

‘THE HOARDING SENSE’: HOARDING IN AUSTEN, TENNYSON, DICKENS,
AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY CULTURE

by

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(Under the Direction of Richard Menke)

ABSTRACT

This project analyzes the roles hoarding played in nineteenth-century culture and fiction. Many scholars of the nineteenth century are interested in the roles things and material culture play in the literature of the period, but there are no contemporary studies of hoarding before the twentieth century. The nineteenth-century hoarder appears at the intersection of two other popular nineteenth-century cultural and literary phenomena: the miser and the collector. But the hoarder does not fit fully into either category, and so the lines between miser, hoarder, and collector blur in nineteenth-century fiction and nonfiction. I demonstrate the nineteenth century’s interest in hoarding by uncovering a variety of historical anecdotes in the form of biographies and periodical accounts that reveal how the period interpreted hoarding. I then examine the role of hoarding in the works of three canonical authors, Jane Austen, Lord Alfred Tennyson, and Charles Dickens. I consider how each author uses hoarding as a metaphor for other concerns, such as the building of domestic spaces, mourning, and the changing relationships between people and things. Ultimately, I suggest the presence of hoarding in nineteenth-century literature and culture burdens the present-day scholar and curator with the anxiety deciding how to

interpret the historical importance of physical objects that possess little to no historical or monetary value.

INDEX WORDS: Hoarding, Hoarders, Misers, Lumber, England, Nineteenth Century, Romantic, Victorian, Novel, Jane Austen, Letters, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, Nests, Home, Domestic, Charles Dickens, The Great Exhibition, *A Christmas Carol*, "Bill-Sticking," *Bleak House*, Crystal Palace, Houses of Parliament, Lord Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, Melancholy, Fragments

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Kim and Julie, my brother, Casey, and my sister, Erin.

In memory of Stanley Gene Badelt, who loved to read.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: "DISTINCT DISORDER"

"Even when one is no longer attached to things, it's still something to have been attached to them; because it was always for reasons which other people didn't grasp."

- Marcel Proust, *Cities of the Plain*

When the Victorian landscape painter J. M. W. Turner died in December 1851 "in an obscure lodging and under an assumed named," the task of cataloguing the contents of his studio fell to writer and art critic John Ruskin (*Leeds* 12). What Ruskin discovered shocked him: "In seventeen boxes . . . I found upwards of 19,000 pieces of paper, drawn upon by Turner in one way or another. Many on both sides. Some with four, five, or six subjects on each side" (qtd. in Thornbury 311). Realizing the extent and pathetic condition of Turner's artistic remains, Ruskin laments his findings:

The best book of studies for his great shipwrecks contained about a quarter of a pound of chalk *débris*. . . . Others in ink, rotted into holes. Others (some splendid-coloured drawings among them) long eaten away by damp and mildew, and falling into dust at the edges Others worm-eaten; some mouse-eaten; many torn half-way through Dust of thirty years' accumulation, black, dense, and sooty, lay in the rents of the crushed and crumpled edges. (311-12)

The image Ruskin creates of Turner's hoarded artwork crumbling into dust endows the scene with a pathos not always found in the descriptions of hoarders and their treasures. It would take

Ruskin almost a full year to examine the “100 oil paintings” and “nearly 20,000 . . . drawings and unfinished sketches” (*Leeds* 12). The year prior to his death, Turner had held his last showing at the Royal Academy, and news of the newly discovered hoard of artwork fired the country’s imagination about the man behind the art.

Following his death, *The Leeds Mercury* published an article titled “The Turner Pictures” discussing the fate of his artwork: “Men said that the Great Master [Turner] . . . was a penurious and cold hearted miser, and that in him were strangely combined an ardent passion for the sublime and beautiful in nature, and an absorbing love for gold—that his genius was chiefly valuable to him as it could be coined into hard cash” (12). The reporter suggests that these sorts of statements are false, and that Turner “was no vulgar hoarder of money,—at all events that his pictures held first place in his regard” (12). The writer presents Turner as an artist who treasured his work over any sum of money, choosing to hoard his art rather than sell “the children of his genius” (12).

Walter Thornbury’s 1862 biography *The Life of J. M. W. Turner*, which is largely a collection of anecdotes, statements, and letters given to the author by the artist’s friends, offers a competing and controversial view of Turner. In it, David Roberts, the Scottish painter and close friend of Turner, describes the artist as kindhearted. But, says Roberts, “he was always for saving, for hoarding and scraping for future, perhaps distant, great emergencies. He was always for collecting and storing a treasure with which magnificent deeds of charity were to be done” (qtd. in Thornbury 267). Roberts claims that Turner “could not help saving, it was in his blood; he had saved when it was necessary, he saved now because he did not know how to spend” (268). In an attempt to teach Turner how to spend, the younger men of his and Robert’s acquaintance begin to give their money away to charitable causes, as if by demonstrating the

action they could move the artist to do the same. Thornbury describes how David Roberts and others combined their fortunes and formed an altruistic plan to lay out their wealth in a series of contributions to various charities. In a well-intentioned but misguided decision, they elected Turner as their treasurer—with the end result being that no charitable contributions were made, because Turner “kept his hand clenched beyond any one’s strength to open; he lay at the door of the money room, whoever entered to take a handful must tread on Turner’s body” (268).

After his death, Turner willed his collection of art to the nation, with the provision “that within ten years the country should provide a fitting gallery for the exhibition of his works” (“The Turner Bequest”). The will demonstrates that Turner recognized not only the importance of giving his art to the nation but ultimately the necessity of preserving it. Today, Turner stands as the central figure of mid-Victorian art, and he is remembered for the light in his paintings rather than the darkness and decay of his hoarding.¹ Turner’s hoarding is described in subsequent biographies in almost supernatural terms, a force beyond anyone’s control. In the following pages, I will argue that hoarding is not simply a phenomenon of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; rather, hoarding has its origins in the nineteenth century and is a symptom of the period’s changing relationship with things.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) describes the etymology of *hoard* as descending from the Anglo-Saxon *hord*, meaning “treasure, hidden inmost place” and that the contemporary spelling of *hoard* “is rare before the 18th century,” which might explain why contemporary scholars have had difficulty in locating historical accounts of hoarding (“hoard”). At the British

¹ Turner’s friends condemned Thornbury’s biography upon its publication in 1862. In the preface to the second edition of his biography in 1877, Thornbury acknowledged that the text revealed many of the artist’s “sordid views and low tastes” to public scrutiny, and “Turner’s more intimate friends were indignant with [Thornbury] for having exposed all those small frailties which the polite biographers of fifty years ago used so discreetly to suppress” (v). He admits that his biography suffers from imperfection but cites the obstinacy of Turner’s closest friends to “furnish [him] with any facts” and “others declining to give me any assistance at all” (v). Today, Thornbury’s biography of Turner is still an object of criticism, but I have included it in this discussion in order to present evidence of the period’s reliance on anecdotes and ephemeral sources in historic cases of hoarding.

Museum in London, one can still view displays of “Gold and Silver Hoards.” One such display, the “Netherhampton Hoard,” includes a small collection of seven silver gilt spoons; the placard reads, “Silver gilt spoons with seal-top finials Dates range from 1586 to 1632 This group of silver spoons may have been deposited with an intent to recover during the English Civil War (1641-1651).” Another display shows a group of more than two dozen silver rings, and a third contains a collection of silver coins. Near these two displays hangs a larger sign, questioning the nature of these hoards: “The interpretation of hoards is often difficult and it is seldom possible to infer the ownership and purpose of such a deposit or the reasons for its concealment and non-recovery.” Even though these hoards are of obvious monetary value and date from several centuries prior to the nineteenth century, they raise the same questions as nineteenth-century writers and historians do about hoards and hoarding and the nature of ownership.

Hoard from the Anglo-Saxon tradition means both treasure and the place in which treasure is hidden. The OED also identifies a second noun form of *hoard*, which descends from the Anglo-Norman *hurdis* and the French *hourd*, terms that can mean either scaffolding or fence. The nineteenth-century possessed, therefore, multiple definitions for *hoard*. These definitions, however, are bound up in issues of objects, ownership, and spaces. In particular, the Anglo-Norman indicates the division of space or the enclosure of space. This definition is key to understanding how Jane Austen uses hoarding to create personal and domestic spaces in *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815). *Hoardings* that are scaffolds or fences might also be interpreted as barriers to contain something, a definition which is important for Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* in which he uses the quatrain ABBA as a kind of container in which to enclose uncontrollable emotions. Lastly, nineteenth-century hoardings, or construction scaffolds, were

ideal locations for advertisers to paste bills and placards, and the term *hoardings* comes to signify these “walls of words,” a image and metaphor which Dickens employs in his 1851 article “Bill-Sticking” and his 1853 novel *Bleak House*. In its definition of the Anglo-Norman *hoarding*, the *OED* claims that the use of *hoarding* to indicate a temporary wall has become obsolete in contemporary society, but the term still abounds in modern-day London on the temporary walls and barriers erected around construction sites. Ironically, the usage of the term in this manner actually indicates a desire to hold something from the past, a definition that the *OED* has deemed outdated and obsolete. In a sense, *hoarding* has been hoarded.

This dissertation seeks to articulate the roles hoarding played in nineteenth-century culture and fiction. Many scholars of the nineteenth century are interested in the roles things and material culture play in the literature of the period, but the scholars and critical works that have been most influential to the conceptual framework of this study are Jeff Nunokawa’s *The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel* (1994), Bill Brown’s *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (2003) and “The Secret Life of Things (Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism),” Elaine Freedgood’s *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006), and John Plotz’s *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move* (2009). This list of critical works suggests that a division exists between the concept of property and that of things. Because hoarding turns things, especially stray or dispossessed things, into property, a study of hoarding offers a new way to interrogate the relationships between people and things.²

² There is a distinction to be drawn between dispossessed objects, which are objects one intentionally throws out or gives away, and stray objects, which are things accidentally lost, like the umbrella forgotten on the subway or the piece of paper that falls out of a pocket, unnoticed by its owner. I suggest that hoarding brings these things back into property.

Elaine Freedgood complains that for all the attention paid to material culture, “the ‘things’ of novels still do not get taken seriously What knowledge has remained unexplored and unexamined, safe in the words that have seemed to designate the most inconsequential and uninterpretable of things?” (1). This study questions the unexplored roles of things in literature, but diverges from the popular tenets of “thing theory” in that it does not take any single item for its subject; rather it examines hoarding, a process that defies the boundaries imposed by such terms as collection or display. Using Virginia Woolf’s 1920 short story “Solid Objects,” a “cautionary tale warning against aesthetic absorption,” as the touchstone of his work on things, Bill Brown wonders how a study of things can “contribute to a materialist phenomenology that does not bracket history, but 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 of modernity and modernism” (5). This study hopes to contribute to the specific field of thing theory and more broadly to nineteenth-century cultural studies by revealing the nineteenth-century’s secret history of hoarding and demonstrating the roles hoarding played in nineteenth-century literature.

HOARDERS

One important fact, which has kept scholars of the nineteenth century from recognizing and subsequently assessing the role of the hoarder in nineteenth-century culture and literature, is that hoarders are grouped with other categories, such as misers, or dismissed as nothing more than rubbish collectors. The nineteenth-century hoarder appears at the intersection of two other popular nineteenth-century cultural and literary phenomena: the miser and the collector. But the

hoarder does not fit fully into either category, and so the lines between the nineteenth-century portraits of misers, hoarders, and collectors blur in nineteenth-century fiction and nonfiction.

The rapid social, technological, and economic developments of the nineteenth century changed the relationships between people and things. The rise of mass manufacturing during the industrial revolution meant that nineteenth-century consumers found themselves in a new world of cheap, readily available material goods. Hoarding was no longer economically necessary for survival. Nonetheless hoarders appear with greater frequency in periodicals and literature of the nineteenth century than in any previous time period. More than mere nineteenth-century curiosities, hoarders are evidence of an instinctual urge responding to constant availability where, before, there had only been scarcity.

The hoarder becomes a symbol of avaricious desire that is uncontrollable and potentially dangerous. The nineteenth century is not only defined by technological and social progress but by increasing profit and wealth and by unrelenting gain. The financial bubbles, investment schemes, and manias of the period all point to an enthusiasm for gain that consumes everyone and everything, growing out of proportion until it can no longer sustain itself and it collapses, or spontaneously combusts. Hoarders are not merely nineteenth-century curiosities but pathologies and expressions of the era's great social developments.

COLLECTORS

In "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting," Walter Benjamin contemplates the relationship of the collector to his possessions. Collecting, he writes, "is merely a dam against the spring tide of memories which surges toward any collector as he contemplates his possessions. Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the

chaos of memories Thus there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order” (60). Collecting, he contends, is about renewal: “I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth” (61). Didier Maleuvre argues that the collector’s “interests are always narratively inclined as they abide in the traditional discourse that binds—or fails to bind—isolated objects into a series: the narrativeness of narrative—the understanding of the movement of narrative—is the ultimate object which impels the collector” (qtd. in Schwenger 143). With this definition in mind, I argue that collectors collect with a view of linear narrative, whereas hoarders hoard without such linearity, offering possible alternatives to narrative. “The key features that define a collection,” writes Randy O. Frost and Gail Steketee, “seem to be that it involves more than one thing, the things have to be related somehow, and the things have to be acquired and organized in a certain way” (71). Of the authors in this study, both Tennyson and Dickens experiment with narrative structure in relationship to hoarding, Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* stanzas and Dickens in his use of two narrators in *Bleak House*. Austen considers alternative forms of narrative in her unorthodox approaches to home building in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*.

Like the collector, the hoarder accumulates things—but without the discerning eye of the collector or the intention of displaying the collection. Collectors choose items based on interest, value, or cultural significance, usually with the intention of exhibiting the results, but hoarders accumulate without such discretion—all objects are objects of desire. The notion of collecting carries with it the suggestions of discernment in the selection of objects and a set of parameters and boundaries that define how the collection takes shape. Collections suggest the objects contained within are of educational, historic, or artistic value, and that the relationship between an object and the collection will increase the value of both. The objects within a collection often

define the collector; museums retain the names of the collectors who donate their collections, such as the Forster Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which contains the largest collection of Dickens's manuscripts, letters, and memorabilia. The value of a collection can translate into economic profit, if the collector is willing to sell, but the value of the hoard is frequently discernible only to the hoarder, with one exception being if the hoarder is hoarding gold or money. Collectors who donate their collections or preserve their collections for posterity achieve a kind of immortality that hoarders generally cannot.

In a letter to Hannah More dated 20 February 1790, Horace Walpole, the author best known for his Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), writes,

[A]s your newly-adopted pensioners have two babes, I insist on your accepting two guineas for them instead of one at present If you cannot circumscribe your own charities, you shall not stint mine, Madam, who can afford it much better, and who must be dunned for alms, and do not scramble over hedges and ditches in searching for opportunities of flinging away my money on good works. I employ mine better at auctions, and in buying pictures and baubles, and hoarding curiosities, that in truth I cannot keep long, but that will last for ever in my catalogue, and make me immortal! Alas! will they cover a multitude of sins? Adieu! I cannot jest after that sentence. (243-44)

In Walpole's letter, avarice, charity, and hoarding, are connected, and he brings all three to bear on concepts of identity and the search for immortality. The humorous tone with which Walpole begins the letter shifts abruptly when he invokes an allusion to the passage from Luke "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (Luke 4:8). In this context, charity also means love; the passage suggests that an act of

charity or love from one individual will cloak the sins of another. To Hannah More, Walpole turns this passage into a question that sheds light on his collection of curiosities at Strawberry Hill, the Gothic-revival mansion he built to showcase his enormous collection, a collection that Walpole claimed “was too great already to be lodged humbly” (qtd. in Sydney 258).³ From reading Walpole’s letter, it becomes clear that More has written to request donations for her pensioners, but Walpole draws some humorous comparisons between their expenditures of money and their collections (his of curiosities, hers of charity cases) that suggest his vices and her virtues are not so different as she might want to believe. In closing, he questions how his collection of historical artifacts and oddities will serve him after he is dead. It will make him immortal, but will it cover a multitude of sins? There is no answer. Walpole died a few years after composing this letter, and he was correct – his home and his collection have contributed greatly to his immortality. Walpole’s legacy has also endured by way of his writings. *The Castle of Otranto* served as one of the inspirations for Austen’s mock-Gothic novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818).

MISERS

The label *miser* is traditionally applied to someone who hoards money, but in biographical accounts of the lives of Victorian misers, we discover that some misers hoarded money *and* things. So it is important that we consider the descriptions of misers as potential object-hoarders. Lives of misers were popular reading in the nineteenth century. A common figure in fiction and morality tales, the miser “abides by mid-Victorian moral economies” (Wagner 79). Frequently written as didactic texts to warn readers, accounts of misers’ lives often

³ Lady Morgan Sydney records in an article for *New Monthly Magazine* (1826) the earliest instance of this quote from Walpole.

included cautionary tales that reflected the spiritual, moral, and economic dangers of hoarding money. Early nineteenth-century nonfiction works, such as *The Dictate Book, Being Lessons on Men and Manners* (1831), reveal the miser as one who contributes nothing to society and poses a danger to himself and others. From *The Dictate Book*, the “Character of the Miser and the Prodigal” chapter suggests that the two figures are like two sides to the same coin:

The hoarding miser heaps up for others; and the prodigal scatters what others had heaped. The hoarder thinks so much of the time to come, as to forget the present; the squanderer has his thoughts so much taken up with the present, as to forget the future. The first lives as if he were never to die, and the last as if he had but a day to enjoy. Both are unprofitable members of society; the one occasioning a stoppage in the circulation, and the other a hæmorrhage. The hoarding miser is like a fog that infests the air. (224)

The language of the article prompts a few intriguing connections with several popular Victorian novels. The first part of the quote, the “heaping up for others” and thinking “of the time to come,” recalls the character of Nell Trent’s Grandfather from Dickens’s *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), who repeatedly professes that his hoarding, his junk shop, and his gambling are all for Nell’s future. Envisioning the hoarding miser as “a stoppage in the circulation” and “like a fog that infests the air” prompts associations with the opening passages of *Bleak House* where the fog encases London and chokes the Court of Chancery. The World of Fashion, we’re told, is not so different, except instead of fog, it is “wrapped up in too much jeweller’s cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun. It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air” (11). Hoarding encourages accumulation but not circulation.

The most famous of all the Victorian biographical accounts of misers was Frederic Somner Merryweather's *Lives and Anecdotes of Misers; or, the Passion of Avarice Displayed* (1850). In it, Merryweather presents a collection of anecdotes about famous misers from the Ancient Greeks through the mid-Victorians with the aim "to render it a volume of instruction as well as amusement" (3). In *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), Dickens uses historical accounts of misers as a way to institutionalize the behavior of miserliness. When creating the character of Boffin, Dickens refers to Merryweather's work as source material for the characteristics and behaviors of misers. Boffin and his wife inherit a large fortune because the intended heir, John Harmon, is believed to be drowned in the Thames. Mr. and Mrs. Boffin decide to bring Bella Wilfer, John Harmon's fiancée, into their home in order to give her the material advantages they feel are due to her as Harmon's intended bride. Showering her with wealth, the Boffins attempt to soothe their consciences and assuage the loss of Harmon. They soon realize, however, that greed is beginning to ruin Bella's character. In order to teach her the dangers of avarice, Boffin transforms himself into a shrewd and miserable miser. In order to perfect a level of authenticity, Boffin uses as his guide Merryweather's *Lives and Anecdotes of Misers*, frequently quoting verbatim passages and sections from it. To Bella and Rokesmith (Boffin's secretary, who is actually John Harmon in disguise), Boffin appears corrupted by his wealth. The charade works, and Bella gives up her comfortable life. Using Merryweather like a theatrical script, Boffin manages to convince everyone (including the reader) that he has become a cruel miser.

Throughout Merryweather's work, he attempts to balance and, sometimes, reconcile the entertainment the tales provide with their moral lessons. "I think," writes Merryweather, "it a pleasant way to instill a moral by exciting curiosity, and have endeavoured in gathering together examples of avarice to show the evils of that passion" (3). He acknowledges, however, the

difficulty of gathering credible tales for his collection. “Some of these materials have been in print before” he writes, “but a great proportion have been extracted from books but little known—from forgotten pamphlets, and from newspapers long out of date. Some have been gathered from old country gossips, and some have been gleaned from ephemeral sources, to which I cannot even myself distinctly refer” (4). Merryweather reveals the critical problems in compiling a history of misers and hoarders, namely the imprecise method of classifying hoarding behavior and the ephemeral nature of hoarding. Yet Merryweather’s text does not lack for examples. One such tale is that of John Little, a famous Kentish miser who died in 1798, Merryweather writes:

He was not only a miser but a *lumberer* of useless trash. He gratified his mania to acquire, without regarding the utility or intrinsic value of the things that he amassed; and we can discover no motive in his accumulations but the mere gratification of the promptings of acquisitiveness. After his death, one hundred and seventy-three pairs of breeches, besides a numerous collection of other antiquated and useless articles of wearing apparel were found in a room which had been kept locked for many years. One hundred and eighty musty old wigs, of all shapes and sizes, yellow, black, and grey, were found stowed away in the coach-house. (71, emphasis added)

The dubious morality of Little’s hoarding is identified by such phrases as “mania,” “without regard,” and “mere gratification.” When Merryweather describes John Little as “not only a miser but a lumberer of useless trash,” he reveals that the nineteenth-century equivalent to hoarder is lumberer (17). The OED defines *lumber* as “disused articles of furniture and the like, which take up room inconveniently” and “useless odds and ends”; so it naturally follows that a person who

collects such things would be a *lumberer* (“lumber”). The terms *lumber* and *lumberer*, together with *miser*, *hoard*, and *hoarding miser*, reveal a previously unexplored subset of nineteenth-century culture that transcends boundaries of profession, religion, class, and gender.

