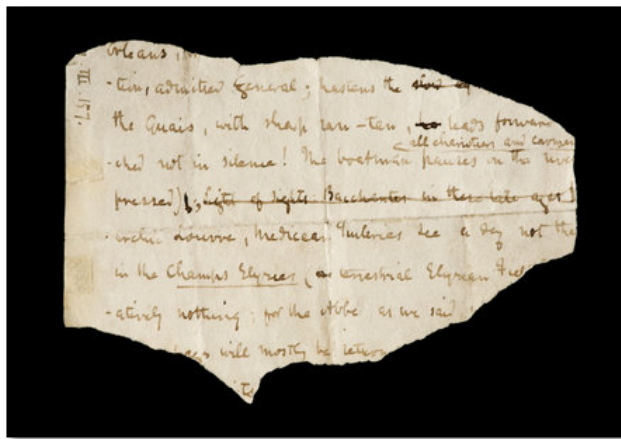


Fig. 23. Fragment of Thomas Carlyle's manuscript of *The French Revolution Vol. I* at Carlyle's House © National Trust. Web. <<http://www.ntprints.com>>

The story of the manuscript's destruction is as follows: in February 1836 Carlyle is said to have handed his only copy of Volume I of his history of the French Revolution over to his friend John Stuart Mill to read. The pages were, in the following weeks, allegedly mistaken for wastepaper and burned by a housemaid of Mill's (Holme 17). Carlyle was devastated. The surviving fragment (fig. 23, above) is a sideways leaf or tear-shaped scrap of paper on which a handful of sentences (with revisions) appear. Described in the *Carlyle House Catalogue* of 1896 as the 'Small Fragment of Manuscript of "French Revolution." (All there is)' (CHC 98) the surviving scrap of the manuscript remains, according to the museum's current custodians, one of the most popular objects in the museum. After all, as a material remain of a lost work of literary art it represents what once was but can never be in

that form again; it stands in for, or presences, the thinking and writing which were lost.

Carlyle's own language in the wake of the disaster prefigures some of these dynamics of loss, for example, in his March 7 letter to Fraser he states: '...my whole First Volume...had *been destroyed*, except some or four bits of leaves; and so the labour of five steadfast enough months had vanished irrecoverably.... *That* first volume... *cannot* be written anew, for the spirit that animated it is past...' (CLO 10.1215/It-18350307-TC-JFR-01; CL 8:66-70 emphasis his; see also Holme 18). In his March 7 letter to Fraser and in his journal entry from the same day Carlyle repeatedly acknowledges the absolute absence of the book-that-was: to Fraser he uses the words 'destroyed' and 'vanished', and in his journal he uses the words 'irrevocably ANNIHILATED' and 'gone' restating again later '*It is gone*; and will not return' (CLO).

This profound sense of the lost material and the lost thought is made present by the surviving fragment and the museal narratives (oral and written) that surround it. But even without the added context of historical / biographical knowledge, museum signage, or anecdote (or other forms of authenticating narrative), an individual happening upon Carlyle's fragment would likely be able to discern that it is a part of something larger – not only because the paper is torn and unsymmetrical and because the writing to the left side of the page adheres to a margin while ending abruptly on the right side, but because if one attempted to read the text it would become evident that the sentences are incomplete and that a number of words around the uneven edges are cut off, though from the context of a sentence it might be possible to imagine, for example, that 'Fiel' as 'Field' – to pre-figure the missing letter.

In this reading, Carlyle's fragment can be said to parallel a number of the resonant effects of an encounter with a Victorian writers' handwriting. In the same way that the fragment of Carlyle's lost work signals that liminal space between the larger work's being and not being (we sense *because* of the fact of the fragment that a larger entity must once have existed) handwriting signals through its material remain the once presence of a body and mind in an act called writing. The fragment presences a larger missing piece, presences a sense of that which *was* but *is no longer*, allowing the spectre of what was and its possible relations to loom before the viewer in its uncertain and ghostly shape. Here authenticity and contiguity are signalled – what remains must be authentic in some way to be highlighted in its imperfect state – and what remains must also have been a part of (have once been contiguous to) something else: a larger piece of paper and the lived thoughts of an individual that haunt the severed page.

In both the Brontëan abstract and the Carlyle fragment what the writing presences is thought: in Parker's amplification of Charlotte Brontë's edit an instance of foregrounded thought that revolves around the choice of a word, and in Carlyle's case a fragmented section of a larger narrative, a narrative that is made abstractly present through its absence and severance. Crucially here, both these examples are examples of handwriting met conceptually as a mode of communication – handwriting as a manifestation of (contiguous to) the writers' thoughts. What is foregrounded in the case of Parker's abstract, or missing in the case of the Carlyle fragment is writing as a meaningful mode of communication. Accordingly the writing presences the writer in the act of *thinking*: an event or series of events that world the writer through the tether that is their thoughts made manifest on the page.

Moving briefly from meaningful words and sentences (even if severed) to the autograph supports the metonymic facet of handwriting in a different way. More than any other scrawl the autograph tends to be the most individual and the most verifiable. It is, at a basic level, a material thing; a mark or impression made via an implement, but even in the form of an ‘X’ it is intended as a mark made by a specific ‘hand’ – a mark as authorization. There is, in looking at a signature, a sense of personal adhesion: a sense of the lead or ink adhering to the paper, and a sense of the unique hand that held the writing implement in order to move it in an again, unique pattern across an inscribable surface. This is, of course, the work of touch and touch or contiguity is one of the most fundamental components of resonance in things – to be encountering something that has been touched by the individual with whom one seeks a connection.

Materially, handwriting and autographs are the result of a conscious impression, a manifestation that springs from a particular individual. Authenticity is a pre-requisite as autographs or signatures that are false are no longer called autographs or signatures but are deemed forgeries.¹⁰⁵ Because handwriting is unique and because the hand is almost always the closest human point of contact to the writing, handwriting evokes the hand that wrote it, a hand that stands in as a further (and commonly used) metonym for the whole being. Turning to Carlyle’s signature (fig. 24, below) we see a series of marks that testify to Carlyle’s self having-been-present at the marking; the signature as coming from the ‘hand’ of the author – a contiguity that gives us the metonymy of ‘hand’ (‘in his own hand’) a hypothesis supported by the making and keeping of casts of Thomas Carlyle’s hands (figs. 25 and 26) hands

¹⁰⁵ The idea of a ‘forgery’ becomes problematized in the case of an invented signature such as Charlotte Brontë’s ‘Currer Bell’ signature – a notation that inhabits an interesting middle ground. As an invention (of person and of autograph) the Bell signature isn’t technically a forgery but something akin to a conceit. And as an invention of *Charlotte Brontë’s* it still seems to carry enough contiguity and metonymy (from her hand / representative of her life as a writer) to be of value.

that are worthy of commemoration because (even in the form of the present-absence the casts evoke) the hand casts signal the metonymical: signal Carlyle the writer whose hands were the vehicle or implement of his writerly mind.

T. Carlyle

Fig. 24. Thomas Carlyle's signature. Web. <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/>>



Fig. 25. Crossed hands of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) by Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm REPRO.1892-97 © Victoria and Albert Museum. Web. <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>>



Fig. 26. Thomas Carlyle, plaster cast of hands by Domenico Brucciani, 1875, on display at The Carlyle House Museum © The National Trust, photo by author with permission.

IV – Handwriting as a Mark

Thus far I have discussed writing as a fragment, as signaling thought even outside of whole semiotic contexts; writing as material trace; as a ‘token’ or record capable of evoking the maker beyond the instant of manifestation; writing as a product of a unique and particular source in both person and time; and writing as an inscription adhered to an object with its own provenance or ‘biography’ – one to which a narrative (such as its destruction) might be adhered. I would now like to turn to the foundational aspect of writing as a material thing: writing as a mark.

Marks, by their very nature, adhere. As Hallam and Hockey suggest in their consideration of the materiality of writing related to death: ‘written texts physically occupy material surfaces (such as paper) and spaces (for example books and shelves). The written or printed word requires materials, implements, machines, and bodily actions for its inscription and these have important implications for memory-making’ (157). This suggests that writing’s materiality is always contextual beyond even ascription, as we cannot divorce writing from what it is written on or with (writing that exists in air is usually considered speech). In this way writing is tethered: it dwells in a site be it rock, hide, or paper and always in a site beyond that: box, case, room, museum, city, country, et cetera. Furthermore the writing this thesis is looking at (Victorian writers’ writing) is, by definition, also troubled in its sites by the intrusion of the biography of the one who marks – a marking that is always already read as autographic when its context is known. This section will examine three sets of ‘marks’ as a means of illuminating the fundamental material quality of writing: a scratch in the Carlyle House Museum, a (now-absent) pen stroke made by

Thomas Carlyle, and wisps of ink on Emily Brontë's lined paper, marks that illuminate having-been as one of the fundamental aspects of handwriting as a thing.