HOARDING AND THE DOMESTIC

Accounts of hoarding appeared in all types of print from short stories, sketches, and newspapers to religious publications. In *Our Village*, a collection of sketches about English village life published from 1824-1832, Mary Russell Mitford includes a character sketch about a hoarder named “Aunt Martha.” The first-person speaker describes Aunt Martha as “the most delightful of old maids” (150). The title of “aunt” is an endearment bestowed on her by the village as “she is every body’s aunt Martha” (150). She is “always kind, and generally lively; the sweetest temper; the easiest manner; a singular rectitude and singleness of mind; a perfect open-heartedness; and a total unconsciousness of all these charms” (150). The speaker offers a generous inventory of her traits. Never married, Martha employs her energy in

nursing and taking care. Of all kind of employments, these are her favourites. Oh, the shawlings, the cloakings, the cloggings! the cautions against cold, or heat, or rain, or sun! the remedies for disease not arrived! colds uncaught! incipient tooth-aches! Rheumatisms to come! She loves nursing so well, that we used to accuse her of inventing maladies for other people, that she might have the pleasure of curing them. (150)

Rather than compose great paintings, Martha prefers to decorate “reticules, bell-ropes, ottomans, and chair-covers”; she prefers the small details and extra flourishes that others ignore (150). But then the sketch shifts from the generosity of its initial lists to short emphatic and declarative statements of Martha’s hoarding. Though infused with admiration and humor, the following

description hints at Martha's deep-seated peculiarities: "She is a thorough hoarder; whatever fashion comes up, she is sure to have something of the sort by her She is a little superstitious; sees strangers in her tea-cup, gifts in her finger-nails, letters and winding sheets in the candle, and purses and coffins in the fire" (151). Mitford's sketch creates a colorful portrait of Aunt Martha beginning with her generous and charitable qualities before illustrating the more eccentric qualities that make her memorable.

Mary Russell Mitford's sketches appeared after Austen's death in 1817, but readers familiar with either writer will remember the Mitford's famous description of Austen, which Mitford recorded in an 1815 letter:

a friend of mine, who visits her now, says that she has stiffened into the most perpendicular, precise, taciturn piece of 'single blessedness' that ever existed, and that, till 'Pride and Prejudice' showed what a precious gem was hidden in that unbending case, she was no more regarded in society than a poker or a fire-screen, or any other thin upright piece of wood or iron that fills its corner in peace and quietness. The case is very different now; she is still a poker, but a poker of whom every one is afraid. (235)

Mitford's description compares Jane Austen, more or less, to a piece of lumber, a kind of bric-à-brac that society has kept around but placed in the corner.

Another popular nineteenth-century text that explores the relationships between hoarding and the domestic and featuring female protagonists is Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853). The novel appeared originally in an eight-part serial form from 1851-1853 in Dickens's periodical *Household Words*. Dickens's own *Bleak House* (1853) appeared almost simultaneously, published in separate monthly installments from March 1852 to September 1853. The editor-

author relationship between Dickens and Gaskell and the overlapping publication of their novels suggests a strong link between both authors and works. Responding to Victorian capitalism, *Cranford* uses nostalgia for past simplicities to characterize the 1830s as a time of genteel frugality. On the other hand *Bleak House*, which is also set in the 1830s, highlights a meaner kind of economy demonstrated by a hoarding that seems without purpose and an unrelenting miserliness that is both immoral and entirely self-serving. That both authors examine hoarding should probably not be surprising given their artistic links to one another; that they explore hoarding in opposing lights, however, seems critically suggestive.

There is also an undertone of melancholy in the beginning of *Cranford*, depicted primarily by the character's holding onto a past way of life. The quiet and closed-off community of Cranford is disappearing; invasive technologies, in the form of the railways and swifter communications, and economic uncertainties, like the bank collapse, are changing the day-to-day routines of its citizens. At the same time, Matty Jenkyns meditates quietly, after the death of her sister, on her role as the last member of her family. Cranford is a town seemingly composed only of women, all of whom love their frugal economies. Mary Smith notices that "almost every one has his own individual small economies—careful habits of saving fractions of pennies in some one peculiar direction" and she regales her reader with the most peculiar stories of frugality among the citizens of Cranford (41). For one man, a "little unnecessary waste of paper . . . chafed him more than all the loss of his money," and for another, the wasting of butter causes annoyance and anxiety (41). Mary Smith admits to her reader, "string is my foible. My pockets get full of little hanks of it, picked up and twisted together, ready for uses that never come. I am seriously annoyed if any one cuts the string of parcel, instead of patiently and faithfully undoing it fold by fold" (41). Matty's own economy, the preservation of candles, annoys Mary, an irony

that the narrator seems either unwilling or unable to acknowledge. In an early humorous scene, Miss Matty enlists Mary Smith in efforts to help protect the pristine quality of her new carpet. Mary Smith says, “[w]e spread newspapers over the places, and sat down to our book or our work; and, lo! in a quarter of an hour the sun had moved . . . and down again we went on our knees” (14). Matty and Mary spend hours cutting and sewing newspapers to lay as pathways across the carpet for her guests “lest their shoes might dirty or defile the purity of the carpet” (14). Matty’s attempts to seal her carpet against the elements seem reflective of the hermetic nature of Cranford.

Following her descriptions of individual economies, Mary Smith and Miss Matty proceed to read and then burn bundles of preserved love letters exchanged between Miss Matty’s parents. When the reading of the letters leads Mary to write a letter to an unknown Jenkyns relative, the addressed Aga Jenkyns arrives in Cranford and is revealed as Matty and Deborah’s estranged and presumed dead brother Peter. Through Mary and Matty’s readings of the collected love letters, Peter emerges, first in script and later in corporeal form. One theory of hoarding is that hoarders form relationships with things as substitutes for relationships with people. The hoarded letters were the only reminder of Peter’s existence, and when they are destroyed, it is as if Peter comes to replace them. In *Cranford* and, as I will argue later, in Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* (novels which certainly inspired Gaskell) hoarding leads ultimately to very good things.

A final text that features female hoarders and the domestic appears towards the end of century. In 1884, an anonymous article simply titled “Lumberers” appeared in the weekly Catholic periodical *The Lamp*. The aim of the article is two-fold, first addressing the general nature of the lumberer, and second, describing the “domestic lumberer” in an anecdote about the writer’s wife and her purchasing habits. Echoing John Clare, the writer begins,

Lumberers, like poets, are born, not made. It is possible to detect one in the nursery by the care with which he gathers trash into a wooden box with a padlock. By-and-bye, you find his box enlarged into a chest, wherein he has arranged with the greatest care, as many old penknives, toys, disused schoolbooks, and half-ruined toys of all kinds. . . . and any odd thing which he finds—and perhaps he is too ready to assume a finding . . . all goes into the chest, there to be gloated over as property, not to be legitimately enjoyed. (21)

The nature of the lumberer is inherent, an engrained instinct that reveals itself in childhood. The lumberer seeks out and retains objects for the sake of possession rather than use. In his discussion of the domestic lumberer, however, the author broaches issues of gender, acquisition, and consumerism in the dawning era of advertising strategies, commercialism, and increasing middle-class purchasing power. The writer continues,

The domestic lumberers—a leading species of the class—are well-known for their purchasing all sorts of things which they do not need. . . . Now, my wife, though one of the most careful and economic wives, is a little bit of a lumberer. Not a day passes that we do not receive a circular advertising a sale of goods at an “enormous reduction.” One day, among many, the temptation could not be resisted . . . a sale of the household goods of some poor family is advertised to take place, and sure as the hour arrives, my wife proceeds to the dismal scene, the natural pity of her heart absorbed in the eagerness of her desire for bargains. (21)

The sardonic tone castigates the domestic lumberer, portraying her as both victim and participant in the glittering lure of advertising schemes. In his discussion of scenes of household clearances in Victorian novels, David Trotter examines such scenes from the perspective of those

individuals forced to surrender their belongings. Articles such as the one appearing in *The Lamp*, offer a glimpse of the same scene from the viewpoint of the spectators and buyers.

The author begins by gently mocking the “natural pity” of his wife’s heart that leads her to scenes of household clearances. In the face of her desire, however, the wife forgets the poor family, whose goods she eagerly buys up at discount price, so consumed is she with the pleasures of accumulation and ownership. Such pleasure is brief. The author describes his astonishment at entering the couple’s garret attic, a place he admits he “had not been before for some years,” only to discover “a most astonishing collection of useless articles, which my dear wife has in course of time stored up” (22). Among the wreckage, he finds chairs, carpets, a collection of books “which looked as if it comprehended the whole literary debris of a large school for fifty years,” carpets, paintings, fire-screens, and tables that “vainly endeavoured to preserve a horizontal position upon two legs and a half” (22). He attempts to temper her acquisitive habits with humor and endearments. She is “one of the most careful and economic of wives,” and her hoarding is “my worthy spouse’s reigning weakness” (22). His efforts to dissociate her moral character from her compulsion only highlight the psychological divide that exists between hoarder and non-hoarder. In a last attempt to account for his wife’s urge to accumulate, the author gives agency to the objects: “It is only one of the evils of our case that the idea of cheap sales *tempts* and *haunts* my wife, and causes me vexations I would rather be spared” (22, emphasis added). The author offers no solution, spiritual or otherwise, to curbing the temptations of consumerism but rather closes the article with resignation at his and his wife’s fates.

HOARDING ON THE STREETS

From hoarding in the home, I want to turn to hoarding in the streets focusing on two narratives that highlight the relationship between hoarding and the streets of nineteenth-century London. Henry Mayhew's exhaustive catalogue *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851) records in detail the habits, characters, and lives of the lower classes living in mid-century London. In particular, Mayhew chronicles the unique behaviors of London street-buyers. He observes that "[t]he principal things bought by the itinerant purchasers consist of waste-paper, hare and rabbit skins, old umbrellas and parasols, bottles and glass, broken metal, rags, dripping, grease, bones, tea-leaves, and old clothes" (103). Mayhew notes that the waste-paper buyers include "many active, energetic, and intelligent men," and that the "elder portion of the street-folk . . . do not sell, but buy" with an aim to buy goods at a cheap price (often by depreciating their value to the seller) in order to resell at a larger profit (103). The motto among street buyers is "buy everything"; they send out bills of advertisement claiming "no rubbish or lumber, however worthless, will be refused" (104). They work throughout London but, according to Mayhew, they congregate near the Thames and "the more secluded courts, streets, and alleys," completing their rounds in "the poorer parts of the populous suburbs" (104). Outside the echelon of street-buyers, Mayhew identifies a contrasting group of "street-finders," individuals who do not buy but rather collect refuse, rags, or bones they find in the street or receive as a form of charity.⁴ In his collection of anecdotes, Merryweather describes the rag and bone street collectors as

[an] amphibious kind of human beings—in appearance neither men nor women, but something between the two. They are known by their peculiar and grotesque appearance. . . . They keep their eyes constantly on the ground, glancing along

⁴ See Selina Gaye's *The World's Lumber Room: A Gossip About Some of Its Contents* (1885) for more detailed information on the repurposing of rags, specifically the use of rags to create artificial flowers, blotting paper, and newspapers.

the gutters of the street with amazing rapidity . . . [and] it is surprising how quickly they discern the objects of their search. . . . It is said, that a boy, observing one of these thrifty souls busy gathering up something in the streets, and dying to learn the wonders of her craft, made a sudden snatch at her bag, when out tumbled filth and refuse of all description; dirty rags, bones too stale for even dogs to pick; an old shoe; a dead cat; a part of an iron hoop; sundry lumps of fat; shreds of cloth; horse shoe nails; bits of hempen cord; fragments of coal; pieces of wood, and a catalogue of sundry articles too numerous to mention. (49)

The difference in tone and attitude between Mayhew and Merryweather is striking. Mayhew records his observations without demeaning his subjects, going so far as to describe the waste-paper buyers as “active, energetic, intelligent men” (103). The aim of Merryweather’s *Lives and Anecdotes of Misers* is markedly different from Mayhew’s work, as Merryweather makes clear in his preface. His descriptions of the individuals as sex-less, “amphibious,” “peculiar,” “grotesque,” “hags” reduces the individuals to creatures and relies on the reader’s voyeuristic curiosity to generate interest and entertainment (49). Mayhew and Merryweather present two sets of vivid descriptions of the rag and bone collectors, street-buyers, and street-finders, and both texts reveal the habits of such individuals as closely aligned with those of lumberers.

Hoarding in the London streets also took the form of artwork. During his life, John Orlando Parry was a well-known artist, painter, and performer in Victorian London. His work in the London theater scene allowed his path to cross with Charles Dickens, and the two became close friends through their mutual love of theater and music. An 1837 painting by John Orlando Parry entitled *A London Street Scene* depicts a scene that could have inspired Dickens’s essay

“Bill-Sticking” (1851).⁵ The side of an old brick building covered in advertising posters dominates the image. A glimpse of the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral is visible in the left hand corner. At the base of the brick wall, fragments of tattered posters rest in crumpled heaps; a billsticker stands over them in the midst of pasting a new poster onto the wall. As the title suggests, this is a street scene of London in the 1830s.

Scholars of Victorian culture have gravitated to Parry’s 1837 painting, and references to his work appear frequently in discussions of Victorian music, art, and theatre, representations of the lower class, and the periodical press. In his analysis of Parry’s work, Richard L. Stein claims that “[t]he disorder of the posters resembles a dense archeological site, in which one vertical slice reveals many separate historic periods copresent in a single physical area. . . . We are presented with an intricate confusion that requires interpretation . . . composed of the layered interpretation of past, present, and future” (48-49). Robert Douglas-Fairhurst examines Parry’s *A London Street Scene* in connection with Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz*. He points out that one of the posters “visible above the group of street traders is a poster advertising *The Christening* at the Adelphi, which shows that Dickens’s ideas (albeit in secondhand form) were still in the public eye when this watercolor was completed” (*Becoming* 143). If we look closely at the watercolor, we find other suggestive connections between Parry and Dickens. In the lower left corner, a young pickpocket steals an officer’s pocket-handkerchief. The young thief evokes comparison with the Artful Dodger from Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, a novel that began its serial run in 1837, the same year Parry finished *A London Street Scene*. The glimpse of St. Paul’s Cathedral recalls a closing scene from an early chapter in *Bleak House*, years later: Jo “sits, munching and gnawing, and

⁵ Parry dates the painting 1835, but he did not complete *A London Street Scene* until 1837. Peter Sheppard Skærved notes that the painting was a gift for Parry’s “new bride, Anne Combe, in the year of their marriage, 1835. Anna Combe was the daughter of the noted surgeon, Henry Combe. The painting alludes to this happy event. At the top of the painting, the words ‘Miss Combe’ crown the space, slightly obscured by the large blue bill for Vauxhall Gardens” (8).

looking up at the great Cross on the summit of St. Paul's Cathedral, glittering above a red and violet-tinted cloud of smoke. From the boy's face one might suppose that sacred emblem to be, in his eyes, the crowning confusion of the great, confused city" (*Bleak House* 243).

Seven years after completing *A London Street Scene*, Parry finished a larger, second painting on the same subject. *Old Houses in the City* (1844) is relatively unknown to nineteenth-century scholars. In it, Parry advertises Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, another novel featuring a prominent hoarder. In turn Dickens's "Bill-Sticking" makes use of the name "JULLIEN" just as it appears in large bold letters in the center of Parry's painting.⁶ In *Old Houses in the City* (1844) appearing directly above the name JULLIEN, two large, open eyes gaze at passersby.

We might apply Stein's apt description of hoardings to Dickens's methods of novel construction for *Bleak House*. Like hoardings, novels are built on foundations of paper and held together by glue and words.⁷ In addition to the number plans and manuscript of the novel, the partial remains of three sets of corrected proofs survive. The manuscript and corrected proofs demonstrate the author's high levels of "anxiety and restlessness," as evidenced by the densely cramped handwriting and high number of insertions and deletions (Kaplan 1). Looking at the hand-corrected proofs of *Bleak House* is akin to lifting the top layer of posters in one of Parry's hoardings—underneath we find, to borrow from Richard L. Stein, "a dense archeological site . . . composed of the layered interpretation of past, present, and future" (48-49). In the corrected proofs, new paragraphs appear frequently in the margins. Sometimes, they are boxed-in by thick black lines visually reminiscent of borders of the type seen on posters. On occasion, new paragraphs appear in the top margins of pages. In the midst of writing, however, Dickens

⁶ Jullien is most probably a reference to the popular French composer Louis Antoine Jullien (1812-1860). Many thanks to Richard Menke for pointing out this reference.

⁷ Only the cheaper editions of Dickens's novels were bound with glue and paper; the more expensive editions were sewn together with thread.

discovers the margin to be too small, forcing him to trail the writing down along the sides. The handwritten portions frame the printed proof, creating a layering effect that evokes a sense of past and present drafts coming together. In an especially large insertion added to Chapter XXXVIII, “The Struggle,” Dickens attaches an entire page of new composition. Composed on faint blue paper, the page is larger than the standard proof pages. Someone, in years past, erratically folded the page in upon itself so that it sits awkwardly within the proof copy binding. The page stands out as a visual reminder: in both its metaphorical and physical construction, novels are layered compositions—novels are hoardings.

In May 2013, the fifth and newest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or DSM, categorizes hoarding as a separate and “distinct disorder,” divorcing it from the obsessive-compulsive disorders with which it had been previously grouped (Hoffman). Recognizing that hoarders engage in a unique set of behaviors, the new contemporary classification of hoarding completes a narrative of hoarding that, I argue, begins in the early part of the nineteenth century. The type of hoarding, which the DSM-5 identifies, defines hoarding as a static, one-dimensional concept, when in actuality hoarding covers a spectrum of behaviors. Contemporary portraits of hoarding would have us believe it is a modern phenomenon characterized by the excessive accumulation of rubbish and valueless objects. But this portrait of hoarding is deeply flawed. As the historic accounts have demonstrated, hoarding is not a modern behavior or idea, and in the following pages, I argue for a more nuanced and fluid definition of hoarding that presents in a variety of literal and metaphorical forms.

Another fault of this modern definition is its attention to value, another concept that, like hoarding, is fluid. The cliché “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure” captures the mutability

of value by taking two antonyms, trash and treasure, and making them synonyms. I would argue hoarding achieves a similar effect by finding truth in contradictions, locating treasure in trash, and finding value in unexpected places and unexpected forms. I also use this cliché because it evokes the difficulties in writing about hoarding, difficulties that may at times lead this study into apparent contradictions, but when discussing hoarding, contradictions are inherent. To define hoarding by a single definition negates its potential as an abstract concept, one that we might find useful in exploring other cumulative processes such as the gathering of materials with which to build a nest, or craft a domestic space, or even write a novel. Because the OED defines *hoard* as both treasure and the place in which treasure is stored, it might be prudent to consider also the spaces in which authors created and hoarded their own treasures – their manuscripts.

My first chapter looks at hoarding in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815), where I argue that hoarding is a metaphor for home building, and Austen's heroines Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse hoard material goods in order to create domestic spaces that are independent of masculine control. In Austen's first two published novels *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, the heroines marry into established homes, whereas in Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, the heroines build domestic spaces from the accumulation of physical objects prior to their marriages. In Austen, hoarding is not about acquiring new possessions but instead is about desiring what one already has and holding onto it. On the spectrum of hoarding behaviors, Austenian hoarding is at the opposite end from the extreme, pernicious, and destructive hoarding, such as the kind Dickens explores and that contemporary media portrays. Austen's hoarders do not aggressively accumulate; rather, they hold onto things and refuse to part with objects that hold no monetary value, like chestnuts or scraps of paper, but which they imbue with emotion and personal significance.

Shortly after completing *Emma*, Austen captured the space of her creative production in an 1816 letter to her nephew: “What should I do with your strong, manly, spirited Sketches, full of variety & Glow?—How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour?” (*Letters* 337). Claire Harman claims, “the metaphor is what has stuck in readers’ minds, evoking miniature painting, dedication to craftsmanship, doggedness, and painstaking expertise. Austen appears to be anticipating the criticism most often leveled at her in later years that she was too small scale” (113-14). The image of a miniature workspace seems a metaphor for the acuteness of Austen’s writing, but it also captures the image of Austen working with the materials she already has, as she playfully praises her nephew’s writing while also comparing its style and substance as out of proportion and out of place next to her own writing.

In the second chapter, I turn to Tennyson’s long poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.* (1850). I argue for a more conceptual understanding of hoarding that connects hoarding with memory, melancholy, and the literary epiphany. Some critics might argue that memory is a selective collection, but I disagree because memories are volatile—we remember what we would rather forget, and sometimes we cannot recall the things we want to remember. Tennyson uses hoarding in his long poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.* as a metaphor for memory, and hoarding memories allows the speaker to stay in touch with a communicable past. Whereas hoarding in Austen is a layering process that creates and defines domestic spaces, hoarding in Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* attempts to deny the possibility of loss. But because the poem is built upon the ephemeral substance of memories, which are unstable entities, the poem is in continual danger of breaking down. Tennyson’s hoarding rests in the middle of the spectrum because there is a degree of obsessiveness in the poem that exceeds that which it is in Austen. Obsession in *In Memoriam* is

evident in the length of time over which Tennyson composed the poem – 17 years – and the use of the *In Memoriam* stanza form combined with the poem’s unrelenting length – over 700 stanzas divided into 131 elegies including a prologue and an epilogue. Hoarding in Tennyson surpasses that of Austen, but Tennyson’s hoarding lacks the destructive quality that we associate with hoarding in Dickens. Rather than destroying the poem, hoarding in *In Memoriam* becomes the means by which the poem attempts to sustain itself.

In February 1850, Tennyson left his fair copy of the *In Memoriam* manuscript behind in his previous lodgings. He sent his friend and fellow author Coventry Patmore (best known for his 1854 poem *The Angel in the House* on the idealization of marriage) to retrieve it. Patmore saved the letter from Tennyson, ultimately giving it to Tennyson’s son, Hallam Tennyson, along with an account of his retrieval of the *In Memoriam* manuscript. Patmore writes, “[t]his letter asked me to visit the lodging in Mornington Place, Hampstead Road, which he had occupied two or three weeks before, and to try to recover the MS., which he had left in a closet where he used to keep some of his *provisions*” (*Memoir* 249, emphasis added). The manuscript, now known as “The Butcher’s Book” (it was an accounting book like those used by butchers and grocers), was begun in November 1842 and marks the third stage of Tennyson’s composition. The long, narrow manuscript gives all the appearance of an accounting book, a detail underscored by the poem’s recording of events in order to give an account of Hallam’s short life. Patmore’s letter to Hallam Tennyson, in which he describes finding the manuscript in a cabinet designed for food storage, is suggestive for how Tennyson viewed his work—as a form of nourishment for body and soul.

In the third chapter, I turn to the novels, essays, and letters of Charles Dickens, examining the works both preceding and following the publication of *Bleak House* (1853), which

is the principal locus of the chapter. Where Austen builds the hoard up across the novel building up the text, Dickens makes the hoard a looming presence from page one. In works such as *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Bleak House* (1853), the hoard exists beforehand, so that the work is not about creating the hoard but about dismantling it. When Charles Dickens died suddenly on June 8, 1870, his illustrator Sir Samuel Luke Fildes, who had planned to illustrate the second half of the serial publication of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, went to the late author's home at Gad's Hill "at the request of the family . . . it was then, while in the house of mourning, I conceived the idea of 'The Empty Chair,' and at once got my colours from London, and, with their permission, made the water-colour drawing a very faithful record of his library" (qtd. in Thomson 28). Fildes's drawing captures the melancholy emptiness of the author's chair and the author's desk, upon which stand clustered together a number of objects and figurines. When Fildes's drawing was published as an engraving in *The Graphic*, Charles Collins (the younger brother of writer Wilkie Collins and Dickens's son-in-law) composed the following description of his father-in-law's desk to accompany it:

Ranged in front of, and round about him, were always a variety of objects for his eye to rest on in the intervals of actual writing, and any one of which he would have instantly missed had it been removed. There was a French bronze group representing a duel with swords, fought by a couple of very fat toads There was another bronze figure which always stood near the toads, also of French manufacture . . . It was a statuette of a dog-fancier, such a one as you used to see on the bridges or quays of Paris, with a profusion of little dogs stuck under his arms and into his pockets, and everywhere where little dogs could possibly be insinuated, all for sale. (Collins qtd. in Forster 236)

From Fildes's watercolor and the subsequent engraving, other items on the desk are easily discernible, such as a vase, a candleholder, an inkpot, and a day calendar, which still reads June 8, 1870. In the far corner of Dickens's desk, the outlines of a second figurine are visible but its distinct features are not. Wearing a pointed hat of sorts and with its back turned to us, it gazes out the window. Presumably this is the "dog-fancier" of Collins's description, but who can be certain? We can see neither its face nor any little dogs. Scholars of Dickens have long pointed to the dueling frogs as emblems of Dickens's own particular brand of humor, but few have drawn attention to the cheap Parisian souvenir "statuette of a dog-fancier" in the corner (236). In his recent biography of Dickens, Michael Slater describes the figurine as "a dog thief/salesman with 'lots of little dogs in his pockets and under his arm'" (256). I am drawn to this faceless figurine, this dog fancier/thief/salesman whose little dogs threaten to overwhelm him. In this figure, I see Dickens's fascination with the hoarder – the individual whose nature both parallels and defies his own.

Critics of Dickens have pointed to the good housekeepers of his novels, characters like Esther Summerson, who compulsively tidy up, as evidence of Dickens's compulsion for orderliness. In Fildes's drawing, Dickens's library presents a neat workspace with books and papers stacked in neat piles on tables; nothing appears out of place – except the two figurines, which stand on opposite ends of the desk like opposing forces in Dickens's life and his work. In *Bleak House*, Dickens, for whom hoarding was a life-long interest, presents a portrait of hoarding that is the most consistent with the contemporary portraits of hoarding as an overwhelming accumulation that frequently destroys the individual responsible for its existence.

With the coda of "The Hoarding Sense," I look forward to the post-1860 legacy of hoarding in writers such as George Eliot and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose novels engage

hoarding in surprising ways. I explore briefly the image of the lumber-room, which appears with increasing frequency after 1860, and the ways in which mid- to late-nineteenth-century writers used the lumber-room as a metaphor for a variety of concerns, namely the state of the late-nineteenth-century mind. Lastly, I suggest ways that nineteenth-century hoarding has become the burden of contemporary scholars.

CHAPTER 2

‘TOWARDS A NEST OF MY OWN’:

HOARDING IN JANE AUSTEN’S *MANSFIELD PARK* AND *EMMA*

As an image for Austen’s novel writing, hoarding draws attention to her process as the organic accumulation of materials. Characterized by its attention to the personal and individual, hoarding in Austen’s novels is pre-industrial and organic. Through it, she explores how individuals create personal relationships both with objects and with people by way of objects. Compared to Dickens, Austen considers hoarding on a smaller scale, examining the pathology of the individual rather than the pathology of a nation. Austen’s earliest publications, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), do not include characters that hoard; there are dandies, fops, and self-obsessed girls, but no hoarders. It is only in *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815), her middle novels, that Austen offers up a narrative with a protagonist who is so dramatically different from her previous ones—a heroine who is a hoarder. In her discussion of narrative and character, Nancy Miller claims that “[t]o build a narrative around a character whose behavior is deliberately idiopathic . . . is not merely to create a puzzling fiction but to fly in the face of a certain ideology . . . [and] to violate a grammar of motives” (37). Austen does not violate, I believe, a code of motives; rather, she suggests a new set of motivations, one that reveals hoarding to be, at its core, about the heroine’s relationship to the home. To label Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse as idiopathic might be taking the assessment too far, but their

collecting and preserving of physical objects in dedicated domestic spaces challenges social codes in the novels.

In this chapter, I argue that Austen's hoarders, Fanny Price, Harriet Smith, and to a lesser degree Emma Woodhouse, learn to value the objects that they already possess and come to love the men they already know. Austenian hoarding is not about making choices but about learning to desire the things one already has. This chapter explores hoarding in the writing of Jane Austen in both literal and figurative ways. I first examine hoarding first as a metaphor for authorship through the image of nests and nest building in Austen's letters, and then I extend this metaphor to Austen's mid-career novels, using it as a tool to explore domestic spaces and scenes of home building in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. Prior to embarking on a deeper analysis of *Mansfield Park*, I look briefly at Austen's unfinished novel *The Watsons* (1807) and Virginia Woolf's comments on the significance of this manuscript. Because we do not possess the manuscripts for any of Austen's novels (save for two manuscript chapters of *Persuasion*), *The Watsons* is an important text for what it reveals about the structure of Austen's novels. I suggest that if we trace across Austen's oeuvre the relationships between her heroines and material goods, we discover it peaks in Austen's mid-career novels. With *Persuasion*, Austen turns away from using material objects to define the relationships between individuals as well as domestic spaces. With *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, Austen explores not only how objects fill domestic spaces but also how collecting and hoarding objects contributes to a conceptualization and the building of home. These activities, hoarding and home building, go hand-in-hand with Austen's use of free indirect discourse in these middle novels.

The characters in Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* treasure objects for reasons other characters (and readers) do not understand. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price does not personally

select the items in her east room; she receives them either as gifts or as secondhand castoffs. However, Fanny imbues each object in her rooms with an emotional significance, a desire, that marks it and makes it her own. Hoarding involves a process of looking at objects, desiring them, and imagining them as possessions. Feminist critics, such as Nancy Armstrong, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, have explored the theme of desire in connection with the novels' treatments of power and sexual politics. But historical critics, such as Susan Wolfson and Bharat Tandon, have concentrated on the relationship between desire and the role of objects in these novels. Tandon claims that desire is "[t]he fulcrum around which *Emma*'s treatment of wanting, things, and wanting things revolve" (16). Joseph Litvak suggests that *Emma* is a "potentially endless circuit of fiction, interpretation, and desire" (771). Hoarding is like this circuit—only it begins with desire and ends in fiction. In *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, desire for things begins with seeing them. Emma Woodhouse desires to possess Harriet Smith because she notices her, and in turn Emma turns Harriet's desiring gaze away from Robert Martin and towards Mr. Elton. Fanny Price does not select the items in her east room, but because she sees them every day, they take on an emotional significance so powerful that she gazes on them whenever she feels anxious and their presence calmly restores her. Fanny Price desires Edmund Bertram because she sees him every day as well; his presence is comforting to her, and Fanny's choice of Edmund, I suggest, is due to his familiarity. Hoarding in *Mansfield Park* reinforces, therefore, the novel's logic of endogamy, a connection I will explore in more detail later.

The act of looking transforms objects in the mind of the viewer from mere things to possible possessions. To some degree, everyone does this, sees things (objects and people) that they desire and wish to possess, but the difference between the average person and the hoarder is that the hoarder does not draw distinctions or make choices—everything is appealing. Fanny

Price makes no choices of the objects in her east room, until the scene when she is presented with a choice of necklaces, a scene that proves to be significant for Fanny's personal development. *Emma's* Harriet Smith hoards trash from Mr. Elton not because she values the items, but because when she looks upon them and touches them, she imagines Mr. Elton touching them. The hoarded objects give Fanny and Harriet primary materials from which to create imaginative narratives. Through an accumulation of books, Fanny Price tries to recreate the world of Mansfield Park in Portsmouth. Books are especially symbolic for Fanny; they present a combination of text and object, emblematic of her efforts to write over her present circumstance with objects. Fed by desire, hoarding is essentially a creative act of the imagination. It encourages a type of authorship where, out of available objects that seem to have little intrinsic value, the hoarder can craft narrative.

Free indirect discourse layers the consciousness of a character with the narrative patterns (such as word choice, verb tense, and pronoun use) of a third-person narrator. At times, it is unclear when a thought or observation belongs to the character or the narrator, and the consequence of decision falls to the critic. Dorrit Cohn defines free indirect discourse as "the technique for rendering a character's thought in his own idiom while maintaining the third-person reference and the basic tense of narration" (qtd in McKeon 485). Michael McKeon suggests this technique achieves "the effect of greater interiority . . . by the oscillation or differential *between* the perspectives of narrator and character . . . a movement that seems palpably to carve out a space of subjective interiority precisely through its narrative objectification" (McKeon 485). At its root the definition of free indirect discourse is concerned with issues of perspective; what one person views as important or valuable, another person may

not.⁸ Tandon claims that through the use of free indirect discourse “Austen challenges her readers to weigh the importance that one person might afford to an object or moment against the wholly different value that another might bring to it—and the possibility that they may well *both* be wrong” (5).

In *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, scenes in which two characters consider the value of the same object reveal more about the morals and values of the characters, than about the value of the object. One such moment in *Emma* is when Harriet Smith and Emma Woodhouse recall from memory the same scene. In their individual retellings, however, they prioritize entirely different details, with Harriet attentive only to what Mr. Elton said and did, and Emma to where Mr. Knightley was standing. This scene, which I examine in closer detail, and others like it emphasize the priority of vision and connect the role that vision plays in the hoarding of details within memory. Tandon highlights the “emphasis on looking” in *Emma* as an “example of the ‘perspectivism’ that free indirect style can perform” (5). Free indirect discourse challenges judgments based on vision and perspective; in a scene or a moment that employs free indirect discourse, a reader must decide whose vision to follow, whose judgment to believe.

Hoarding and free indirect discourse are connected because they share the same set of elements: the emphases on vision, a fiction that relies upon a layering, and access to internal thoughts through outside sources. Austen’s use of hoarding and free indirect discourse together in the same narrative reveals these connections. In her discussion of Austen’s use of narrated

⁸ Critics disagree over the terminology for this conscious-rendering structure of third-person narrative. Tandon prefers “free indirect style” as translated from the French *style indirect libre*. Other critics I look to, such as Rachel Provenzano Oberman, prefer Dorrit Cohn’s term “narrated monologue” from Cohn’s *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness*. Michael McKeon employs “free indirect discourse” because it is the most common form in Anglophone linguistic and literary criticism, but he acknowledges the German *erlebte Rede* as well. In her argument on the importance of details and particulars in Miss Bates’s speeches, Mary Hong employs “free indirect discourse” in order to emphasize the discourse, or spoken conversation, associated with Miss Bates’s speeches. I also prefer “free indirect discourse” for its commonality in criticism and its emphasis on the concept of discourse as both internal thought and external speech.

monologue, Rachel Provenzano Oberman claims, “[t]here are moments when it is unclear whose opinion is being given . . . and this lack of clarity subtly undermines the reader’s confidence in the objective value of statements” (3). With free indirect discourse, a reader has a choice: to try and work out whose thought (narrator’s or character’s) is at the forefront, or to accept the multiplicity of readings without a knowing certainty. Although some critics such as Oberman and Tandon suggest Austen challenges the reader to make a decision, hoarding is not about decisions, as the example of Fanny Price will confirm—it is about the creative potential and the multiplicity of narrative.

I. THE EARLY NOVELS

Austen’s attention to hoarding and use of free indirect discourse in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, her mid-career novels, signals a distinct shift from her previous works. Austen’s early novels, by which I mean her first and second published novels *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), treat excessiveness, especially in connection with clothing or decoration, with satiric contempt, and characters who show too much of an interest in either are frequently treated as thoughtless or ridiculous. In a memorable scene from *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor, waiting for service at a jeweler, watches a snobbish gentleman make decisions on the purchase of a toothpick case:

He was giving orders for a toothpick-case for himself, and till its size, shape, and ornaments were determined, all of which after examining and debating for a quarter of an hour over every toothpick-case in the shop, were finally arranged by his own inventive fancy At last the affair was decided. The ivory, the gold, and the pearls, all received their appointment, and the gentleman having named

the last day on which his existence could be continued without the possession of the toothpick-case, drew on his gloves with leisurely care . . . [and] walked off with an happy air of real conceit and affected indifference. (SS 165-66)

The disdain of Austen's narrator for Robert Ferrars is obvious here, and scenes such as this appear with some regularity in Austen's first two novels. Scenes of decadence in the early novels do not bear any resemblance to scenes of hoarding in the later novels. Rather, Austen's novels prior to *Mansfield Park* demonstrate an entirely different mode of desiring objects. In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, characters desire specific objects in order to advertise, change, or advance their social status, and Austen keeps the narrator (and reader) away at the distance of an observer with no internal access to the thoughts of these characters. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen crafts just such a scene in the character of Lydia Bennett, the most frivolous of the Bennett daughters. Lydia purchases an ugly bonnet with, she claims, the intention of improving it, but then reveals she bought it more for the bandbox in which it came:

Look here, I have bought this bonnet. I do not think that it is very pretty; but I thought I might as well buy it as not. I shall pull it to pieces as soon as I get home, and see if I can make it up any better . . . there were two or three much uglier in the shop; and when I have bought some prettier-coloured satin to trim it with fresh, I think it will be very tolerable . . . I am glad I bought my bonnet, if it is only for the fun of having another bandbox! (PP 143-44)

Lydia Bennett claims that she chooses an ugly bonnet for the purposes of fixing it up, but then reveals that she purchased it for the fun of having something more than she had before, another bandbox. This scene anticipates Lydia's choice of husbands in the ungallant Wickham and subsequent flaunting of her new social status as a married woman, unmindful of the chaos and

distress her actions have caused: “Do the people here abouts know I am married to day? I was afraid they might not; and we overtook William Goulding in his curicle . . . so I let down the side glass next to him, and took off my glove, and let my hand just rest upon the window frame, so that he might see the ring” (205). Through her secondary characters like Robert Ferrars and Lydia Bennett, Austen explores the narcissism and vanity associated with material possessions. In scenes such as these that deal with issues of taste, Austen hones her wit. Her heroines, sisters Marianne and Elinor Dashwood and Elizabeth Bennet, however, demonstrate little concern for material things; there is, certainly, a practical concern for money, but not for the material objects that make up a home. With the middle novels, Austen engages her heroines in the world of objects in an entirely different and subjective way.

In *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, Austen does not treat hoarding with the disparagement that she does the vanity of fussiness for things of her earlier novels. She ties hoarding to the search for home, which suggests that she views hoarding as something more significant than just an excess of clutter. In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, the heroines’ main concerns are for successful and prosperous marriages that secure a future. In the middle novels, however, Austen shifts her attention, moving it past marriage to focus on the heroines’ roles in building and shaping homes. Succinctly, one might say that the heroines of Austen’s first two published novels marry into homes, while the heroines of her middle novels build homes. For the sake of home building, I believe, Austen becomes interested in hoarding. For Austen, *hoarding* means the act of desiring, possessing, and accumulating objects; she treats it as a means by which a home can be made to suit the heroine and not the other way around. It is at this moment in Austen’s writing that a new image begins to appear with some regularity in her novels and her letters—the image of a bird’s nest.

“THIS NEST OF COMFORTS”

For Austen, nest building is the physical process of layering the mundane objects of everyday life into a structure that offers comfort, personal safety, and mental security—a home. In *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, the heroines carve out private spaces, emblematic of their private selves, before their marriages, so that the novels become not the search for homes, but the construction of homes. *Mansfield Park* explores the formation of the self through an accumulation of objects; Austen’s narrator describes Fanny Price’s attic rooms as her “nest of comforts,” a place Fanny retreats to for solace and one that helps to reinforce her sense of personal identity. In *Emma*, Austen uses hoarding as a metaphor for composition, specifically Emma’s attempt at creating narrative out of the scraps of Highbury life. Out of all of Austen’s novels, *Emma* demonstrates how Austen used materials from her own life, such as the minutiae of daily living conveyed in her letters, to form her narratives.

In 1867, Caroline Austen published her biography *My Aunt Jane Austen: A Memoir*. Three years later, James Edward Austen-Leigh, Caroline’s brother, published his own biography *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. The siblings had consulted on one another’s texts, but it was Austen-Leigh’s publication that included, for the first time in print, several of Jane Austen’s letters and the fragment now known as *The Watsons*. In a letter to her brother on the subject of Austen’s letters and whether or not they were fit for publication, Caroline writes, “There is nothing in those letters which *I* have seen that would be acceptable to the public . . . they detailed chiefly home and family events . . . to strangers they could be no transcript of her mind – they would not feel that they knew her any the better for having read them” (qtd in Le Faye 249). On Cassandra Austen’s careful destruction and editing of the letters, Caroline also writes that Cassandra “looked them over and burnt the greater part (as she told) 2 or 3 years before her own death—

She left or *gave* some legacies to the Nieces—but of those that *I* have seen, several had portions cut out” (qtd in Sutherland 174). Cassandra Austen, who died in 1845, destroyed or edited most of Austen’s letters, leaving very little material for future biographers to consult.

In response to the public’s enthusiasm and curiosity about his aunt, Austen-Leigh decided to break the family’s carefully guarded silence and publish several of Austen’s letters accompanied by his unfortunate remarks. He cautioned avid readers “not to expect too much There is in them no notice of politics or public events; scarcely any discussions of literature, or other subjects of general interest” (51). Although he admires the “vein of humour [that] continually gleams through the whole,” Austen-Leigh believes that “the materials may be thought inferior to the execution, for they treat only of the details of domestic life” (51). This demeaning assessment of Austen’s correspondence set the tone for scholarly criticism of the letters for the next century. The 161 surviving letters by Austen sent to friends, family members, and publishers, have been described as trifling, “inappropriately joined,” “jarring catalogues of ‘little matters’ that unsettle a reader looking for coherence” (Flynn 98). Contemporary Austen scholars still express mixed feelings on the nature and quality of Austen’s letters. In recent years, however, the connections between the letters and the novels have proved to a fertile ground for new critical work.

Recent scholars and critics have heaped reproaches on the head of James Edward Austen-Leigh. Carol Flynn angrily rejects his evaluation of the letters’ subject matter as “inferior to the execution” (Austen-Leigh 51). Flynn writes, “[i]t is only recently that the domestic nature of the letters has been freed from such a condescending interpretation” (101). But if James Edward Austen-Leigh is ever to be rescued from the wrath of contemporary scholars, we should examine closer the unusual metaphor he employs to describe Austen’s construction of her letters. “They

may be said,” he writes, “to resemble the nest which some little bird builds of the materials nearest at hand, of the twigs and mosses supplied by the tree in which it is placed; curiously constructed out of the simplest matters” (51). The bird’s nest metaphor evokes the image of a crafted structure that appears, from the outside, haphazard; inside, however, the nest reveals a tightly woven structure concentrated around a smooth center. The bird’s nest suggests a fragile domesticity reliant upon instinctual urgings rather than contrived creation; such an suggestive image applied to Austen’s letter writing reflects her focus on the domestic arrangements of village life for inspiration. Although Austen-Leigh may characterize the “details of domestic life” as coarse and dull, Austen interweaves a glittering thread of humor throughout the whole, as Austen-Leigh acknowledges, a thread that brightens her materials and draws the eye to look more closely (51). Flynn’s ire at Austen-Leigh’s interpretations may be misplaced because she believes, falsely, that the bird-nest metaphor is his own pejorative creation. In fact, it is not.