In 2007 Rizzoli International published a small hardcover book of the coffee table sort consisting mostly of photographs with identifying labels. The book, *Dr Johnson's Doorknob and Other Significant Parts of Great Men's Houses* by the London-based photographer Liz Workman was based on her *National Heritage Revisited* series, a series that focused on houses that had transitioned into museums because they had once housed a famous occupant. Described on the cover flap as a 'situationist's catalogue of overlooked and underappreciated personal effects' the book features just over one hundred photographs of great men's doorknobs, crockery, mantelpieces, chairs, desks, books, banisters, mirrors, skirting boards and beds.¹⁰⁶ In the skirting board section we are treated to a close-up section of Thomas Carlyle's skirting board (fig 27, below) a red-brown slat that sits above a wood floor and under white wallpaper decorated with green leaves.



Fig. 27. Thomas Carlyle's skirting board from *Dr Johnson's Doorknob and Other Significant Parts of Great Men's Houses*, (Workman 168) image cropped.

¹⁰⁶ The 'great men' featured in this book include five of the male authors considered in this thesis: Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Charles Darwin, John Keats and Sigmund Freud, as well as Winston Churchill, Thomas Cole, Victor Hugo, Washington Irving, Thomas Jefferson, Dr Johnson, Frederic, Lord Leighton, William Morris, Samuel Morse, Edgar Allan Poe, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Sir John Sloane and George Washington.

The skirting board is almost unremarkable save for its wear and a few notable scratches: one a thin line that swoops horizontally across the image, others shorter and more gouge-like: deep enough that the white of the wood comes through. These marks and others like them in a writer's house/museum – whether the thick black ink splotches and ink circles on Carlyle's desk (fig 28, below), the worn patch of floor in the turret window of Ruskin's Brantwood, the cracked spines of Darwin's books, or the repaired break-line in Emily Brontë's Christening mug – signal an event or a series of events. (These events often include events *between things* i.e. a cup and the floor, a nail and a skirting board, events where the human agent dropped a thing or dragged a thing and two things made contact.) The mark that signals an event is a mark that also signifies a having-been; the very 'having-been' many visitors to a writer's house/museum may be hoping to sense or encounter when they visit.



Fig. 28. Carlyle's desk, ink stains, Carlyle House. Photo by author with permission.

In this way, all 'marks' – especially the semiotic kind and those associated with writing – in a writer's house/museum are likely to be contextually bound and highly valued. Two examples of non-semiotic material marks will accordingly be effective

in illustrating what a mark's release from the instance and context of literary production might look like and how such a release might inform encounters with other marks: the first mark taking the form of the aforementioned scratch on the Carlyle's skirting board and the second mark taking the imagined form of a now-lost strike of a pen on a newspaper sent from Thomas to Jane Carlyle in the autumn of 1835. These two examples will support my argument that the 'mark' aspect of handwriting is a central component in the affective experience of an author's writing. An argument that will propose that while the semiotic communication in the form of a writer's letter, manuscript or diary may serve to *further* a sense of the author's presence or 'life' it is the mark as a site of event, dwelling or having-been that is the fundamental generator of felt-presence.

Carlyle's skirting-board and pen-stroke

The scratch on the Carlyle skirting board is a mark that has most likely been made by some thing – a force of one material thing against the wood of the skirting board. The 'some-thing' or 'when' of the some-thing's encounter with the skirting board cannot readily be determined and is therefore ambiguous or absent. Whether the mark was made by some-thing that Thomas or Jane or a now-contemporary custodian held or moved or used is unknown. Thus the mark (a scratch) is cut free of the instance of its production and, accordingly, its context is destabilized. A viewer of the mark would likely not, for example, know what or who made the mark or how – though they might imagine a set of scenarios or players (human and material) based on logical suppositions within a context and/or their own experience with mark-making. Thus

the immediate context for the mark is unknown though the larger context (a-mark-made-in-a-house-that-once-belonged-to-Thomas-and-Jane-Carlyle) is known because this mark, as with any such mark or thing in the writer's house/museum is always apprehended materially in (or over/against) a particular environment, in this case a house in Chelsea associated with two writers, and is thusly endowed with a larger context – in this case one that assumes (correctly or not) as the photograph in the Rizzoli book suggests – a relationship to the Carlyles. Here the context gives the mark some of its meaning (its autographic ascription: that which makes it worthy of a coffee table book), but crucially the mark also means in and of itself even if cut free from contextual narratives, it means an event of presence, an event of being.