The bird-nest metaphor is Jane Austen’s own humble image for her composition process. On the subject of authorship and the precarious nature of writing, she writes in an 1816 letter to her nephew,

By the bye, my dear Edward, I am quite concerned for the loss your Mother mentions in her Letter; two Chapters & a half to be missing is monstrous! It is well that I have not been at Steventon lately, & therefore cannot be suspected of purloining them;—two strong twigs & a half towards a Nest of my own, would have been something.—I do not think however that any theft of that sort would be really very useful to me. What should I do with your strong, manly, spirited Sketches, full of variety & Glow?—How could I possibly join them on to the little

bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour? (*Letters* 337)

This excerpt from Austen's letter has gained notoriety for its implications about Austen's workspace, the "little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory," and the narrow social world that she satirized (337). Comparatively neglected, however, has been the reference to the "two strong twigs & a half towards a Nest of my own," an image which would suggest a kind of organic tension with the miniature ivory workspace. The twig and nest imagery suggests the act of authorship for Austen is a type of hoarding, by which she uses the materials she already has at hand, namely the details, triumphs, and trials of country life, and imbues them with a richness and meaningful emotion that turns them from nothing special into something significant. Her authorship is a layering process, much like nest building, by which she crafts complex structure from nothing. The ivory, while organic in origin, is more suggestive of a natural material crafted and polished with artistic and purposeful intent. The brushing on ivory is more refined and subtler in its effects. Austen offers this image of delicate creation as a contrast to the artistic broad strokes of Austen-Leigh's "strong, manly, spirited Sketches" (337). The tension between the instinctual art of the bird's nest and the deliberate, measured art produced by the brush on ivory is at the heart of Austen's mid-career novels *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. Of all of Austen's novels, none reflects the world embodied in her letters better than *Emma*. Turning to the letters offers us a clearer vision of how Austen transposed the details of village life into her novel.

THE LETTERS

Austen's letters demonstrate her playful engagement with language and subject matter; she frequently treats solemn events with levity and joyful events with solemnity, another

enactment of imbuing trivial details with meaning that transforms them from dull to entertaining. “In the first place I hope you will live twenty-three years longer,” begins her earliest surviving letter, written to her sister Cassandra on the event of her twenty-third birthday, 9 January 1796 (*Letters* 1). Its survival may be nothing more than an accident, but something about Austen’s language is difficult to ignore. For one thing, the letter does not begin with exuberant felicitations such as we might expect her to send to her only sister on the event of her birthday. Instead, the author’s hope acknowledges life while invariably invoking death. Twenty-four days earlier, on 16 December, Jane Austen turned twenty years old; perhaps, her recent entrance into a new decade of her own life placed thoughts of life and death at the forefront of her mind. But as Caroline Austen and other critics have pointed out, Austen does not linger on any one piece of news; she moves quickly between news, gossip, and the kind of confidences only sisters can share. She spares just a single sentence for Cassandra’s birthday, because she has much more interesting and important news to share:

Mr. Tom Lefroy’s birthday was yesterday You scold me so much in the nice long letter which I have this moment received from you, that I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together. I *can* expose myself, however, only *once more*, because he leaves the country soon after next Friday. (1)

Austen’s syntax dances as she describes her mischievous and flirtatious behavior in a manner that she hopes will shock and entertain Cassandra. She lists the other guests at the ball, names their partners, and says she has spent all her money “in buying white gloves and pink persian,” and that Tom Lefroy called on her dressed in a “morning coat [that] is a deal too light” in

imitation of Tom Jones (1). As Claire Tomalin points out, this reference “is another provocative remark. Jane is making clear that she doesn’t mind talking about a novel which deals candidly and comically with sexual attraction, fornication, bastard children and the oily hypocrisy of parsons By telling Cassandra she and Tom Lefroy have talked about the book together, she lets her know just how free and even bold their conversation has been” (115). In closing her letter, Austen teases Cassandra that her fiancé the Revd Thomas “Tom” Fowle has given his ship a funny name: “[w]hat a funny name Tom has got for his vessel! But he has no taste in names, as we well know, and I dare say he christened it himself” (2). To this point, Austen’s letter has covered two birthdays, dancing, flirtations, and new romances. When she writes that Cassandra’s fiancé “has no taste in names” and that he “christened it himself,” she is perhaps looking ahead to the next chapter of Cassandra and Tom’s life—to their children. Yet her next sentence reveals the precariousness of this image: “I am sorry for the Beaches’ loss of their little girl, especially as it is the one so much like me” (2-3). The Beaches were unrelated to the Austens, and several of their children died in infancy, an age too young for Austen to assert with certainty that any one of them was “so much like me” (3). In what way then was the Beaches’ girl like Austen? Was it in look, temperament, or something else indecipherable? Could Austen be imagining, in a roundabout way, Cassandra’s children, who might actually be like her one day? The sentence is impenetrable, but the vein of humor shines out through Austen’s use of irony.

Her letters frequently mention dead children. At times, she shows an extraordinary lack of sympathy, as with the oft-cited reference to Mrs. Hall of Sherbourn who “was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected owing to a fright,—I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband” (17). Compared to the previous letter, this one seems cruel. In both, however, Austen acknowledges the loss in simple, direct language, and then she

redirects attention from the dead child onto a living person. She does not dwell on the loss or the grief of the families—their grief is assumed. Instead, she turns quickly to the details of daily life. For Carol Flynn, the most surprising aspect of Austen’s reflection on the death of Mrs. Hall’s child “is not so much its heartless wit, but its context. It becomes in this long and rambling letter just one of many careless-seeming remarks” (103). Such a context gives the appearance of trivializing the deaths of children, but this appearance is deceptive. Austen’s presentation, characterized by fragmented momentum, offers a reflection of the nature of village life in early nineteenth-century England, with an emphasis on the growth and change and starts and stops of life. In this presentation, there is resolve; by layering the death of children within the details of life, she takes away its sting, refusing to linger on it for more than a moment before turning her attention to other matters.

Among the letters that survive, there is a large gap between June 1799 and October 1800. We can only speculate that the letters were lost, or, as Deidre Le Faye has suggested, that Cassandra and Jane were together at Steventon during this period. In either case, it is unfortunate that we do not have Jane Austen’s thoughts, whatever they may have been, on the start of a new century. Austen’s first letter from the nineteenth century is dated Saturday 25 – Monday 27 October 1800. Its recipient, Cassandra, had left Steventon with their elder brother Edward Austen, later known as Edward Knight, to travel to his estate in Godmersham Park in Kent. Jane writes:

You have had a very pleasant Journey of course, & have found Elizabeth & all the Children very well on your arrival at Godmersham, & I congratulate you on it. Edward is rejoicing this evening I dare say to find himself once more at home, from which he fancies he has been absent a great while.—His son left behind him

the very fine chesnuts which had been selected for planting at Godmersham, & the drawing of his own which he had intended to carry to George;—the former will therefore be deposited in the soil of Hampshire instead of Kent; the latter, I have already consigned to another Element. (*Letters* 51)

Edward Austen, his wife Elizabeth, and at least one son had just completed a visit to Steventon. Edward's unnamed son, probably his eldest son also named Edward, would have been six years old at the time of the visit (Le Faye 486). It is easy to imagine the young child collecting and making souvenirs of his journey to Kent. The drawing and the chestnuts are, in the child's mind, significant objects. They embody the adventure to a new place, and more importantly, they offer the chance of recreating that experience in Kent. Children have a tremendous capacity for creating treasures from anything and imbuing those objects with sentimental significance. One wonders how far the coach traveled before the young Edward recalled these treasures left behind. Adults, on the other hand, tend to be more circumspect. Austen's wry tone in relating these events to Cassandra reveals she prizes the chestnuts over the nephew's drawing, and that she intends to return them to nature—the drawing, she has already burned.

THE WATSONS (1807)

In her *Common Reader*, Virginia Woolf describes Jane Austen as “a mistress of much deeper emotion than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind and endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial” (138-39). Trivial and triviality are two words that appear frequently in contemporary Austen criticism, often used in describing the basis for Austen's depictions of everyday life. Woolf suggests,

however, that Austen shows readers how the surface of everyday life, composed of seemingly trivial fragments, reveals emotional depth. Austen's genius was not, she suggests, in its spontaneity ("she had not, like Emily Brontë, merely to open the door to make herself felt"), but in its thoughtfulness: "[h]umbly and gaily she collected the twigs and straws out of which the nest was to be made" (139). Highlighting the simplicity of the materials and the deliberate nature of Austen's craft, Woolf claims it was her "peculiar genius to bring [them] together," a statement that emphasizes the complexity of Austen's novel constructions (141).

Woolf's metaphor recalls the nest metaphor used by Austen Leigh in his memoir, but she takes her assessment a step further by suggesting that though the nest is composed of small matter, each fragment contains a hidden depth to be explored. Using Austen's unfinished novel *The Watsons* as evidence, Woolf directs our attention to its framework, a view of which is unobstructed by layers of detail, character, and plot.⁹ The fragment of *The Watsons* that survives is significant because, apart from two manuscript chapters of *Persuasion*, it is the only surviving manuscript of any of Austen's novels. *The Watsons* fragment marks a transition between Austen's early writings and her middle period novels. She begins work on *The Watsons* in 1804 and abandons it sometime in 1807. Prior to *The Watsons* in 1802, she had revised *Susan* (1798), which she later retitled *Northanger Abbey*, for publication. In 1811, she not only secures a publisher for *Sense and Sensibility*, but she also begins drafting *Mansfield Park*. Because what remains of *The Watsons* is clearly a working draft, we have the rare opportunity to see the nest not in its polished final form but mid-build. For Woolf, the fragment offers a glimpse of the novelist caught in the act. She notes that

⁹ Austen left the manuscript untitled. James Edward Austen-Leigh in his 1871 not only published the fragment but also gave it the title of "The Watsons."

the stiffness and bareness of the first chapters prove that she was one of those writers who lay their facts out rather baldly in the first version and then go back and back and back and cover them with flesh and atmosphere . . . we should never have guessed what pages of preliminary drudgery Jane Austen forced her pen to go through. Here we perceive that she was no conjuror after all. Like other writers, she had to create the atmosphere in which her own peculiar genius could bear fruit. (137-38)

Woolf's metaphor emphasizes Austen's writing as a slow layering, a building-up of materials, and although the process is orchestrated, the outcome gives the appearance of something instinctual and organic.

Looking at the actual manuscript pages, Kathryn Sutherland points out that we can see "how [Austen] works with minute detail, altering just a tiny word to get a phrase exactly right, and above all how economic her art is, how she pares away excess of information" (Sutherland). Sutherland notes that the small pages, which Austen preferred, are filled with her writing, from edge to edge. "Because she leaves no room for extensive revision or deletion," states Sutherland, "where she does want to expand a section or write something new, she literally applies patches to the manuscript, a piece of paper cut and tailored precisely to the space its meant to cover, and a pin to patch it to the space" (Sutherland). The manuscript is composed of small fragments, pieces that Austen layers, building towards a larger design.

For Woolf, that larger design is *Mansfield Park*. *The Watsons*, she suggests, "gives us a foretaste of [the] power" that Austen later demonstrates in *Mansfield Park* in "the depth, the beauty, [and] the complexity of her scenes" (141). The scene that so readily captures this elusive quality of Austen's writing is one in which, on the surface, nothing appears to happen. Woolf

chooses the scene that occurs on the stairs as Fanny Price and her cousin Edmund Bertram are walking upstairs to dress for the dinner that precedes the ball, held on the occasion of Fanny's coming out, which will shortly take place at Mansfield Park, Woolf writes,

Here is nothing out of the way; it is midday in Northamptonshire; a dull young man is talking to rather a weakly young woman on the stairs as they go up to dress for dinner, with housemaids passing. But, from triviality, from commonplace, their words become suddenly full of meaning, and the moment for both one of the most memorable in their lives. It fills itself; it shines; it glows; it hangs before us, deep, trembling, serene for a second; next, the housemaid passes, and this drop, in which all the happiness of life has collected, gently subsides again to become part of the ebb and flow of ordinary existence. (141-42)

On the surface, the moment is innocuous; but underneath it, carried along in the tedium of the everyday, is a momentary awareness that changes the course of events.

II. *MANSFIELD PARK* (1814)

When Fanny Price first arrives at Mansfield Park, the home of her cousins, the Bertrams, she finds the “grandeur of the house” overwhelming; “the rooms were too large for her to move in with ease . . . and she crept about in constant terror” (13). Upon discovering she owns only two sashes, her cousins Julia and Maria “hold her cheap,” but they “make her a generous present of some of their least valued toys, and leave her to herself” (12). When her cousin Edmund finds her crying in the stairwell, he attempts to comfort her by inquiring as to her brothers and sisters. Learning of her close relationship with her brother William, Edmund asks Fanny when she plans on writing to her brother, but Fanny “hung her head and answered hesitatingly, ‘she did not

know; she had not paper” (13). Edmund responds, “If that be all your difficulty, I will furnish you with paper and every other material, and you may write your letter whenever you choose” (14). Edmund is better than his word; he provides Fanny with the materials, lines her paper, assists with her spelling, and then takes the letter to his father to mail. By the end of the scene, Edmund “began to find her an interesting object” (14). This is Fanny Price’s introduction to the world of objects in Mansfield Park.

Arriving with few possessions, she fears to touch anything in the house for “whatever she touched she expected to injure,” and she is terrified to ask for writing paper (13). Her fear isolates her from her female cousins and silences her voice until Edmund gives her the tools to regain it. These opening scenes establish Fanny’s role in Mansfield Park; she is not only the receiver of cast-off objects, but she is herself a cast-off object. By treasuring objects deemed undesirable by others, Fanny Price turns away from traditional exchanges and valuations of goods. She creates an individual model of order, one that she can control. Hoarding allows her to create a private mental space that is solely her own, and Fanny retreats to her “nest of comforts” whenever she feels anxious, guilty, or threatened (107). The white attic and east room offer her solace and are the only rooms acknowledged to be hers. The east room “was now considered Fanny’s, almost as decidedly as the white attic. . . and Mrs. Norris having stipulated for there never being a fire in it on Fanny’s account, was tolerably resigned to her having the use of what nobody else wanted” (*Mansfield Park* 106).¹⁰ Fanny retreats to the east room in order to surround herself with her treasured possessions—most of them things that nobody else wants. The east room becomes an alternative space in which memories, triggered by personal objects, can negate present harsh realities:

¹⁰ *Mansfield Park* will appear in parenthetical citations henceforth as *MP*.

Her plants, her books . . . her writing desk, and her works of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach . . . Everything was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend . . . its greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded footstool of Julia's work, too ill done for the drawing-room, three transparencies, made in a rage for transparencies . . . a collection of family profiles thought unworthy of being anywhere else, over the mantle-piece, and by their side and pinned against the wall, a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H. M. S. Antwerp at the bottom, in letters as tall as the mainmast. (106-07)

Fanny Price's possession of the east room and the white attic at Mansfield allows her to build a "nest of comforts": the collected personal items and cast-offs that trickle down to Fanny because of their bedraggled state or poor form and taste create her private world (107). Once designed as a place of learning for the family, the east room becomes a place of forgetting—a room for the discarded odds-and-ends of the family. As a dependent cousin, Fanny is also one of family's oddities relegated to the attic space. The question "Where is Fanny?" is asked repeatedly by members of the Bertram family: "Edmund, looking around, said, 'But where is Fanny?—Is she gone to bed?'" (51); "As she entered, her own name caught her ear. Sir Thomas was at that moment looking round him, and saying 'But where is Fanny?—Why do not I see my little Fanny?'" (123); "Fanny's consequence increased on the departure of her cousins. Becoming as she then did, the only young woman in the drawing-room . . . it was impossible for her not to be more looked at, more thought of and attended to, than she had ever been before; and 'where is Fanny?' became no uncommon question" (141). Emily Rohrbach suggests that even though the purpose of the question is "to locate [her] spatially" in the home, "it comes across as a linguistic

tic” that reinforces her position as *thing* rather than *person* in the house where she is, initially, neither a family member or a servant, but something in between (739).

For Fanny, unlike the rest of the residents of Mansfield Park, the east room is not a place of forgetting but a refuge for remembrance. She escapes to the room “after any thing unpleasant below,” retreating into her memories by way of the assorted objects about her, and, surrounded by these tokens, Fanny consoles herself, “blend[ing] together” and “harmoniz[ing] by distance” the “suffering . . . pains of tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect” below (106). For William Deresiewicz, whose work explores *Mansfield Park* as a series of substitutions, Fanny “desires to remain in communication with past feelings . . . and so discards nothing that evokes them. Here she has accumulated a collection of powerfully evocative mementos. . . . transform[ing] the East room into a palimpsest of personal history, a theater of memory that makes the past visible to present awareness and so ground the self in time” (57). For Deresiewicz, the east room allows Fanny not only to recollect memories but also to transform and blend them with present experiences, resulting in a harmonized whole. Deresiewicz compares Fanny’s east room to Wordsworth’s Wye Valley in “Tintern Abbey,” as suggested by the transparency of the abbey in Fanny’s window: “the space in question becomes a physical projection of its beholder’s inner self and, as such, the place where that self is uniquely nourished and uniquely whole” (57). Achieving a harmonized state, however, is not, for Fanny, as simple as walking into a room; it requires mental work as well.

Using the world of objects to craft identity and form ties between the self and others is, however, especially tenuous. Austen’s use of free indirect discourse in Fanny’s east room signals not only Fanny’s distress, but also Fanny’s fragile connections with people outside the east room. Having refused to act in her cousins’ amateur production of *Lovers’ Vows*, Fanny turns to the

quiet of her east room to confront her anxieties at having denied her cousins' request and potentially ruining their plans. In the east room, Austen's third-person narration moves into free indirect discourse:

To this nest of comforts Fanny now walked down to try its influence She had begun to feel undecided as to what she *ought to do*; and as she walked round the room her doubts were increasing. Was she *right* in refusing what so was warmly asked, so strongly wished for? What might be so essential to a scheme on which some of those to whom she owed the greatest complaisance had set their hearts? Was it not ill-nature—selfishness—and fear of exposing herself? It would be so horrible to her to act, that she was inclined to suspect the truth and purity of her own scruples, and as she looked around her, the claims of her cousins to being obliged, were strengthened by the sight of present upon present that she had received from them she grew bewildered as to the amount of debt which all these kind remembrances produced. A tap at the door roused her in the midst of this attempt to find her way to her duty. (*MP* 107).

Fanny goes to the east room to try to find solace, but as she walks around the nest of comforts she has created, she confronts the past, represented by the “sigh of present upon present,” but which are nothing more than faded trinkets and the clumsy offerings of childhood (107). Only in this space can Fanny retreat into subjectivity, but it is subjectivity limited by her place within the Bertram home. Austen's use of free indirect discourse reinforces the attic space as an embodiment of Fanny's interiority, but the presence of free indirect discourse also comments on the confusion of that interiority.

Fanny Price views the world quite differently from her cousins, because, from early on in the novel, she is marked out as different. She is chosen out of her many siblings, including older brothers, to be sent to Mansfield Park. Edmund tries to convince Fanny that she should move to the white house with Mrs. Norris, who originally formulated the idea to have one of the Price children come to Mansfield Park. Austen's narrator, however, draws attention to Mrs. Norris's parsimonious and unsolicitous behavior from the beginning of the novel:

Having married on a narrower income than she had been used to look forward to, she had, from the first, fancied a very strict line of economy necessary; and what was begun as a matter of prudence, soon grew into a matter of choice, as an object of that needful solicitude, which there were no children to supply. Had there been a family to provide for, Mrs. Norris might never have saved her money; but having no care of that kind, there was nothing to impede her frugality. (9)

Edmund says to Fanny, "Mrs. Norris is much better fitted than my mother for having charge of you now. She is of a temper to do a great deal for any body she really interests herself about" (21). But Mrs. Norris is never desirous of helping Fanny; in fact, she "stipulated for there never being a fire in [the east room] on Fanny's account, [but] was tolerably resigned to her having the use of what nobody else wanted, though the terms in which she sometimes spoke of the indulgence, seemed to imply that it was the best room in the house" (106).

Edmund believes he is responsible for forming Fanny's mind and helping her to see the correct path in life. But Fanny declares, "I cannot see things as you do" (21). Edmund is just arrogant enough that he believes "[h]aving formed her mind and gained her affections, he had a good chance of her thinking like him" (47). He does not consider that Fanny views things differently because of her uncertain position within the family. Her world of objects in the east

room reflects her status within Mansfield Park as another type of object, a role which the male characters of the novel reinforce in the *Lovers' Vows* scene where Fanny's value is tied directly to her completing a tableau vivant. When her cousins ask her to play the part of the cottager's wife in their production, Fanny refuses: "No, indeed I cannot act" (102). Tom's attempts to reassure and persuade her reinforce her identity as an object rather than an individual. "It need not frighten you; it is nothing of a part, a mere nothing," he says, "you may be as creepmouse as you like, but we must have you to look at" (102). Edmund attempts to intervene by offering Fanny a choice: "It is not fair to urge her Let her choose for herself as well as the rest of us" (103). By offering Fanny a choice, Edmund acknowledges her free will and individual identity, placing her as an equal to the rest of the family members. Mrs. Norris announces, however, that if Fanny chooses not to act, "I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl . . . considering who and what she is" (103). Tom and Mrs. Norris reduce Fanny to a thing, and their harsh reminders reinforce Fanny's dependency on the family not only for financial security but also for individual identity.

Louise Flavin points out that Austen layers free indirect discourse through Fanny's consciousness to underscore moments of irony within the narrative. Following Fanny to her east room, Edmund reveals he has gone against his own scruples and agreed to act in *Lovers' Vows*, breaking his alliance with Fanny and siding with Mary Crawford. To Fanny he says, "Put yourself in Miss Crawford's place, Fanny. Consider what it would be to act Amelia with a stranger. She has a right to be felt for, because she evidently feels for herself They will not have much cause of triumph, when they see how infamously I act. But, however, triumph there certainly will be, and I must brave it" (108). Edmund's reasons ring false, and Fanny's frustration and jealousy of Mary Crawford are evident in the following days: "There were not

fewer smiles at the parsonage than at the park on this change in Edmund. . . One advantage resulted from it to Fanny; at the earnest request of Miss Crawford, Mrs. Grant had with her usual good humour agreed to undertake the part for which Fanny had been wanted—and this was all that occurred to gladden *her* heart during the day” (111). Flavin claims, “it is obvious that Edmund’s rationalization of his decision to act [in *Lovers’ Vows*] is presented as it would sound to Fanny” (140). Through free indirect discourse, Austen shows us Edmund’s actions as they appear through Fanny’s eyes, aligning her readers’ condemnation of his decision to act with Fanny’s refusal.

FANNY’S CHOICE

Fanny’s hoarding, or refusal to part with anything, threatens traditional models of exchange, such as the scene in which Fanny wears two gold necklaces from her two suitors Henry Crawford and Edmund Bertram along with the amber cross from her brother William Price. Edmund Bertram’s entrance into Fanny Price’s fragile domestic space is signaled by his contribution to her possessions in that space. Edmund has let himself into the east room while she is away; when Fanny reenters, she surprises him in the midst of writing a note. Fanny has just returned from Mary Crawford’s room, where she has been manipulated into not only selecting for herself but also accepting a necklace given by Henry Crawford. When she returns home, she rushes to her own rooms “to deposit this unexpected acquisition, this doubtful good of a necklace, in some favourite box in the east room” (*MP* 179). The necklace is morally questionable, given in such a deceitful and dubious manner. That Edmund comes in person to Fanny’s rooms to offer his necklace, “a chain,” distinguishes it as a truer treasure (179). Edmund says to Fanny, “You will find the beginning of a note to yourself; but I can now speak my

business, which is merely to beg your acceptance of this little trifle—a chain for William’s cross” (179). Fanny expresses her gratitude in a burst: “Oh! this is beautiful indeed! this is the very thing, precisely what I wished for! this is the only ornament I have ever had a *desire* to *possess*. It will exactly suit my cross. They must and shall be worn together. It comes too in such an acceptable moment” (180, emphasis added).

Occurring at the very middle of the novel, this moment marks a significant growth for Fanny Price. Earlier, Mary Crawford enacted the same ritual of presenting Fanny with a number of necklaces from which to choose, but the duplicitous intentions of the Crawfords make Fanny’s choice a false one. In retreating to her rooms to erase the encounter with Mary, Fanny finds herself not only erasing it but also replacing it with the encounter she truly desired. The necklace is triply valuable because of Edmund’s presence and its erasure of the duplicity of the Crawfords. With her previous experience replaced, Fanny longs to return the Crawfords’ necklace—it is the only object Fanny ever desires to discard.

Fanny may long to rid herself of Henry Crawford’s necklace, but she does not; rather, she wears it to the ball along with Edmund’s chain and William’s cross. Dominant readings of this scene how emphasize Fanny’s choice of the chain reveals her position within the house. Claudia Johnson contends that “a modest young woman whose function it is to oblige the wishes of fathers, uncles, and brothers without exhibiting any ‘independence of spirit’ or any ‘perverse’ and ‘disgusting’ desires to decide for herself is to say that she is a slave” (467). William Deresiewicz’s reading suggests the choice between chains determines who “will earn the right to chain her up in marriage” (76). Discovering that only Edmund’s chain will fit through William’s cross, Fanny joins

those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by every thing real and imaginary—and put them round her neck, and seen and felt how full of William and Edmund they were, she was able, without an effort, to resolve on wearing Miss Crawford’s necklace too. . . . Miss Crawford has a claim; and when it was no longer to encroach on, to interfere with the stronger claims, the truer kindness of another, she could do her justice even with pleasure to herself. (*MP*186)

Deresiewicz argues that Fanny “creat[es] a symbolic system of her own, finally repossessing the tokens—and thus, imaginatively, the people—that had slipped out of her control” (76). When Edmund offers Fanny his chain, he does within the sanctuary of Fanny’s east room, a space that allows Fanny to determine to wear both the chain and the necklace simultaneously. Fanny can harmonize her choice to wear the necklace because she also wears the more powerful tokens of the chain and cross, and by referring to the necklace repeatedly as “Miss Crawford’s necklace,” Fanny negates its significance by refusing to claim it as her own (186).

After Edmund leaves, Fanny struggles to suppress her romantic feelings for him and pledges to herself that she will do her duty and think of him only as a dear friend. “She had all the heroism of principle, and was determined to do her duty; but having also many of the feelings of youth and nature,” writes Austen,

let her not be much wondered at if, after making all these good resolutions on the side of self-government, she seized the scrap of paper on which Edmund had begun writing to her, as a treasure beyond all her hopes, and reading with the tenderest emotion these words, ‘My very dear Fanny, you must do me the favour to accept’—locked it up with the chain, as the dearest part of the gift. It was the

only thing approaching to a letter which she had ever received from him; she might never receive another; it was impossible that she ever should receive another so perfectly gratifying in the occasion and the style. . . . To her, the hand-writing itself, independent of any thing it may convey, is a blessedness. Never were such characters cut by any other human being, as Edmund's commonest hand-writing gave! This specimen, written in haste as it was, had not a fault; and there was a felicity in the flow of the first four words, in the arrangement of "My very dear Fanny," which she could have looked at for ever. (181-82)

With an excess of feeling, Fanny quickly transforms the fragment from a torn scrap of paper into a relic. The narrator recovers the moment from its sensationalism in the next line: "Having regulated her thoughts and comforted her feelings by this happy mixture of reason and weakness, she was able, in due time, to go down and resume her usual employments near her aunt Bertram" (182). Austen's narrator reminds us that the attic space is independent from the rest of the house, and when Fanny is there, she can imagine herself possessing what she cannot have when she is below stairs. By saving the fragment of Edmund's letter, with its endearment, and incorporating it into her hoard, Fanny can possess Edmund's affection. Even if he marries Mary Crawford, Fanny can keep a symbolic piece of him.

PORTSMOUTH

When Fanny returns to her natal home in Portsmouth after almost a decade, it seems no time has passed, and she struggles to reconcile the past with the present. Upon seeing her sister Betsey, "she could not but think particularly of another sister, a very pretty little girl, whom she had left there not much younger when she went into Northamptonshire, who had died a few

years afterwards. . . . The sight of Betsey brought the image of little Mary back again” (262). In seeing Betsey, Fanny is thrust back into memory, a move reminiscent of how objects in her attic space call forth specific memories. In returning to Portsmouth, Fanny is confronted with the fact that some things left behind cannot be reclaimed.

The Price home shocks her with its “noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be” (224). In assessing her rooms, Fanny finds “[t]here was nothing to raise her spirits in the confined and scantily-furnished chamber She soon learnt to think with respect of her own little attic at Mansfield Park, in *that* house reckoned too small for anybody’s comfort” (263). Using the world of things as a foundation, Fanny tries to recreate images and scenes of Mansfield Park in Portsmouth but with very mixed results. On her deathbed, Mary leaves behind a single object, a silver knife, which she gives to Susan; it is the sole object in the Price home that evokes a memory of Mary, but the knife is also the source of frequent arguments between her sisters Betsey and Susan. When Susan sees Betsey with the knife, Susan cries out, “[i]t was very hard that she was not to have her *own* knife; it was her own knife But mama kept it from her, and was always letting Betsey get hold of it; and the end of it would be that Betsey would spoil it, and get it for her own” (262). What initially appears to be an argument over memory is revealed in actuality to be an argument over ownership. To resolve the conflict, Fanny purchases a silver knife for Betsey, who accepts it “with great delight, its newness giving it every advantage over the other that could be desired; Susan was established in the full possession of her own, Betsey handsomely declaring that now she had got one so much prettier herself, she should never want *that* again” (270). Through her purchase, Fanny clears up the domestic squabble and gains Susan’s confidence.

In the passage following the resolution of the knife, the ambiguity of personal pronouns, as Fanny considers Susan's character, acknowledges Fanny's shaping of Susan's tastes to mirror her own and preparing Susan to replace Fanny at Mansfield Park:

Her temper was open. She acknowledged her fears, blamed herself for having contended so warmly, and from that hour Fanny understanding the worth of her disposition, and perceiving how fully she was included to seek her good opinion and refer to her judgment, began to feel again the blessing of affection, and to entertain the hope of being useful to a mind so much in need of help, and so much deserving it. She gave advice; advice too sound to be resisted by a good understanding, and given so mildly and considerately as not to irritate an imperfect temper; and she had the happiness of observing its good effects not unfrequently. (270)

The paragraph opens with Susan as the subject; it is Susan's temper and fears under examination but, out of context of the page, the subject is less clear. The use of ambiguous pronouns disguises whose thoughts and fears of self-worth are under consideration. The second clause of the second sentence, "from that hour Fanny understanding the worth of her disposition," is particularly tricky; it seems reflective but actuality is focused on Susan. The "she" of the third sentence is Fanny and, as it hints at, the nature of Fanny's advice. Austen's choice of pronouns creates the potential for confusion but with the result of blending the two female figures together. The opening of the next paragraph begins with a return to the third-person narrator: "The intimacy thus begun between them was a material advantage to each. By sitting together up stairs, they avoided a great deal of the disturbance of the house" (270). Opting for the third-person plural "they" emphasizes the presentation of the two women as a unit, as Susan's character begins

increasingly to mirror Fanny's. "They sat without a fire," writes Austen, "but *that* was a privation familiar even to Fanny, and she suffered the less because reminded by it of the east-room. It was the only point of resemblance" (270). Fanny finds it impossible to reconcile her past at Mansfield with her present situation in Portsmouth, so she attempts to recreate Mansfield in Portsmouth.

As part of this effort, Fanny introduces books to the Price family home. At Mansfield her relationship with books is limited to those that others give her. In Portsmouth, however, Fanny's interest expands when she joins a circulating library and takes on a new dimension when she becomes responsible for choosing her own books. Fanny

found it impossible not to try for books again. There were none in her father's house; but wealth is luxurious and daring—and some of hers found its way to a circulating library. She became a subscriber—amazed at being any thing *in propria persona*, amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chuser of books! And to be having any one's improvement in view of her choice! But so it was. Susan had read nothing and Fanny longed to give her a share in her own first pleasures, and inspire a taste for biography and poetry. (270-71)

Books from private lending libraries are temporary possessions; like those in her attic rooms, these books have passed through the hands of others before coming to her. Austen's use of the Latin, *in propria persona*, meaning to act on one's own behalf, underscores Fanny's steps towards independent selfhood. The use of the Latin phrase lifts Fanny out of the squalid Price family home and transports her (linguistically at least) to the manor house at Mansfield Park. Joseph Litvak points out, however, "the embarrassing fact that the passage just barely conceals is that Fanny comes into her own only by entering a system of exchange, a circulating library. To

be ‘any thing *in propria persona*,’ Fanny must spend her wealth, dispersing it into a larger economy” (764). The circulating library introduces a world of things that are exchangeable and, Litvak suggests, only by entering fully into that system of exchange and learning to spend, does Fanny achieve selfhood. These scenes of exchange, however, which are central to Fanny’s development, take place offstage, a marked difference from the prominent scenes of shopping in Austen’s earlier novels. In *Mansfield Park*, the focal point is not on the acts of commerce but rather their subsequent effects on Fanny’s sense of independence and self.

“THE DAUGHTER HE WANTED”

Ultimately, it is Fanny’s sense of independent selfhood that allows her to reject, for a second time, the interests of Henry Crawford. By rejecting him, Fanny precipitates the novel’s conclusion and her own eventual union with Edmund. Disgraced by his daughter Maria’s affair with Henry Crawford and the elopement of his other daughter Julia with Mr. Yates, Sir Thomas effectively replaces them both with Fanny Price. He discovers that “Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted,” and although Lady Bertram declares that Fanny “could not be parted with willingly by *her*,” it is possible because, “Susan remained to supply her place.—Susan became the stationary niece. . . . Susan could never be spared” (320). The interchangeability of Fanny and Susan, which had been hinted at before, is now openly welcomed. Replaced by Susan, Fanny is free to move into the roles of “daughter” and “sister” and approved by the family to marry Edmund.

Sir Bertram’s resistance to change contributes to the issues of endogamy in the novel. In her reading of Fanny and Edmund’s marriage, Glenda A. Hudson claims that because they “have been raised under the same roof . . . [their] endogamous union preserves the inviolability of

Mansfield and excludes the risks attendant on marriage outside the family—to the Crawfords, for example” (35). In her compelling argument of endogamy as economic strategy, Eileen Cleere suggests that

Fanny’s move from niece to daughter is Sir Thomas’s final attempt to rewrite her economic history Marked as waste or excess at the beginning of the novel, Fanny eventually represents savings to Sir Thomas; in a time of dwindled resources, of banished and devalued daughters and sisters, Fanny is the family member who finally cannot be thrown away. . . . Anticipating the flood of mid-Victorian conduct books that explicitly denounce wastefulness as the cardinal crime of inexperienced households, *Mansfield Park* identifies the daughters of England themselves as sites of potential spoilage and, in the process of mingling Bertrams and Prices, puts forth a narrative of endogamy similarly concerned with the evils of waste. (115)

In this assessment, Fanny is not only transferred from her role as niece to her new role as daughter, but is also reclaimed from the attic and established in the domestic space of the home. Cleere’s argument effectively ties the creation of home to an economic theorem that encourages, relies even, on hoarding. Fanny does not choose the objects in her east room, but she comes to love them because she sees them everyday; they are familiar and comforting to her. In a similar way, she first begins to desire Edmund because she sees him everyday; he is a familiar object. Before the novel’s resolution, when Edmund suspects Fanny might accept Henry Crawford, he says to her, “He has chosen his partner, indeed, with rare felicity. He will make you happy, Fanny, I know he will make you happy; but you will make him every thing” (238). The critical readings, such as those proposed by Hudson, Cleere, and Deresiewicz, would agree. Although

Fanny rejects Henry Crawford, by marrying Edmund Bertram she restores Mansfield Park.

Having hoarded things initially considered supernumerary and valueless—including her presence and her hand in marriage, Fanny preserves Mansfield Park.

III. *EMMA* (1815)

The content and form of Austen's letters offer a clearer vision of how she collected the material details of small village life, and if the scene of consigning childish mementoes to the fire, from Austen's letter, sounds familiar, it is because we have seen it before – in *Emma*. If the attention bestowed on seemingly trivial objects, such as chestnuts, over artistic objects such as paintings or novels, sounds familiar, it is because we have seen it – in *Emma*. Austen's 1815 novel explores the notion of pleasure received from an attachment to things. In Austen's fictional Highbury, nearly every character hoards or holds onto things, both tangible and intangible, for reasons other characters cannot understand. Harriet Smith hoards the false relics of pretend romances; Miss Bates holds tightly onto the details and “small matter” of daily life; and Emma Woodhouse keeps half-finished projects, which she will never complete. Even Mr. Knightley confesses to preserving mementoes of Emma's girlhood:

Knightley says to Mrs. Weston, “I have seen a great many lists of her drawing up at various times of books that she meant to read regularly through—and very good lists they were—very well chosen, and very neatly arranged—sometimes alphabetically, and sometimes by some other rule. The list she drew up when only fourteen—I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit, that I preserved it sometime. (*E* 36)

“What is this,” asks Bharat Tandon, “if not just a more intellectually refined version of Harriet Smith and her ‘*Most precious treasures*’?” (15, emphasis in original). Early in the novel, Mr. Woodhouse claims he cannot understand the pleasure his grandchildren feel from being tossed into the air by their uncle. Emma responds, “That is the case with us all, papa. One half of the world cannot understand the pleasure of the other” (*Emma* 79).¹¹ This sentiment runs deep in *Emma*, a novel, Austen claimed, possessed of “a heroine whom no one but myself will much like” (qtd in Austen-Leigh 119).¹² *Emma* is about negotiating different pleasures, and Austen’s admission about Emma’s likability is a negotiation between what pleases an author and what pleases an audience. Austen’s statement on the elusive nature of pleasure also reflects the theme of finding significance in that which is commonplace.

“A VALUABLE ADDITION”

Bharat Tandon suggests that Austen’s “novels establish basic material frames for their plots, without feeling the need to fill every square inch of those frames with physical ‘props’” (14). In *Emma*, “as the novel progresses, it . . . becomes a challenging exploration of the will to *make* things and people meaningful” (Tandon 14). Nowhere is the desire “to *make* things and people meaningful” more evident than in the relationship between Emma Woodhouse and Harriet Smith. Emma thinks of Harriet Smith in the same way the Bertrams regard Fanny Price: as “an interesting object” (*MP* 14), “exactly the something which her home required” (*E* 24), “a Harriet Smith . . . one whom she could summon at any time . . . would be a valuable addition” (26). Emma reduces Harriet to little more than a decorative prop. When Emma convinces Harriet to refuse Robert Martin’s marriage proposal, Harriet laments, “I shall never be invited to Abbey

¹¹ Henceforth *Emma* shall appear as *E*.

¹² The sole source for this quotation is in James Edward Austen-Leigh’s *The Memoir of Jane Austen* (1871).

Mill again”; Emma replies, “[n]or if you were could I ever bear to part with you, my Harriet. You are a great deal too necessary at Hartfield, to be spared to Abbey-Mill” (54). This aspect of Emma echoes Lady Bertram and her claims, “Oh! no—I cannot do without Fanny,” “I cannot spare her,” and “how can I spare her?” (*MP* 55, 149, 150). Harriet Smith is as interchangeable as Fanny Price; to Emma, Harriet represents something by which, and on which, to craft narrative.

Harriet’s appeal is not in her curious individual qualities but rather her completion of a larger collection. With Hartfield as the backdrop, Emma’s collection is designed to reflect her taste, influence, and general dominance of the space. Emma, who is solely responsible for her father’s comfort and entertainment, brings society and company to their door, and “happy was she . . . in the power” (*E* 23). Emma’s drawings cover the walls of Hartfield, described by Mr. Elton as “specimens of her landscapes and flowers,” and only Emma is able to introduce the “large modern circular table . . . and persuade her father to use it, instead of the small-sized Pembroke, on which two of his daily meals had, for forty years been crowded” (42, 325). Hartfield is Emma Woodhouse’s her nest, her *wood house*, in which she creates narrative by way of her possessions.

Harriet Smith’s narrative, on the other hand, is a blank. She appears in Highbury without knowledge of her history or connections: “Somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard’s school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour-boarder. This was all that was general known of her history” (23). She is dependent on those around her in much the same way Fanny Price is. Emma Woodhouse takes Harriet Smith on as a project, and because Emma does not intend to marry, she removes herself as the object of marriage plots and inserts in her place Harriet. Emma views herself as possessed of a discerning good taste, and she imagines she has a talent to see what others do not:

She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, powers Altogether she was quite convinced of Harriet Smith's being exactly the young friend she wanted—exactly the something which her home required. (24, emphasis in original)

Through free indirect discourse, Austen reveals Harriet through Emma's eyes. Upon deciding to paint Harriet's portrait, Emma brings out her portfolio "containing her various attempts at portraits, for not one of them had ever been finished Her many beginnings were displayed. Miniatures, half-lengths, whole-lengths, pencil, crayon, and water-colours had been all tried in turn" (43). Emma's portfolio reveals, the narrator suggests, an aspect of Emma's character: "She had always wanted to do everything but steadiness had always been wanting; and in nothing had she approached the degree of excellence which she would have been glad to command, and ought not to have failed of" (43). In this, the portfolio, with its many starts and stops, is representative of Emma's hoarding, a refusal to finish or discard anything.

The sitting for Harriet's portrait is presented partially in free indirect discourse, highlighting the moment as one in which objects and desires are uncertain. Emma judges how the scene appears from her own perspective as well as the perspective of an imaginary viewer, watching the interplay between Mr. Elton and Harriet. But because she does not view herself as an object to be collected, she misses completely the true object of Mr. Elton's gaze—herself.