A stroke mark made on a newspaper by Thomas Carlyle in 1835 (a mark that has likely passed out of existence) represents a different kind of present-absence. This is a mark (lost to us in its material form but recorded as fact) that has been cut free from the museal space and accordingly serves (even if imagined) to support the idea of a mark as an instance of having-been. The mark in question is cited in *Thomas and Jane Carlyle Portrait of a Marriage* by Rosemary Ashton. Ashton writes that in the fall of 1835 some six, almost seven months after the disaster that befell Thomas Carlyle's Volume One manuscript on the French Revolution and Carlyle's dogged rewriting of the lost draft, Thomas went to visit his family. Shortly after he left he sent Jane a newspaper in the post 'with a stroke indicating his safe arrival' (171). According to Ashton the stroke was a means for Carlyle to communicate his safe arrival without having to pay the postage that was then charged on letters (171). Jane noted her receipt of the newspaper in a letter, stating that '[a] newspaper is very pleasant when one is expecting nothing at all, but when it comes in place of a letter it

is a positive insult to one's feelings' (171-2). Two things are notable here. The first is the hierarchy Jane's response implies: a letter (semiotic narrative) is best, a newspaper with a stroke on it (signifying mark) is lesser, but still preferable to nothing (absence, or, at least the absence of an indication of being or well-being). The mark of a stroke on a newspaper therefore signals some-thing (being) and nothing (being without context) simultaneously. It traces a presence or a having-been at the time of the making of the mark, even if the mark has experienced a rupture or has become free-floating from its context or instance of production.

What these two examples hope to show is that regardless of the degree of rupture or destabilization and whether the mark is tied to context (the house proper) or floats somewhat independently in relation to its context (as a line on a newspaper might have done) the mark still, by its very being-there, signifies a having-been. The mark of the pen-and-hand (in the case of the stroke) or of the object that scrapes the skirting board (in the case of the scratch) are in this way not so unlike other marks in the world that signify non-semiotically a having-been-there. Again we see this fascination with the mark in Cornelia Parker's abstracts: with the wisps of ink on Emily Brontë's lined paper (fig. 29, below) – ghost traces of the words she wrote on the paper placed above her lines – a lacuna that presences absence both of words and the individual who left these ghostly traces.

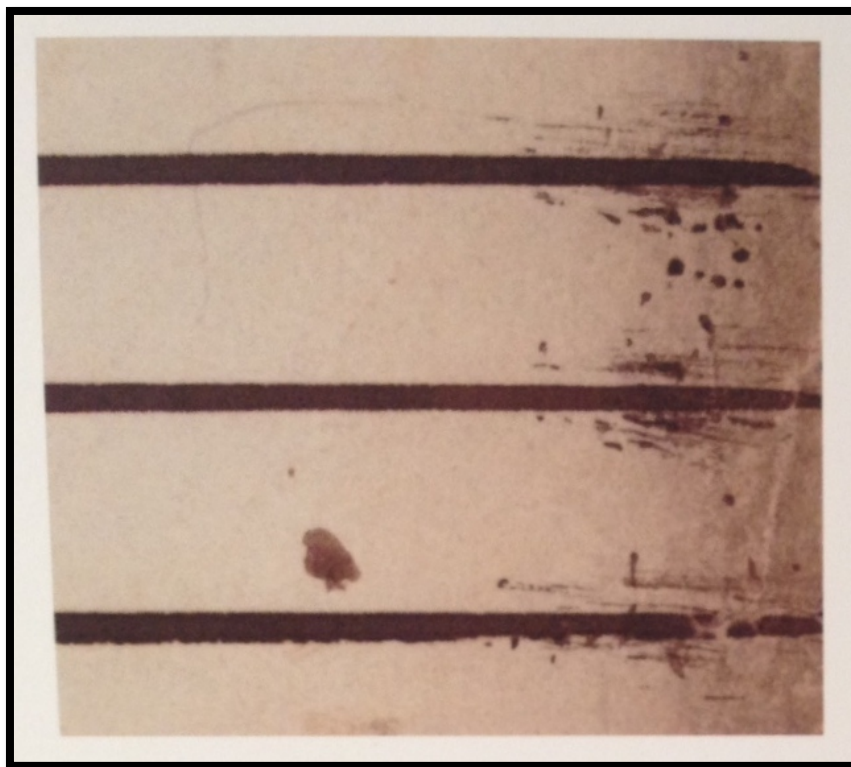


Fig. 29. fBrontëan Abstract (marks made in the margins of Emily Brontë's lined paper) 2006, scan © Cornelia Parker (Parker, *Brontëan* 22).