The sitting began; and Harriet, smiling and blushing, and afraid of not keeping her attitude and countenance, presented a very sweet mixture of youthful expression

to the steady eyes of the artist. But there was no doing anything, with Mr. Elton fidgeting behind her and watching every touch. She gave him credit for stationing himself where he might gaze and gaze again without offence; but was really obliged to put an end to it, and request him to place himself elsewhere. . . . [Mr. Elton] was ready at the smallest intermission of the pencil, to jump up and see the progress and be charmed . . . his admiration made him discern a likeness almost before it was possible. (45)

Mr. Elton's eagerness to praise is ridiculous, only serving to distance Emma further from him. Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley point out in turn that Harriet's portrait does not resemble her; "Miss Smith has not those eye-brows and eye-lashes," says Mrs. Weston; Emma has "made her too tall" complains Mr. Knightley (46). Their commentary reveals that Emma's representation of Harriet has replaced her with a newer, better version. Cicely Palser Havelly suggests Emma "wants to transform the raw material of her protégé's daily life into a popular romance," and her romanticized portrait of Harriet Smith is part of that fiction (224). Havelly points out, "Harriet begins to act not like Mrs. Goddard's docile parlour boarder, but like the superior young lady Emma has invented" (225). Emma creates a new beginning for Harriet but, as her portfolio forewarns, Emma's commitment to finishing what she begins is not absolute.

"MOST PRECIOUS TREASURES"

Emma recognizes that she "actually talked poor Harriet into being very much attached to this man," but like her paintings, her resolve to avoid meddling is only a half commitment and she does not acknowledge how her involvement has affected Harriet in other ways (*E* 129). Harriet does not begin to hoard until Emma instigates a possible match between Harriet and Mr.

Elton. Robert Martin and the Martin family give Harriet several gifts, but in the course of her relationship with him, she does not hoard a single thing, nor does she seek out things to hoard. Harriet's hoarding may very well develop out of her relationship with Emma. Once Emma encourages Harriet to view the Reverend Elton as a potential romantic match, Harriet begins hoarding the little bits of trash and odds and ends he discards. Emma talks Harriet "into love; but alas! she was not so easily to be talked out of it. The charm of an object to occupy the many vacancies of Harriet's mind was not to be talked away," and in a comedic reversal of Emma's lack of follow through, Harriet reveals herself as "one of those, who, having once begun, would always be in love" (172). Harriet's hoarding, like Emma's, is steeped in desire and fiction. She hoards objects associated with Mr. Elton, a collection from which she attempts to craft a romantic narrative of Elton and herself.

The scene in which Harriet presents her box of "*Most precious treasures*" for Emma's admiration, only to discover that Emma has no recollection of them, is one of Austen's finest exploitations of hoarding for comedic effect. The objects Harriet accumulates, a bit of plaister and the leadless end of pencil, are useless trash. She attempts to turn them into relics by wrapping them "in silver paper" and placing them in a "pretty little Tunbridge-ware box . . . lined with the softest cotton" (317). Her efforts fall short. Emma judges Harriet, thinking to herself, "when should I ever have thought of putting by in cotton a piece of court plaister that Frank Churchill has been pulling about!—I never was equal to this" (318). Yet when Harriet mentions Elton's conversation with Knightley over spruce beer, occurring in the moments before Harriet pockets Mr. Elton's pencil, Emma exclaims "I perfectly remember it . . . Oh! yes—Mr. Knightley and I both saying we liked it, and Mr. Elton's seeming resolved to learn to like it too . . . Stop; Mr. Knightley was standing just here, was not he? I have an idea he was standing just

here” (318). Emma looks to Harriet for confirmation, but Harriet can only reply, “I cannot recollect” (318). Just as Harriet hoards the plaister and pencil, Emma’s memory is selectively hoarding as well. Austen’s use of irony highlights the comedy of the scene. Initially the laughter seems directed at Harriet’s nonsense, but when the narrator calls our attention to Emma’s hypocritical views, we cannot help but make her the object of our laughter.

Emma realizes that while she cannot talk Harriet out of love, the object of Harriet’s attentions “might be superseded by another . . . even a Robert Martin would have been sufficient” (172). The indefinite article *a* signals Emma’s views on individuals as interchangeable. Harriet comes to destroy her precious treasures of Mr. Elton because her affections have turned already towards another, but her actions begin anew the cycle of “fiction, interpretations, and desire” (Litvak 771). If we look at this scene beyond the implications of hoarding, Harriet demonstrates a desire to see treasure where Emma only sees trash.

The moment parallels an earlier one, when Harriet Smith sees Robert Martin as he truly is. Their attachment forms naturally and without artifice. She recalls with girlish excitement that “[h]e had gone three miles round one day, in order to bring her some walnuts, because she had said how fond she was of them—and in every thing else he was so very obliging!” (28). The Martins accept Harriet as part of the family, going so far as to call their “little Welch cow, a very pretty little Welch cow . . . *her* cow” (27). To all appearances, the Martins offer Harriet the family and connections she lacks. Emma Woodhouse scoffs, however, at their simple gestures. When she discovers Robert Martin has never read the popular books of the day, such as Ann Radcliffe’s sensational Gothic novel *The Romance of the Forest*, she encourages Harriet to push her literary tastes on him. His collection of walnuts, however, suggests the natural image of the

sower; he plants the seed of an idea with Harriet Smith, and the organic development of their relationship is a testament to its authenticity.¹³

Throughout much of the novel, Harriet Smith appears like a foundling child. Left with Mrs. Goddard and with no clear history or familial connections, Harriet lives on the fringes of society, and her position in Highbury is defined by her displacement. She is largely dependent on well-off individuals, like Emma, to include her in social events, but even this relationship is not enough to erase the stigma of Harriet's quasi-foundling status. Initially Knightley dismisses her based on her lack of meaningful acquisitions in the form of personal connections, fortune, and education. From Emma, he demands to know,

What are Harriet's claims, either of birth, nature, or education...? She is the natural daughter of nobody knows whom, with probably no settled provision at all, and certainly no respectable relations. . . . She is not a sensible girl, nor a girl of any information. She has been taught nothing useful, and is too young and too simple to have acquired any thing herself. At her age she can have no experience, and with her little wit, is not very likely ever to have any that can avail her. She is pretty, and she is good tempered, and that is all. (59-60)

His evaluation of Harriet revolves around the term *useful*, and Emma views Harriet in much the same way. She is valuable only as long as she is useful. When Emma and Knightley announce their engagement, Emma sends Harriet away to her sister Isabella's home in Brunswick Square in London: "Harriet was to go; she was invited for at least a fortnight; she was conveyed in Mr. Woodhouse's carriage.—It was all arranged, it was all completed, and Harriet was safe in

¹³ Austen's choice of the surname Martin, like Woodhouse, carries with it a reference to both birds and homes. A type of swallow commonly found in England is the house martin, frequently seen in agricultural areas and woodlands. Whether by design or simple coincidence, Austen's choice of the surname Martin, like Woodhouse, carries with it a reference to both birds and homes. A type of swallow commonly found in England is the house martin, frequently seen in agricultural areas and woodlands.

Brunswick Square” (422). Austen’s choice of Brunswick Square for Harriet’s exile is significant for its historical implications. Brunswick Square was the site of the London Foundling Hospital, established in the 1740s.¹⁴ In London, Harriet reconnects with Robert Martin, and the two become engaged. Only after her engagement does Harriet’s “parentage become known. She proved to be the daughter of a tradesman, rich enough to afford her the comfortable maintenance which had ever been hers, and decent enough to have always wished for concealment” (451). With this revelation, Harriet is no longer a lost object. Once her engagement to Robert Martin is ensured and her history revealed, Highbury and Emma Woodhouse reclaim Harriet Smith as one of their own.

“THREE THINGS VERY DULL INDEED”

In *Emma*, there are no piles of things as in Fanny’s east room in *Mansfield Park*. Instead, we have, what Susan Wolfson calls “big blocks of babble” belonging to Miss Bates. These blocks create verbal obstacles, which challenge characters and readers alike. “Every time I teach *Emma*,” writes Wolfson, “I poll students on how they negotiated the big blocks of babble that are the Bates hallmark. . . . Ever more quickly scanning the wall of words that promised only a stupefying wash of gossip, triviality, and inanity, they resumed slow reading only as Miss Bates dwindled into silence” (Wolfson). Miss Bates’s speeches challenge the patience of characters and readers, and it is easy to want to dismiss them as the mere rambling and mundane observations of a dull woman. Yet as many critics have pointed out, the amalgamation of gossip,

¹⁴ Children left at the London Foundling Hospital between 1740-1770 were admitted with a token, such as a coin, trinket, piece of embroidery, ribbon, or scrap of cloth, by which the child was identified. A parent wishing to reclaim a child could do so by identifying the token. Although the novel does not overlap this period in the hospital’s history, Austen’s attention to and emphasis on Harriet’s hoarding of scraps, by which she attempts to create narrative, recalls the tokens left with the foundling children, symbolic of lost histories and identities. For a detailed reading of the connection between the Foundling Hospital and orphans in Austen’s *Emma*, see Laurie Kaplan’s “*Emma* and ‘the children in Brunswick Square’” *Persuasions* 31 (2009): 236-47.

news, and details resemble the kinds of observations, with their repetitive and fragmented momentum, that Austen makes in her letters.

Austen's choice of the surname *Bates*, meaning to restrain, seems a joke at Miss Bates's expense.¹⁵ Other characters also describe Miss Bates as lacking discrimination. Indeed, she demonstrates a specific type of hoarding focused on memories and details rather than physical objects, but her lack of restraint in which details or memories are appropriate to store connects her hoarding with other instances in the novel.¹⁶ Early in the novel, Emma exclaims to Harriet, "if I thought I should ever be like Miss Bates! so silly—so satisfied—so smiling—so prosing—so undistinguishing and unfastidious—and so apt to tell every thing relative to every body about me, I would marry tomorrow" (*E* 82). Emma criticizes Miss Bates's lack of restraint in her behavior. Mary Hong suggests that "[b]y characterizing Miss Bates as long-winded and indiscriminating, Emma implies she is the opposite—all wit and fine distinctions" (240). Yet, in the scene on Box Hill, it is Emma who lacks restraint.

The trip to Box Hill, already delayed once, begins on a "very fine day . . . but in the general amount of the day there was deficiency. There was a languor, a want of spirits, a want of union, which could not be got over. They separated too much into parties" (*E* 344). Frustrated with the general insipidness of the outing, Frank Churchill devises a game that depends entirely on Emma Woodhouse's discrimination. He announces to the gathering, "I am ordered by Miss

¹⁵ Another, more archaic, definition of *bate* from the *Oxford English Dictionary* links it with falconry, meaning "to beat the wings impatiently and flutter away from the fits or perch" ("bate"). Austen's extensive use of ellipses in Miss Bates's speeches does create the effect of a nervous fluttering sensation.

¹⁶ Contemporary psychologists identify memory hoarding as distinctive from object hoarding. The OCD Center of Los Angeles defines memory hoarding as "a mental compulsion to over-attend to the details of an event, person, or object in an attempt to mentally store it for safekeeping. This is generally done under the belief that the event, person, or object carries a special significance and will be important to recall exactly as-is at a later date. The memory serves the same function for the mental hoarder that the old newspaper serves for the physical hoarder. People with memory hoarding OCD exhibit two major errors in information processing. The first error is the distorted belief that they will need this memory someday, and that it would be catastrophic if the memory weren't 100% accurate. Second, people with memory hoarding also have the distorted belief that memories can be treated the same way as inanimate objects" ("Memory Hoarding in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder").

Woodhouse, to say, that she . . . only demands from each of us either one thing very clever, be it prose or verse, original or repeated—or two things moderately clever—or three things very dull indeed, and she engages to laugh heartily at them all” (347). In response, Miss Bates exclaims, “then I need not be uneasy. ‘Three things very dull indeed.’ That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan’t I?—(looking round with the most good-humoured dependence on every body’s assent)—Do not you all think I shall? (347). The moment proves impossible to pass up:

Emma could not resist. “Ah! ma’am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once.” Miss Bates, deceived by the mock ceremony of her manner, did not immediately catch her meaning; but, when it burst on her, it could not anger, though a slight blush showed that it could pain her. (347)

Miss Bates makes a joke at her own expense, showing she possesses some self-awareness. But in a moment that tests Emma’s restraint, she shows none.

Knightley chides Emma for her unkindness, but she responds, “Nay, how could I help saying what I did?—Nobody could have helped it” (351). Robert Donovan views this scene as a reenactment of Austen’s letters; in the character of Emma, Donovan sees “the [same] sudden and overwhelming impulse to treat irreverently what we have been taught to regard with respect and solemnity” (380).¹⁷ How Austen uses the minutiae of everyday life in her novels is a subject of concern for many contemporary scholars, such as Nancy Armstrong, who views the trivial details of Miss Bates’s speeches as too superficial to be compelling. Of Miss Bates, Armstrong claims, “she is all on the surface, her meaning too readily apparent. That she leaves nothing for

¹⁷ Donovan draws the explicit comparison between Emma’s judgment of Miss Bates and Austen’s remarks of Mrs. Hall, who “was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected owing to a fright,—I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband” (*Letters* 17).

one to interpret is confirmed by a glance through any edition of *Emma*, which identifies the places seamlessly filled with her speech as pages one can afford to skim overly quickly” (155). Other critics, however, read Miss Bates from an entirely different angle, choosing to examine the “dichotomy of detail and abstraction” in the novel (Hong 237). For Mary Hong,

the representation of daily life in *Emma* has the feel of the quotidian or the everyday not because the minute details document concrete existence, or the (almost) unrepresentable realm of how things and characters were or could be, but because they dramatize the act of thinking or abstracting. Austen’s realism is not the depiction of a certain reality existing in space and time . . . it is a narrative of how we are able to make our experience of the world intelligible. (239)

In Hong’s assessment, details do the work of translating experience and of creating narrative, and for this reason Miss Bates’s presentation of experience mirrors Austen’s presentation of experience in her letters. Readings of Miss Bates by critics such as George Levine and D. A. Miller suggest, “the more one talks, the less one’s words mean. Instead of marking difference, details impede differentiation, or mean-making” (Hong 238). Hong points out, however, that it is from an abundance of details that experience is formed, and “Emma’s public condemnation of Miss Bates’s details leads to her subsequent self recognition render[ing] these insignificant details simultaneously important to the heroine’s development” (Hong 237).

Miss Bates’s memory hoarding of details and trivia is the equivalent of Harriet Smith’s scraps in her box of “*Most precious treasures*” or the objects of Fanny Price’s east room. Miss Bates does not hoard physical objects because she does not have access to them. When Knightley rebukes Emma’s treatment of Miss Bates, he says of Miss Bates, “Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance . . . but, Emma, consider how far this

is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and if she live to old age, must probably sink more” (351). Miss Bates receives much charity from her neighbors, but most of these tokens come in the form of perishable goods, such as the apples she receives from Knightley. Her gratefulness to Frank Churchill for fixing her mother’s spectacles, a thanksgiving which covers several pages, is not only for the repair of the rivet but also for him sparing them the expense of purchasing new spectacles. If Miss Bates does not have material goods to hoard, she only has memory and the details of experience with which to build her narrative, which is simultaneously the narrative of daily life in Highbury.

“HOUSE-BREAKING”

News of Mrs. Churchill’s death, conveyed in language reminiscent of Austen’s letters, propels the novel to its conclusion:

The following day brought news from Richmond to throw every thing else into the back-ground. An express arrived at Randalls to announce the death of Mrs. Churchill! The great Mrs. Churchill was no more. . . . Goldsmith tells us, that when lovely woman stoops to folly, she has nothing to do but to die; and when she stoops to be disagreeable, it is equally to be recommended as a clearer of ill-fame. Mrs. Churchill, after being disliked at least twenty-five years, was now spoken of with compassionate allowances. (*E* 363)

The death of Mrs. Churchill will allow for the fulfillment of three marriages, and, as in her letters, Austen fills the death notification with the same satirical tone and irony. With his aunt’s death, Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are free to reveal their engagement, which in turn brings about the engagement of Emma Woodhouse and George Knightley. At the thought of possibly

not possessing Knightley's affections, Emma realizes "with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" (382). It is the revelation of their engagement that sends Harriet Smith to Brunswick Square in London to be reunited successfully with Robert Martin. With Frank Churchill married to Jane Fairfax and Harriet Smith married to Robert Martin, all that is left for the novel to fulfill is the marriage of Emma and Knightley.

The one remaining impediment to their marriage, however, is a question of homes. "While her dear father lived," writes Austen, "any change of condition must be impossible to her. She could never quit him" (419). Knightley considers that he might convince Mr. Woodhouse to move homes to Donwell; he "had wanted to believe it feasible, but his knowledge of Mr. Woodhouse would not suffer him to deceive himself long" (419). Mindful of the disruption that Miss Taylor's wedding, at the novel's beginning, caused to her father's peace of mind, Emma cannot proceed with the wedding without considering his comfort. Deliverance from this state of stasis comes in the form of "*house-breaking*" and the threat of material loss:

In this state of suspense, they were befriended, not by any sudden illumination of Mr. Woodhouse's mind, or any wonderful change of his nervous system, but by the operation of the same system in another way. Mrs. Weston's poultry-house was robbed one night Other poultry-yards in the neighbourhood also suffered. Pilfering was *house-breaking* to Mr. Woodhouse's fears. He was very uneasy; and but for the sense of his son-in-law's protection, would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life. . . . The result of this distress was, that, with a much more voluntary, cheerful consent, than his daughter had ever presumed to hope for at the moment, she was able to fix her wedding-day. (452-53, emphasis in original)

Instead of Emma leaving Hartfield, leaving her nest, Knightley moves in, effectively securing the nest and completing Emma's collection at the same time. In a novel about nests and homes, it is the theft of birds – a literal robbing of the nest – that brings the novel to its resolution.

IV. *PERSUASION* (1817)

With *Persuasion*, her last completed novel, Jane Austen moves beyond the imagery of hoarding and nest building. Her maturity as a novelist is matched by the maturity of her heroine. Anne Elliot is older than her predecessors, and her search for home is not dependent upon domestic spaces or particular material objects such as the kinds cultivated by Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse. The narrator first presents Anne in the shadow of her family: "Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne" (*Persuasion* 5). Anne values dignity and duty over material comforts; when the family's expenses begin to outweigh their means, she would rather economize and stay at Kellynch Hall than fall further into debt or move to Bath. Anne "considered it as an act of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors, with all the expedition which the most comprehensive retrenchments could secure, and saw no dignity in any thing short of it" (9-10). Sir Walter Elliot, Anne's father, cannot imagine life without its comforts, "Journeys, London, servants, horses, [and] table" (10). He refuses to change his lifestyle, deciding to rent out the hall and move the family to Bath, where "he might be important at comparatively little expense" (10). Anne "disliked Bath, and did not think it agreed with her—and Bath was to be her home" (10). The beginning of *Persuasion* fulfills the spectral threat of house breaking that haunts the conclusion of *Emma*. By opening with the image of a broken

home, Austen effectively leaves behind her that world of domesticity that she has built up in her previous novels, a world built upon the material foundations of the home.

Homeless, Anne Elliot enters the text simultaneously as the references to returning sailors, themselves searching for homes, begin to appear. Mr. Shepard suggests that Sir Walter consider letting Kellynch Hall to a returning officer. “This peace” says Mr. Shepard, “will be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore. They will all be wanting a home. Could not be a better time, Sir Walter, for having a choice of tenants, very responsible tenants” (12).¹⁸ Anne’s first words refer also to the returning navy: “The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give. Sailors work hard enough for their comforts, we must all allow” (14). Being “only Anne” in her father’s estimation and disliking the prospect of Bath as her future home, Anne possesses the same lack of rootedness or connection to home that the returning sailors experience. That she enters the text at the moment the navy appears aligns her search for home with those of the returning sailors. But *Persuasion* moves away from the material collections, homes, and nests so readily present in Austen’s two previous novels. “There is, “ Woolf writes, “a peculiar beauty and a peculiar dullness in *Persuasion*. The dullness is that which so often marks the transition stage between two different periods. . . . we also feel that she is trying to do something which she has never yet attempted. . . . She is beginning to discover that the world is larger, more mysterious, and more romantic than she had supposed” (144). Some critics, such as Thomas Pfau, have located in *Persuasion* a deep melancholy that “transfers onto readers of Austen’s prose the holistic perception of the whole business of the human as consisting of

¹⁸ Austen sets *Persuasion* during a brief period of peace between May 1814 and March 1815 during the Napoleonic Wars. In May 1814 the Treaty of Paris brings about the temporary peace Mr. Shepard references. In March 1815 Napoleon escapes the island of Elba and begins the conflict known as the Hundred Days, which ultimately leads to the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815.

mindless material acquisitions and the unconscious emulation and display of cultural forms and practices” (329). As the novel least concerned with material acquisitions, *Persuasion* concludes with the returning threat of war, an event that serves to reinforce the novel’s ultimate rejection of “mindless material acquisitions” (Pfau 329). Of Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot, Austen writes, “His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less; the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance” (168).

When Austen compared her novel writing in 1816 to the building of a bird’s nest, it was a revelation she could arrive at only after finishing work on *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, her two novels most concerned with the building of homes. Her statement is a piece of literary criticism that does not carry the spiritual weight of an epiphany but rather the startling lucidity that accompanies the crystallization of a thought. Virginia Woolf, in concluding her essay on Jane Austen, imagines that had Austen “lived a few more years only, all would have been altered. She would have stayed in London, dined out, . . . made new friends, read, travelled, and carried back to the quiet country cottage a *hoard* of observations to feast upon at leisure” (144, emphasis added). While it is certainly tempting to imagine what kind of writer Austen would have become had she lived, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* are about learning to desire what one already has. Perhaps we should take our cues from Austen and do the same.

CHAPTER 3
 ‘THE HOARDING SENSE’:
 MEMORY AND MELANCHOLY IN
 LORD ALFRED TENNYSON’S *IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.*

Across this study of nineteenth-century literature and hoarding, the two constants are desire and loss. On its surface, Tennyson’s *In Memoriam A. H. H.* (1850) seems to have little in common with hoarding, but *In Memoriam* is deeply invested in the themes of desire and loss, as its most famous lines attest: “’T is better to have loved and lost, / Than never to have loved at all” (27.14-15). “To love,” writes Irene Hsiao, “is so often to be beyond quantification, gesture, words,” but Tennyson attempts both to quantify his love for Arthur Hallam and to process the devastation of his loss. In Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, hoarding is a process of seeing objects, desiring them, and eventually possessing them; this practice forms domestic spaces as well as the heroine’s sense of self. Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* offers a reversal of these motivations; beginning with loss, *In Memoriam* offers a two-fold narrative of recovery: the attempted retrieval of Hallam’s spirit (which comes to a climax in elegy 95) and the emotional recovery of the speaker as he mourns his loss. Dennis Brown argues that “[r]ecovery requires narrative, but narrative may be appropriately disjunctive rather than continuous” (344). Hoarding attempts to deny the possibility of loss, and for this reason, the narratives of hoarding are also non-linear, frequently reaching their conclusion by circuitous pathways. Tennyson’s poem, I

argue, enacts a narrative of recovery through hoarding, but it is not the hoarding of physical objects so much as the effort to hold onto fading memories.

Hoarded letters play a crucial role in this effort. In elegy 95, which I will return to later, the speaker brings out the letters he saved that chronicle his friendship with Hallam. These letters are the only obvious material objects that the speaker claims to have saved, and so they occupy an important position in this discussion. The epiphany the speaker experiences on account of the letters has been the subject of some debate, but, I argue, his epiphany is not unlike the one Jane Austen's Anne Elliot experiences upon receiving a letter from Captain Wentworth at the end of *Persuasion*, or the sudden realization experienced by characters of *Bleak House* when a small bundle of letters is found in the charred remains of the Rag and Bottle Warehouse. As with the hoards in the other texts examined here, we have to work through the hoard before we can uncover the letters.

Whereas Austen's nest building is a layering process with the intention of building up and creating form, Tennyson's *In Memoriam* is in constant danger of breaking down. Austen's hoarding relies on solid organic materials, which are prone to decay, but Tennyson's hoarding uses ephemeral materials, such as memories, and hoards them together in an effort to create a lasting memorial. As a tribute to the memory of Arthur Hallam, *In Memoriam* is a negotiation of two worlds: the world of the living and the world of the dead. The world of the living is built from organic matter, such as wood and paper, which will decay with time. The world of the dead is built from stone, evidenced by headstones and marble monuments, which can resist the ravages of time. The speaker attempts to negotiate between these two worlds by constructing a monument of memories, the process of which enacts the narrative of his recovery.

HISTORY OF COMPOSITION

Published anonymously in 1850, *In Memoriam* met with enormous public enthusiasm, which quickly led to the revelation of its authorship, and its success paved the way for Tennyson's appointment as poet laureate. The poem was a favorite of Prince Albert's, and upon his death, Queen Victoria sought solace in its lyrics. Of its title, Christopher Ricks writes, "The title *In Memoriam A. H. H.* had been either suggested or preferred by Emily Sellwood, whom Tennyson married in June 1850. The title . . . directs attention firmly to one focus, despite Tennyson's injunction . . . 'this is a poem, *not* an actual biography'" (201). Other titles under consideration included *The Way to the Soul* and *Fragments of an Elegy*, the latter of which suggests "with some frankness and some truth, that the poem as a whole does not possess a firm focus" (201). Irene Hsiao views the same alternate titles as "impl[y]ing something unfinished, shattered, the shards of something unpieceable, yet it is also within sight of a cognizable whole: the elegy. In contrast, 'The Way to the Soul' is too complete, suggesting a narrative, a journey arriving at its proper destination" (173). While I agree with Hsiao about how the poem remembers Hallam through fragments, I disagree with her rejection of the alternate title because it suggests the journey ends in "its proper destination" (173). The poem suggests we can remember the dead only through such "unpieceable" fragments, but as time passes, the fragments of memory change shape and fade. Critics take a variety of positions on the reader's ability to break the poem down or to comprehend it as a whole. On *In Memoriam*, T. S. Eliot writes, "Here are one hundred and thirty-two passages, each of several quatrains in the same form, and never monotony or repetition. And the poem has to be comprehended as a whole. We may not memorize a few passages, we cannot find a 'fair sample'; we have to comprehend the whole

poem which is essentially the length that it is” (135). To “memorize a few passages” of a poem on the nature of memory is, ironically, to do it a disservice.

Composed of more than 700 quatrains of *abba*, divided into 131 units of various lengths, *In Memoriam* gives the appearance of both a long narrative poem and an extended elegy, and critics give a variety of opinions on the relationship between the parts and the whole. Arthur Henry Hallam dies on September 15, 1833; Tennyson learns of his death on October 1, and on October 6, he begins writing the elegy now known as elegy 9. In his memoir of his father, Hallam Tennyson records that “[t]he earliest jottings, beg[a]n in 1833, of the ‘Elegies’ as they were then called” (*Memoir* 249).¹⁹ There is a long-standing critical disagreement over what to call the 131 units into which the poem is divided. Scholars have used terms ranging from units and sections, which suggest distinct measurement, to elegies, poems, or lyrics, all of which are reflective of generic concerns. Tennyson and his son both refer to the individual units as “elegies,” as evidenced by Hallam Tennyson’s *Memoir* and a letter from Tennyson to Coventry Patmore, regarding the uncertain location of the manuscript, for, according to Hallam, “my father was always careless about his manuscripts” (249). Dated 28 February 1850, Tennyson writes,

I went up to my room yesterday to get my book of Elegies: you know what I mean, a long, butcher-ledger like book. I was going to read one or two to an artist here: I could not find it. I have some obscure remembrance of having lent it to you. If so, all is well, if not, will you go to my old chambers and institute a vigorous inquiry? I was coming up to-day on purpose to look after it, but as the

¹⁹ To avoid confusion, quotes from Hallam Tennyson’s memoir of his father will be cited as *Memoir* and references to the author will include his full name as “Hallam Tennyson.” Tennyson scholars uniformly identify elegy 9 as the first of the elegies to be committed to paper, as “Tennyson told John Knowles that elegy 9 was ‘the first written’” (Hill 211). Elegies 9-17 form a distinct grouping focused on the return of Hallam’s body and “are probably among the first written” (211).

weather is so furious I have yielded to the wishes of my friends here to stop till tomorrow. (*Memoir* 249)

The book, which Tennyson absent-mindedly leaves behind, was the third-stage manuscript and fair copy of *In Memoriam*: “In December 1848 or January 1849, Tennyson showed this book to his publisher, Edward Moxon, who ‘was delighted, and, to Alfred’s utter astonishment, offered to publish it and to hand him a cheque on the spot.’”²⁰ Although Tennyson’s letter is dated February 1850, *In Memoriam* was not printed until May 1850.

Tennyson’s choice of “my book of Elegies” suggests the compositions are individual works in a larger collection (*Memoir* 249). In a much later and more reflective letter from November 1883, which most critics cite as evidence of his preference, Tennyson describes the work in very different language:

It must be remembered . . . that this is a poem, *not* an actual biography. It is founded on our friendship, on the engagement of Arthur Hallam to my sister, on his sudden death at Vienna, just before the time fixed for their marriage, and on his burial at Clevedon Church. The poem concludes with the marriage of my youngest sister Cecilia. It was meant to be a kind of *Divina Commedia*, ending with happiness. The *sections* were written at many different places, and as the phases of our intercourse came to my memory and suggested them. I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole or for publication, until I found I had written so many. (*Memoir* 255; emphasis added)

²⁰ “This account is by Charles Tennyson Turner, Alfred’s brother, who told A.J Symington, who reported it to Hallam Tennyson, Tennyson’s son, in a letter, 11 January 1894. (Letter 6688, TRC). Incidentally the £300, according to the same letter, enabled Tennyson to finally marry Emily Sellwood in 1850” (“*In Memoriam A. H. H.* by Alfred Tennyson”).

Tennyson's use of *sections* to describe the units of the poem has led some critics, such as Irene Hsiao, to assert that "sections" means "not parts pieced one by one to make a mosaic whole, but a division of something once whole, a full entity sliced neatly through, leaving visible seams" (174). Hsiao's argument of *section* versus *elegy* is a bit bare, and her imagery of "a full entity sliced neatly through" is a bit too graphic given that the first elegies Tennyson composed were on the return of Hallam's remains from Vienna.

Other critics, such as David Shaw and Christopher Ricks, address the relationship between the text and the weaving ("I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole") that the author claims not to have done. To James Knowles, Tennyson said, "the general way of its [*In Memoriam*] being written was so queer that if there were a blank space I would put in a poem" (qtd in Ricks 202). Shaw and Ricks read this statement, along with Tennyson's letter, as evidence of the weaving the text enacts. Hsiao, however, rejects this concept, stating that, "[r]ather than a thread to be woven into the whole structure, the section, by such a claim, more clearly functions as a bridge that mocks itself as a futile filling-in of blanks" (175). For my own argument, I view the divisions of the poem as independent elegies. *Section* demands that the divisions of the poem are incomplete in isolation, and implies a precision, which I do not believe is inherent in Tennyson's work. Christopher Ricks and Timothy Peltason both contend that the divisions function as independent poems.

Ricks reads the units as "separate poems, occasionally and loosely linked into groups, engaging with a multiplicity of matters and achieving the inner relationships of a *congeries* rather than a single poem" (204). *Congeries* suggests an assemblage or heap, not the organized collection, which *section* would imply. Timothy Peltason argues,

As a long poem made up of short poems, *In Memoriam* naturally interests itself in the way that short structures build into longer ones Neither the poem nor its readers can renounce the difficult task of gathering things together and seeing them whole, of giving a name to the uncertain shapes of history, of human experience, of *In Memoriam*. (5)

In Peltason's assessment, we are unable to resist the gathering impulse even as we may acknowledge the futility of our task to gather immaterial things such as memories. In our readings of *In Memoriam*, we are frequently required to work through contradictory emotions and remembrances, and one of the coping methods we employ is to gather like objects together. As we read, we attempt to impose order on the different threads that Tennyson has laid down. In this kind of reading, we oscillate between viewing each moment or memory as a separate entity and viewing each as a fragment of a larger whole, an overarching plan.

MEMORY: THE HOARDING SENSE

Before writing *In Memoriam*, a paean to memory, Tennyson previously published two poems dedicated to memory, entitled "Memory" (1827) and "Ode to Memory" (1830), which demonstrate how the author engaged the faculty of memory prior to his longer work. In "Memory," which appeared in the 1827 volume of *Poems by Two Brothers*, the epigraph Tennyson selects is a quote from an entry in Joseph Addison's *The Spectator* from August 30, 1712. The part Tennyson excerpts describes memory in terms which are closely aligned with hoarding: "The memory is perpetually looking back when we have nothing present to entertain us: it is like those repositories in animals that are filled with stores of food, on which they may ruminate when their present pasture fails" (qtd in Norton 18). Memory is a storage cabinet for

provisions; it looks backward, but at the same time looks forward as it is filled against the threat of future loss. In this work, memory is an enchanter, and a deceiver:

Memory! dear enchanter!

Why bring back to view

Dreams of youth, which banter

All that e'er was true?

.....

Memory! why deceive me

By thy visions blest? (Tennyson 1-4, 43-44)

Memory brings back visions of past time, and the haunted speaker finds that memory brings a difficult reminder of those “years gone by / When those hopes were blooming,” which he contrasts with present “age’s frosty mansion, / So cheerless and so chill” (19-20, 49-50). In Kroll’s account of these early poems on memory, she writes, Tennyson “disappointed by the language of science as a source of reformulating either the heavenly or the human . . . turns to that very human realm, memory, in the 1830 *Poems [Chiefly Lyrical]* as a possible source of spiritual succor” (471). To memory, the speaker beseeches, “Come forth, I charge thee, arise” and “Thou comest not with shows of flaunting vines / Unto mine inner eye, / Divinest Memory!” (Tennyson 46, 48-50). The refrain of the poem, “Strengthen me, enlighten me! / I faint in this obscurity, / Thou dewy dawn of memory,” emphasizes the speaker’s desperate need, and Tennyson uses the refrain as a comment upon the tenuous state of memory. Memory wavers between a romantic imprecision, “robed in soften’d light,” and a recollection of minute particulars, such as “The seven elms, the poplars four / That stand beside my father’s door” (10, 56-57). In *In Memoriam*, Tennyson would interweave these characteristics of memory, praising

its ability to bring forth the image of Hallam and denigrating it for taunting him with such visions.

In these poems, Tennyson questions the efficiency of memory for maintaining links to the past. Examining “Morte d’Arthur,” Tennyson’s retelling of Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*, and the “material forms of cultural memory,” Allison Adler Kroll argues that the poem “debates whether we must maintain physical contact with the past—to preserve its material traces, in other words—or whether the imaginative realms of poetry, myth, and legend provide a more effective means of conserving cultural memory” (461). Pointing to the later and larger work *The Idylls of the King*, Kroll notes that Excalibur “should not be discarded, but instead ‘stored in some treasure house’ (l. 101) for public consumption . . . it should be on ‘show . . . at a joust of arms’ (l. 102), and a museum-like tag about its fashioning by the lady of the lake included with that display” (462). In these works, cultural artifacts preserve memory, and in *In Memoriam*, “the ‘artifact’ created by the public poet gives expression to the personal grief of the private man” (Gates 515).

In elegy 44 of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson links memory and hoarding with public and collective experience. Tennyson describes memory as “the hoarding sense” and suggests that man has access to a primitive past at birth:

But he forgets the days before
God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish’d, tone and tint,
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
Gives out at times—he knows not whence—

A little flash, a mystic hint. (Tennyson 44.2-7)

In the previous chapter on Jane Austen's mid-career novels, I suggested that nest building is a hoarding that is instinctual, and the home building that Austen's heroines engage in is the result of their hoardings. In Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, he implies that "the hoarding sense," which I interpret as memory, is also instinctual and formed in the days before consciousness.

Accompanying this elegy, Tennyson includes the following note: "Closing of the skull after babyhood 'The dead after this life may have no remembrance of life, like the living babe who forgets the time before the sutures of the skull are closed, yet the living babe grows in knowledge, and though the remembrance of his earliest days has vanished, yet with increasing knowledge there comes a dreamy vision of what has been . . .'" (231).

But as he grows he gathers much,
 And learns the use of "I" and "me,"
 And finds "I am not what I see,
 And other than the things I touch." (45.1-4).

As the baby grows, he gathers knowledge, and this hoard of knowledge helps him recognize the difference between the subject, "I," and object, or "the things I touch" (45.2, 4).

ABBA: THE *IN MEMORIAM* STANZA

Because memories are chaotic, Tennyson uses the tightly bound spaces of the *In Memoriam* stanza to contain the emotions that memories evoke. The stanza is a quatrain with the rhyme *abba*. It is a form that, Christopher Ricks writes, "is especially suited to turning round rather than going forward" (210). For Ricks, the rhyme of the first and fourth line results in a return to the beginning of mourning, enacting a perpetual mourning that begins again with each

stanza and again with each section. Sarah Gates reads the *In Memoriam* stanza not as a closed or inward looking circular unit, but as a spiral that

includes the backward forward gesturing of vacillation, the repetition risking stasis (the central concentration), but also the outer diffusion, the movement beyond. The ends do not quite meet: the first “a” raises the anticipation of the second, but the intervening couplet interrupts the closure, or deflects the rhyme, so that the second “a” recollects but differs from the first. The outer lines, therefore, gesture toward enfolding the inner lines, but at the same time, the inner lines break through, or refuse this enfolding gesture. (509)

The relationship between the outer “a” and inner “b” pairs of lines reflects the imagery of hoarding. “b” lines are wedged between “a” lines, but “b” lines refuse to be consumed by “a” lines. As Timothy Peltason contends, “many individual lyrics subvert or challenge the process by which they are assimilated into a large and exemplary narrative, declaring the sovereignty of the moment and the absolute privacy and idiosyncrasy of the poet’s experience” (6).

If the stanza reflects the spiral motion of Gates’s argument, then “b” lines provide the internal momentum to propel the stanza from “a” to “a.” In elegy 12, Tennyson writes

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
 To bear thro’ heaven a tale of woe,
 Some dolorous message knit below
 The wild pulsation of her wings;

 Like her I go, I cannot stay;
 I leave this mortal ark behind,

A weight of nerves without a mind

And leave the cliffs and haste away (Tennyson 12.1-8)

In both stanzas, the “a” lines offer images of flight: “as a dove when up she springs,” “The wild pulsation of her wings,” “Like her I go,” “And leave the cliffs and haste away” (12.1, 4, 5, 8). In comparison, the “b” lines are weighted down: “To bear,” “dolorous message,” “mortal ark,” and “A weight of nerves” (12.2,3,6,7). The “b” lines create a gravitational pull around which the “a” lines circulate in attempts to escape, but they are continually pulled back to it. The relationship between “a” and “b” lines echoes Tennyson’s relationship with his memories of Hallam. As time passes, the distance between Hallam and the memory of Hallam increases, and like birds flying into the sky, the memories become less distinct the further they get. Tennyson attempts to weigh the memories down by imbuing them with emotional significance and shaping them into the concrete forms of words, lines, and stanzas, fearful that if he does not, the memories will fly from him.

The consistent rhyme of the *abba* stanzas gives *In Memoriam* the stable base it needs and from which it can explore the shifting themes of the poem. In Peltason’s assessment, the “relationship of the part to the whole is antagonistic as well as constructive” (6). The *abba* stanza resists the flux that dominates the rest of the work and simultaneously offers a stable but empty form, a space to be filled. Sarah Gates offers that “if we want to understand the ‘coherency’ . . . of this extraordinarily self-contradictory, fluidly granulated work, we might start with a look at the only constant—and an obsessive constant it is—to be found in it” (508). Early in *In Memoriam*, Tennyson writes

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,

A use, in measured language lies;

The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But the large grief which these enfold

Is given in outline and no more. (Tennyson 5.5-12)

Writing can capture the contours and general shape of his grief, but writing cannot give it distinctive features. He finds the mechanical process of writing dulls the pain but cannot erase it. Writing, like hoarding, becomes the process by which he self-soothes; he gathers all his emotion and anguish at Hallam's death and covers over it with stanzas. He attempts to box-in his grief, locking it inside four-line stanzas, but it frequently overruns its borders:

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more— (7.1-5)

The first stanza runs into the second stanza, creating the physical space to represent the metaphysical space that now separates the speaker and his object. "A hand" that once stretched out and met another, now stretches and finds only empty space. What once connected the speaker with his object is now withheld; the object is beyond his touch.

In moments such as this, when the speaker seeks out the object and finds it missing, he returns to the memory of that moment of contact, only to discover that it has changed as well:

He is not here; but far away

The noise of life begins again,

And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain

On the bald street breaks the blank day (7.9-12)

In her reading of the relationship between subject and object in *In Memoriam*, Isobel Armstrong contends that “[t]he work of the poem is to overcome the immobility which arises from the discontinuous and uncertain oscillation between an open, reflexive, mind-created world and a blind, subject/object account of experience” (635). The subject/object relationship is based initially, as in childhood, on touch; the mind is formed in relationship to objects in the world around it. As the subject matures, however, the mind becomes “actively shaped by the self” (631). Armstrong argues that the speaker learns through touch to distinguish between the subject and the object, but when the ability to touch the object is gone, the poem “can go no further. The day dawns or *fragments*, breaking like something brittle” (631). Stasis can threaten dissolution, leading to disintegration.

HALLAM'S BODY

To build a monument out of ephemeral materials, Tennyson not only weighs his memories down so that they remain distinct and within easy reach, he also incorporates images of strength and stability. The first elegies Tennyson completed memorialized Hallam's body, an organic form that had already begun to decay. To counter time and decay, the first elegies offer

organic metaphors, such as the yew tree, as symbols of rebirth and remembrance. The speaker addresses the yew tree, which he imagines as embracing the headstones of the dead:

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the underlying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots wrapt about the bones. (Tennyson 2.1-4)

From the images of death, the speaker turns to symbols of life, describing the tree in bloom and new life in the next stanza:

The seasons bring the flower again,
 And bring the firstling to the flock;
 And in the dusk of thee the clock
 Beats out the little lives of men. (2.5-8)

He demonstrates the passing of time in two forms; first the passing of the seasons, which is natural time, and then the ticking of the clock which is manmade time. Nourishing the tree, the body helps to “bring the flower again,” and with each passing season, the dead live again. By imaging the dead as living again in some organic form, Tennyson negates the power of the time. Tennyson engages a similar image in elegy 8:

And this poor flower of poesy
 Which, little cared for, fades not yet

 I go to plant it on his tomb,
 That if it can it there may bloom,
 Or, dying, there at least may die. (8.19-20, 22-24)

The “poor flower of poesy” may find its nourishment on Hallam’s tomb, and if it does not, then it is already placed so that its remains may rest with Hallam’s body. The organic imagery underscores the vulnerability of poetry in its tentative nascent state on the verge between life and death.

The image of Hallam’s body providing nourishment to Tennyson’s flower of poesy, and to the actual flowers in the English soil, is one that the author returns to again in elegies 18 and 21:

Where he in English earth is laid,
 And from his ashes may be made
 The violet of his native land.

 I sing to him that rests below,
 And, since the grasses round me wave,
 I take the grasses of the grave,
 And make them pipe whereon to blow.