V – Worlding

If the mark signifies presence, or the having-been of a being (even if in passing) one of the aspects of the mark's signification is that it worlds even if it does so in an ambiguous way. In their analysis of death-related writings (wills, headstones, memorial inscriptions, handwritten tokens) Hallam and Hockey note that in relation to 'the material dimensions of writing... the life of the inscribed word might overlap with, but may also extend beyond the physical body; materialized words become potent as markers that preserve identity after death' (157). While this is certainly the case with an author's texts: manuscripts, letters, and even their near-ephemera (Darwin's beetle labels for example), it is also the case for other marks they made in

the world. In *On Longing* Susan Stewart attests to the way that writing can locate us.

She states:

...writing contaminates; writing leaves its trace, a trace beyond the life of the body.... Our terror of the unmarked grave is a terror of the insignificance of a world without writing. The metaphor of the unmarked grave is one that joins the mute and the ambivalent; without the mark there is no boundary, no point at which to begin the repetition. Writing gives us a device for inscribing space, for inscribing nature...'. (31; see also Hallam and Hockey 157)

The idea of the mark as setting a boundary is important here. Like a footprint in the snow, a handprint in a prehistoric cave, like a scratch along a skirting board or strike on a newspaper, marks gather to them a sense of some thing or some being, they contaminate a space, they delineate it, they are a trace 'beyond the life of the body'. In this way absence is locatable in part because of its relation to things like marks or impressions. This idea is found in Frazer's readings of sympathetic magic where he notes that it was possible to do magic on a person via the impression they left behind: a footprint, or the mark left by a reclining body (Frazer 45). In Margaret Gibson's *Objects of the Dead*, Gibson identifies a 'sunken couch, hand, a photograph... open door, hat' as 'ghostly signals' signals that can appear in everyday things, things 'ordinarily overlooked until that one day when they become animated by the *immense forces of atmosphere concealed in them*' (Gibson 185 emphasis hers; see also Gordon 204). In this way the mark – even in its shadowy form – can signal and hold the trace of the absent individual.

What the writer's house/museum does is provide a context for these marks, traces and material remains, through autographic ascription (these are pen marks made by Charlotte Brontë), through a context that biases the authentic, through supporting or authenticating narratives, and through raising the register of the importance of things via stasis and display. Whether the marks exist in the form of the marks on the back

of the door at the Carlyle House from where the lock chain has always swung against the wood (when I asked one of the two museum caretakers what he thought the most resonant thing in the house was he showed me these marks – a sign of all the comings and goings over the years) or in the form of marks made by a pen – the fundamental quality of signaling an event is palpable.

Heidegger's reading of things as related to the idea of assembly or gathering places (*What* 5) is especially useful here. This theme runs through much of his later thinking about things and can be found in his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' when he describes how a bridge brings a set of relations into being. For Heidegger a bridge does more than just connect the banks of the stream, it also allows the banks to come to the forefront of perception in a new relation and further to that, brings a larger set of relations into relief or 'into each other's neighbourhood' (*PLT* 150). For Heidegger the bridge worlds: it gathers relations and these relations are not only based on the landscape but also included relations with, and amongst, human beings who may 'come and go from shore to shore' carrying with them customs, beliefs and ideas that are shaped by the material world they inhabit and the relations the bridge as a gathering thing brings forth (150-151).

This idea of worlding is made explicit again by Heidegger in relation to the representation of a pair of shoes in a work of art in his essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. This essay is useful for how it supports Heidegger's notion of worlding things and also for how it serves as a reminder that in the context of the writer's house/museum what tends to come to the fore in relations with worlding things is the fact of the writer's *life*.

Martin Heidegger's essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art' is based on a number of lectures he delivered on the topic of art – the first, given in Freiburg in November 1935, and the last, a series of three talks (from which the translation cited here is drawn), delivered in late 1936 in Frankfurt. 'The Origin of the Work of Art', presented almost a decade after *Being and Time* was written, engages issues related to the distinctions and affinities between mere things, equipment, and the artwork. In writing about Van Gogh's painting of a pair of 'peasant' shoes Heidegger engages in a description of the horizons of experience or 'world' the painting – and the shoes as painted things exude. He begins by stating of shoes that '[s]uch gear serves to clothe the feet' (32) and then acknowledges that the gear calls to mind their usefulness and genuine use, which calls to mind 'the toilsome tread of the worker' and 'the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind' (33). He states: 'This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, and trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death' (33). In Heidegger's reading the apprehension of the truth of the work of art and the truth of the peasant shoes as depicted gives the viewer access to a whole set of experiences; or the terrain of being (and Being) that the shoes presence. Here Heidegger is suggesting a kind of access the shoes make possible, he is affirming (again) that an encounter with things *worlds* or enlarges both the thing and us through the unconcealedness of a thing's worldly (and possible) horizons. Heidegger does acknowledge that shoes for fieldwork and shoes for dancing will differ in matter and form (32) and thus world their own truths – but he does not equate the worlding of the shoe with anything empirically

knowable. In fact, in the first part of this essay he mounts a strongly analytic argument against the possibility of the aesthetic of mere things (its properties), the totality of a thing's effect on our senses, or the integration of matter and form as being determinate in relation to knowing.

Heidegger's knowledge is always slippery this way – an evanescent kind of knowing. For Heidegger even just 'bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting' of the shoes can afford access to this worlding. Heidegger states:

The equipmental quality of equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description and explanation of a pair of shoes actually present; not by a report about the process of making shoes; and also not by the observation of the actual use of shoes occurring here and there; but only by bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be. (34-35)

Here, Heidegger is talking about the transporting nature of a pair of painted shoes, shoes seen in a resonant and worlding way. Through meeting a thing with the proper comportment ('bringing ourselves before' the work) Heidegger suggests that the thing – the artwork, the shoes – can reveal whole sets of relations. This is the power of the thing that speaks of someone else, somewhere else, or other sets of relations. This is the power of the thing 'set-off' or on display to evoke memories, ideas, or a felt-sense of an absent individual or even the thing's own biography. Even a mark, as this chapter argues, brings relations to it – even if the mark and the relations are haunted by absence and unknowability.

In her reading of Cornelia Parker's photographs of Charlotte Brontë's revisions exhibited at the Parsonage Museum, Deborah Levy makes a point that supports Heidegger's notion that works can bring a world to the fore. Levy states: 'What Parker knows is that Charlotte Brontë the writer at work becomes more present in these unconscious lapses or mistakes or slips.... [I]t is in these mistakes and

corrections that one feels the author breathing, fidgeting, thinking' (Parker, Brontëan 10). For Levy the marks, the strikethroughs, the difference between 'descended' with its crossed out 'ed' and 'descending' – layer and *mark* time, create gaps and spaces and a sense of events, of a lived life. Levy goes on to wonder: 'How did time pass between Charlotte dipping her nib into the ink and starting again? Between one thought and another, one correction and another? What were the sounds and interruptions in the Parsonage while she wrote?' (10). This is an example of the mark made by the writer 'worlding' and of the writer's things acting as a scaffold for memory (Hallam 33, Sutton 2) – of things provoking an imagination and calling the absent writer and their world to mind.

Conclusion

This thesis began by asserting that writers' houses/museums evoke the life of the absent writer through the provocative material objects housed within them – things that cohabited with the authors; things whose 'life histories' coincided with the life history of the writer. Identifying a fissure in thing theory discourse around *how* affective encounters in writers' houses/museums worked ('how the things things, and how it things the world' (Brown, *How* 936)) I employed a strategy of reading objects in the writer's house/museum alongside narratives of encounter and Heidegger's work on the structure of experience as it pertains to things and their relations. This analysis led to the identification of six dynamics that contribute to affective encounters with writerly things: autographic ascription, authenticity, contiguity, metonymical fitness, equipmentality, and stasis / conspicuousness.

In chapter one I analyzed writers' houses as pilgrimage sites and identified autographic ascription as a fundamental component in resonant encounters with a writer's things. I demonstrated the roles of authenticity and contiguity in relation to affective encounters employing an analysis of *failed* encounters with writerly things as a means of demonstrating how statements such as 'I felt no spirit, no ghosts, and no aura' (Trubek 21) serve to acknowledge the dominant narratives surrounding meetings with meaningful things. I deconstructed the concept of contiguity in order to nuance the role of touch and nearness in affective encounters and to lay the ground for later discussions on stasis. In this chapter I defined resonance in order to give a shape to the kinds of affective experiences that narratives of encounter describe. Employing Virginia Woolf's narrative of encounter with Charlotte Brontë's dress

and shoes, and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work on how the metaphors used in everyday language reveal human conceptual systems (in their book *Metaphors We Live By*) I elaborated on affective encounters through a reading of what it means to be 'touched' by something.

In chapter two I read Heidegger's 'Analysis of the Structure of Experience' alongside a nineteenth-century visit to the Carlyle House Museum and a scene from Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* demonstrating that Heidegger's analysis of the structure of experience has correspondences in both narratives. This laid the foundation for Heidegger's concept of worlding which I read as a coming to the fore of a set or sets of relations made present by both the comportment of the individual and the giving-forth of things – a mode of encounter that, in the context of the writer's house/museum, brings the figure of the author and their world into resonant presence.

In chapters three, four, five and six I turned to the four categories of things that are prevalent across all of the writers' houses/museums considered here: hair, clothing, writerly tools (such as desks and chairs) and handwriting. In these chapters I contextualized the object category within the Victorian era and examined its fitness as a remembrancer via its own particular qualities thereby foregrounding both the concepts things were met with, and the things' own modes of giving forth. In each chapter I strove to emphasize the autographic, authentic, contiguous, metonymical and equipmental aspects of individual objects and their larger categories. In chapters six and seven on the writer's tools and writer's handwriting I furthered my analysis of Heidegger's concepts of tools and tool use in *Being and Time* and his reading of the representation of a thing in art in order to demonstrate the role that stasis plays in

modulating a thing's equipmental nature, allowing, in the case of the writer's house/museum, a tool to transition from one kind of 'with-which' designation to another: i.e. from a tool 'for writing with' to a tool 'for remembering with'. In doing so, I attempted to demonstrate that through this transition a writer's things undergo a metamorphosis: ceasing to be everyday tools fit for a specific task (for sitting, for drinking with) and becoming instead tools for remembrance – evocative things that act as repositories for narratives about the absent individual with whom they are associated, and the world they inhabited in their lifetime.

Throughout this thesis I have returned consistently to material things – in the form of museum objects, works of art, and environments. I began with a lock of hair and ended with a scratch on a floorboard and the mark of a pen. In each case I hope to have demonstrated the power of things to signal an event of being – whether in the form of a lock of hair that references the absent body or a pen mark that signals an instance of thought and bodily motion. In each case I have attempted to assert that the things in question have a particular fitness for the task of evoking or presencing the absent individual for whom they stand.

In this way I hope to have contributed to contemporary material culture discourse through building a strong case for the provocative role things play in resonant encounters; through contributing to current discourses relating to what Bille, Hastrup and Sorensen have described as 'absences in everyday practice' (7) – in this case by establishing the role of things in giving a shape to the lives of absent writers; and through applying Heidegger's thinking about things and environments to *actual* things in meaningful environments – a cross-reading that I believe supports and

expands on his thinking about worlding things while also affirming the value and importance of the house/museum as a space for resonant encounter.

Most importantly I hope to have demonstrated that there is a vital repository of knowledge about things that can be accessed through both the sustained study of things themselves and through how we write about things, speak about things and portray them, how we wittingly or unwittingly ‘say’ things in our literature and every day exclamations – exclamations that can range from Charlotte Brontë’s use of ‘magic’ to describe her trip to Abbotsford, to a contemporary Parsonage visitor’s ‘Wonderfully evocative’ (August 2011).

At the start of *Writers’ Houses and the Making of Memory*, Harald Hendrix states that ‘Writers’ houses have meaning, even beyond their obvious documentary value as elements in the author’s biography. They are a medium of expression and of remembrance’ (1). Through reading things in the writer’s house/museum this thesis has expressed some of the ways that writers’ houses as mediums of expression and remembrance evoke the author and their world and how things can bring the museum visitor into meaningful encounter – a dynamic that is made possible by what gets left behind: by a lock of hair, or a wedding bonnet, a pen, desk, chair, a spill of ink; by a signature, letter, poem or novel – traces that bring to presence the past and the individuals for whom things stand.

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