 Ye never knew the sacred dust.
 I do but sing because I must,
 And pipe but as the linnets sing:

 And one is glad; her note is gay,
 For now her little ones have ranged;
 And one is sad; her note is changed,

Because her brood is stolen away. (18.2-4, 21.1-4, 21.22-28)

Elegy 18 alludes to Shakespeare's Ophelia: "Lay her in the earth, / And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring" (5.1. 261-63). Tennyson alters the allusion in elegy 21 with the image of the poet-piper using the grasses that grow upon the gravesite to make the pipe upon which he forms the music to accompany his lyrics. The image suggests that Tennyson crafts his poetry literally from Hallam's body. The creative process is then collaborative, a partnership between Hallam, or rather Hallam's material body, and Tennyson's creative faculty. Hallam's body provides both the raw materials and the inspiration for Tennyson's poetic art. Tennyson compares his lyric song to the singing of birds. To the naysayers who complain, "He loves to make parade of pain," Tennyson chides, they never knew "the sacred dust," and compares his feelings of love and loss for Hallam to those of a mother bird for her brood.

Dust is a composite image, in much the same way that *In Memoriam* is a composite literary work. In *Bleak House*, which Charles Dickens began composing the year following the publication of *In Memoriam*, Dickens describes dust as the "universal article into which . . . all things of earth, animate and inanimate, are resolving" (326). Dust plays an important role in *In Memoriam*, and Tennyson imagines different kinds of dust: the physical dust of the earth, the symbolic dust of time, the dust of origins, and the dust of death and departure. Addressing the ship which bears Hallam's body home, the speaker says, "Such precious relics brought by thee / The dust of him I shall not see / Till all my widow'd race be run" (Tennyson 17.18-20). In elegy 21, Tennyson sanctifies Hallam's body as "the sacred dust," elevating his remains to the status of saintly relics (21.22). Kroll argues that the "consolatory device to which [Tennyson] will return again and again, in *In Memoriam*, *The Idylls of the King*, and elsewhere, namely, the making 'holy' that which is merely human, in a sort of reverse kenosis, the spiritualization of that which

is common, local, quotidian” (473). The sanctification of Hallam’s dust is in part due to the void Tennyson feels not only at the death of Hallam but also at his own subsequent spiritual doubt.

Tennyson displaces his love for Hallam “onto [Hallam’s] remains, the remains which are the divisive consequences of departure. The love is a love for tangible things: remains are loved as refrains are loved. . . . they are loved in an attempt to gather what cannot be gathered—to transform a fragmented relic into a living part” (Hsiao 183-84). The speaker compares the dust of individual man to the collective dust to which all living creatures must return:

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is: (Tennyson 34.1-4)

The uncertain belief that life goes on eternally is preferable to the certain knowledge that all life will come to an end. In stanzas such as this one, Tennyson uses the form *abba* to impose logic on a fearful unknowable. In elegy 50, Tennyson begins each of the four stanzas with an importuned plea to the spirits: “Be near me when my light is low,” “Be near me when the sensuous frame / Is rack’d with pangs,” “Be near me when my faith is dry,” “Be near me when I fade away” (50.1, 5-6, 9, 13). The repetition creates reliable order in the chaotic moments leading to death.

In the same elegy, Time personified is “a maniac scattering dust / And Life, a Fury slinging flame” (50.7-8). When time threatens furious disintegration, the speaker turns to faith as a stabilizing force. In elegy 54, the speaker says,

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,

Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;

That not one life shall be destroy'd,

Or cast as rubbish to the void,

When God hath made the pile complete. (54.1-8)

If the speaker seeks comfort in his faith, he undermines himself by offering an image of a deity who is destructive. In the first stanza, the speaker claims, “final goal of ill” is “good,” a paradoxical statement that confounds more than it soothes. The speaker follows his assertion with a list of examples that are even more disconcerting: “not a worm is cloven in vain; / That not a moth with vain desire / Is shrivell’d in a fruitless fire” (54.9-11). What good is meant to come from these violent deaths? Certainly the speaker wishes to believe that nothing evil happens without reason, that no individual life will be lost in vain, but the stark examples he produces are cold comfort. He offers an image of a deity who destroys life but does not discard his “rubbish to the void”—God keeps his rubbish and lumps it into a “pile” (54.7-8). The speaker offers up an image of a deity who hoards the lives “destroy’d / Or cast as rubbish to the void” (54.6-7). Because the speaker cannot keep Hallam for himself and cannot yet come to terms with the loss of Hallam, he finds comfort in the thought and image of God hoarding the dead matter of Hallam’s body.

LOVE AND LOSS

If there is a refrain in *In Memoriam*, it is the statement: “’T is better to have loved and lost / Than never to have love at all,” which appears twice in the poem, first in elegy 27:

I envy not in any moods
 The captive void of noble rage,
 The linnet born within the cage,
 That never knew the summer woods

.....

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
 I feel it, when I sorrow most;
 'T is better to have loved and lost
 Than never to have loved at all. (27.1-4, 11-15)

The linnet appears again, but whereas the linnet from elegy 21 has experienced both love and loss, the linnet of elegy 27 has experienced no such turmoil. The poem suggests that these experiences lead to a greater truth, the experience of which may be painful but ultimately preferable to the ignorance of the caged linnet.

The knowledge of love and loss leads Tennyson to the realization that “consciousness is not possible without the pain of loss,” and that “loving is also the matter of losing; the love lyric is always already an elegy” (Hsiao 183). In elegy 85, Tennyson comes again to this truth:

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
 I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
 'T is better to have loved and lost,
 Than never to have loved at all—

O true in word, and tried in deed,
 Demanding, so to bring relief

To this which is our common grief,

What kind of life is that I lead; (85.1-8)

The accouterments of loss, the bier and pall, carry and cover the body, leaving it unseen save for its outline. The moments when he “sorrow’d most” are relieved by the memories of love. The two stanzas suggest that only by experiencing loss can we plumb the depths of love and come to comprehend and eventually overcome the loss. Hsiao writes that “love and loss appear together and apart in nearly every section—they are the parameters of the speaker’s identity” (183). The speaker establishes these parameters early in the poem:

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown’d,

.....

Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,

.....

Than that the victor Hours should scorn

The long result of love, and boast,

“Behold the man that loved and lost,

But all he was is overworn.” (Tennyson 1.9,11, 13-16)

Hallam Tennyson’s notes to the text claim, “it is better to bear the wild misery of extreme grief than that Time should obliterate the sense of loss and deaden the power of love” (qtd in Hill 207).

In elegy 77, Tennyson debates the fate of the poem in the context of different types of time, such as historical time and the geological time. For Timothy Peltason, *In Memoriam* “records little of the external movement of this period of Tennyson’s life, but registers finely and variously the psychic homelessness that accompanied it, the puzzled alternations of mood

the persistent and frustrated search to put an end to this wandering among moods and to discover some stabilizing pattern in the history of recorded moments” (4). The speaker asks,

What hope is here for modern rhyme
 To him who turns a musing eye
 On songs, and deeds and lives, that lie
 Foreshorten’d in the tract of time?

These mortal lullabies of pain
 May bind a book, may line a box,
 May serve to curl a maiden’s locks;
 Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,
 And, passing, turn the page that tells
 A grief, then changed to something else,
 Sung by a long-forgotten mind. (Tennyson 77.1-12)

When faced with the future, an unbounded expanse of time, the poet questions and doubts the longevity of his work. The print pages may find new life, serving a purpose other than the one the poet intended for them, forcing the poet to confront the possibility that his “lullabies of pain” (77.5) are nothing more than the “melancholy reminder of the futility of amassing material things” (Schwenger 76). At the conclusion of the previous chapter, I argued that Austen’s turn away from hoarding in her last novel *Persuasion* was due to an awareness that “the whole business of the human . . . consist[s] of mindless material acquisitions” (Pfau 329). Tennyson’s

melancholy is bound up in the duality of love and loss, as hoarding is an attempt to deny the possibility of loss. The constant struggle between feelings of love and desire for Hallam and feelings of grief and despair at his loss results in the deep-seated melancholy inherent in the poem.

In his study on the relationship between melancholy and language, Thomas Pfau describes melancholy as “[b]orn of an *excess* of knowledge that ultimately renders it incommensurable with *any* form of representation. . . . melancholy appears to be so insistent and overdetermined a feeling that it must be viewed not as the opposite of self-consciousness but as its veritable apotheosis” (309-10; emphasis added). Pfau reveals that melancholy, like hoarding, is characterized by an excess which grows out of disproportion, but Pfau surprises with his assertion that melancholy is the ideal form of experiencing the conscious recognition of one’s own self. In this definition, melancholy becomes a hoarding in which knowledge, emotion, and awareness overwhelm the self, leading to the “attendant quality of exhaustion rather than possibility” (310).

The exhaustion of *In Memoriam*, Isobel Armstrong argues, comes from the poem “continually threaten[ing] itself with termination. ‘But that large grief . . . Is given in outline and *no more*’ (V). Language allows grief to be expressed in no more than an outline, but the poem also categorically discontinues itself. It can utter grief ‘no more’. And it brings itself to a halt” (175). I agree with Armstrong’s reading here; the difficulty of the poem is in its repeated starts and stops. The poem seems continually to end but never does. I would take Armstrong’s reading further and suggest that the speaker’s melancholy results in his awareness of his own consciousness, and as he experiences these moments of overwhelming mindfulness, the momentum of the poem appears to halt. As time passes, the wave of consciousness recedes and

allows the poem to start again before the subject has come to terms with his awareness of his own consciousness. Pfau argues a similar point when he states that “[i]t is to this melancholic recognition that intellectual and cultural practice responds . . . for the simple reason that the remedial operation of thought, having been called forth by that feeling, is forever bound to reproduce and prolong it. No effect can fully absorb and contain its own cause” (316).

Melancholy is “a feeling that all but knows about its own bottomless nature . . . a knowledge that, instead of a determinate object, revolves around the subject’s confronting its epistemological abjection” (321). Bound up in a deep awareness of mortality, melancholy and hoarding are both refusals to acknowledge the loss of a loved object. Tennyson hoards remembrances of Hallam in an attempt to arrest the passage of time, as time invariably leads to forgetting. But the “slow” and “aching” time of *In Memoriam* “can be filled only with sifting through the debris of goals, methods, and images of a post-[Hallam]” world, an activity that prolongs the ache of loss rather than alleviating it (312). Melancholy and hoarding are cycles that can be overcome only when the subject willingly releases the object, because to let go of the loved object, the subject must acknowledge his own mortality. Only through the experience of this sadness “can knowledge ascend to a new, conspicuously mediated or virtual plateau—that of an intellectual engagement ‘studiously’ mindful of its own radical transience” (312).

EPIPHANY

If the physical is a symbol of the spiritual world, then to evolve into new forms, or new modes of being, the ‘dead selves’ of the past must be discarded. As hoarding in *In Memoriam* creates a narrative of recovery, it is also a shedding of an old self that allows the speaker to reach a new truth. In elegies 90-95, Tennyson reaches the climax of the poem, the scene in which he

seems to touch and commune with Hallam's spirit. The reading of these elegies has been much debated.

In elegy 90, Tennyson considers the confusion and disruption of life that would occur if the dead returned:

Behold their brides in other hands;
The hard heir strides about their lands,
.....
Not less the yet-loved sire would make
Confusion worse than death, and shake

The pillars of domestic peace. (90.14-15, 18-20)

Even so, the speaker cries, "come thou back to me! / Whatever change the years have wrought" (90.21-22). The speaker imagines that if he were to see Hallam again in physical form, he would assume it was "the canker of the brain I might but say, I hear a wind / Of memory murmuring the past" (92.3, 7-8). Yet the speaker pleads for Hallam's spirit to commune with his. He begs, "Descend, and touch, and enter; hear / The wish too strong for words to name" (93.13-14).

In elegy 95, the speaker tells of a summer evening spent with friends on the lawn, of watching the bats come out at dusk, and singing songs with friends, until one by one, they head to bed, leaving him alone on the lawn. Then he says,

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fallen leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead. (95.21-24).

Alone, the speaker brings out his hoard of letters, written in the five years of friendship with Hallam. As he reads over them again, committing them again to memory, he finds that

... strangely on the silence broke
 The silent-speaking words, and strange
 Was love's dumb cry defying change
 To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigor, bold to dwell
 On doubts that drive the coward back,
 And keen thro' wordy snares to track
 Suggestion to her inmost cell. (95.25-32)

Silently-speaking the words to himself, the speaker breaks the silence not only of the scene, as he sits alone, but the silence that stretches between Hallam and himself. In the words, he hears "love's dumb cry defying change" (95.27). The preservation of the letters, the hoard, defies the change of time, preserving the love between the speaker and his friend, as love has defied the change of time.

The speaker realizes that love remains unchanged, and this realization makes him bold in the face of his doubts (that perhaps his love had begun to wane). The speaker continues,

So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touch'd me from the past,
 And all at once it seem'd at last
 The living soul was flash'd on mine, (95.33-36)

Touched by the language of the letters, Hallam's soul appears to touch the speaker through the medium of language, connecting past and present. In the moment of transcendence, the speaker catches,

The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out

The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—

The blows of Death. At length my trance

Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words! But ah, how hard to frame

In matter-moulded forms of speech,

Or even for intellect to reach

Thro' memory that which I became. (95.40-48)

In touching the spirit of Hallam, the speaker connects with the pulses of the universe, but his trance is broken by a moment of doubt.

He finds language incapable of conveying the sensations of the trance, moments in which he transcends even his own “matter-moulded” form (95.46). In a note to the text, Tennyson writes, “The trance came to an end in a moment of critical doubt, but the doubt was dispelled by the glory of the dawn of the ‘boundless day’” (70). Ashton Nichols argues for the importance of the trance, citing that it “was important to Tennyson's subsequent life as the true epiphany of the poem because its effect persists, manifesting the mind's power to bestow immense significance on the ordinary experience of a sunrise” (160). Wim Tigges disagrees, however, arguing that this

moment is not a true epiphany: “The letters of a dead friend are not the trivial or commonplace trigger which is the hallmark of a literary epiphany . . . the emotions evoked can hardly be said to be spontaneous (another basic requirement), no matter the ‘flashing’ of one living soul on another!” (279). Tigges does “not believe there are any actual letters in *In Memoriam*,” (280) rather, like Richard J. Dunn, he interprets the leaves as belonging to the “full foliaged elms,” having been blown down in the summer breeze (Tennyson 95.58). Tigges argues that letters make only one previous appearance in the poem, and that the speaker is not sitting in the fading light of dusk without a single candle attempting to read his friends’ letters. Instead, Tigges suggest, the leaves are “sibyl’s leaves,” which Tennyson “‘reads’ first of all the mutability of the seasons . . . then translates this in terms of the human life cycle, then is reminded of Hallam and the ‘wordy snares’ of religious doubt” (281). The “leaves” in Tigges’s Romantic reading “triggered the poet’s memories of the prematurely dead Hallam at an unusual moment when he had been out of the former’s mind” (280).

The conventional reading of the scene interprets the leaves as written letters, a reading reinforced by references to the elements of writing: ‘words’ (Tennyson 95.33) ‘lines’ (95.33), and ‘speech’ (95.46). Tigges’s counter-reading rests on the literal translation of epiphany as manifestation, such as the term generally denotes: “a manifestation or appearance of some divine or superhuman being” (“epiphany”). However, he does not clarify his definition of epiphany, which is where the fault in his argument ultimately rests. His attention to the epiphany as a literary device invokes the definition of literary epiphany popularized by James Joyce, in his novel *Stephen Hero*:

By an epiphany he mean a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed

that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. (211)

Joyce's definition highlights the potential for commonplace objects to transcend the mundane. In Tigges's argument, the only fact that accounts for Hallam's letters being, in his opinion, "not the trivial or commonplace trigger," is that their author has died, which is not an attribute of the letters but a condition of the author.

Towards the end of *In Memoriam*, the speaker expresses his desire to release the memories of Hallam, to let Hallam die with the old year. In elegy 106, Tennyson marks the passage of the old year with the ringing of the New Year's bells as a symbolic passing not only of the year but also of his grief and his melancholy:

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
 The flying cloud, the frosty light;
 The year is dying in the night;
 Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
 Ring, happy bell, across the snow:
 The year is going, let him go

.....

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
 For those that here we see no more

.....

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;

Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;

Ring out the thousand wars old

Ring in the thousand years of peace. (106.1-7, 9-10, 25-28)

The *him* of line 4 symbolizes the end of the old year and Hallam. In lines 25-28, Tennyson expresses not only the yearning to rid the world of disease and war, but also the “lust of gold,” which we can interpret as an indirect reference to hoarding. Tennyson speaks more to the ruinous nature of avarice, but the reference to a “narrowing” is also suggestive how the speaker has narrowed the focus of his life to a prolonged mourning for Hallam.

Throughout *In Memoriam*, the speaker has been consumed by his grief, and at the end, the speaker consumes his grief at last, declaring:

I will not shut me from my kind,

And lest I stiffen into stone,

I will not eat my heart alone

Nor feed with sighs a passing wind.

.....

... I was *born* to other things. (108.1-4, 120.12)

What seems to be an endless melancholic cycle of hoarding is actually a narrative about overcoming grief—a narrative of recovery. The speaker refuses to wall up himself inside his hoard of memories; he refuses to “stiffen into stone,” the material that identifies the world of the dead; and, he refuses to continue his life consumed in his grief.

In Memoriam ends with the wedding of Tennyson’s sister and enacts a literal return of the speaker to his kind. In the previous chapter on Jane Austen, I argued that hoarding was a

process of home building, and with the ending of his poem, Tennyson turns his attention to the domestic, not only the marriage of his sister, but also to his own marriage, which was possible with the money earned from publishing *In Memoriam*. In the epilogue, the speaker “seek[s] to subsume the whole experience within’ a single, “global becoming” (Brown 343). The speaker says,

That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,

One God, one law, one element,

And one far-off divine event,

To which the whole creation moves. (Tennyson Epilogue 140-144)

Bringing the disparate parts together into a single creation, Tennyson offers a final image not of stagnation but of collective movement towards a future in which each individual soul is reunited into a singular whole.

CHAPTER 4
AN “OBSTINATE ADHERENCE TO RUBBISH”:
HOARDING AND DICKENS

Writing in the early decades of the nineteenth-century, in the early years of the industrial revolution, Austen views hoarding as the productive accumulation of materials with which to build homes (as in *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*) or to build up the nation (as in *Persuasion*). Dickens on the other hand, writing in the 1830s alongside the industrialization of the nation’s manufacturing and workforce, views hoarding as a stubborn refusal to let go of the rubbish and material clutter of the past. For Dickens, hoarding threatens progress. As industrialization streamlined the production of goods, material things became symbols of progress, wealth, and prosperity. Dickens challenges this concept by demonstrating that the hoarder arrests progress by gathering and preserving surplus material goods, especially waste, rubbish, and items like lumber that become synonymous with the past as new technologies, such as steel, replace them. Refusing to let go of the past, the hoarder becomes a symbol of how progress is impeded, not facilitated, by an unrestrained love for things.

One fact that makes writing about Victorian hoarding difficult is that two of the period’s great loves are organization and things. Hoarding is synonymous with an impulse to preserve things, but hoarding is a preservation that resists categorization. Victorian hoarding, therefore, both reflects and distorts the period’s relationship with things. When Dickens writes about hoarding, he does so with one foot in truth and one foot in allegory. In *Bleak House*, he uses

hoarding as a metaphorical way to interrogate a multitude of problems: the role of the past in the present, the role of the individual in society, the responsibility of the mid-century novel to reflect the nation's social ills, the function of the narrator (who represents the individual) in the mid-century novel (which represents society), and the representation of the urban collage in the Victorian imagination.

With its multiple and intertwining plots and subplots, a range of characters representative of the distinct social classes, and zealous attention to detail, *Bleak House* exemplifies the Victorian novel form. To capture the diversity of society, Dickens experiments with the role of the narrator, and in *Bleak House*, this translates into the presence of two narrators: an unknown, mostly omniscient, third-person narrator, and the sometimes unreliable first-person narrator Esther Summerson. But writing about Dickens and hoarding does not lend itself to a single cohesive thread of inquiry. Instead, we have to approach the subject of hoarding in Dickens's work as Dickens approaches *Bleak House* – with multiple narratives that offer complementary but different perspectives on Dickens' relationship to Victorian hoarding.

To achieve this, the chapter offers four narratives that examine closely the decade 1843-1853 in order to capture Dickens's interest in hoarding in the years prior to and directly after the 1851 Great Exhibition. The first narrative assesses Dickens's critical responses to the Great Exhibition, the Victorian paean to organization and things. The second looks at three pieces of Dickens's fiction, beginning with *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and "Bill-Sticking" (1851), which I argue address hoarding from separate but compelling angles and form significant, though often unacknowledged, pieces in the genesis of *Bleak House* (1853), the subject of the third narrative. Focusing exclusively on *Bleak House*, the third narrative examines the role of hoarding in the novel and asks whether disparate elements can be brought together successfully to form a

complete and unique whole, and whether *Bleak House* demonstrates the problems inherent in this approach—or their solution? The fourth and final narrative considers the toll Victorian hoarding exacts on the nation in the years following the publication of *Bleak House*.

I. DICKENS AT THE GREAT EXHIBITION

The Great Exhibition of 1851 sits at the center of the nineteenth century, representing a historical and cultural divide between past and present, and serving as a showcase for the Victorians' love of organization and things. After her second visit, Charlotte Brontë recorded her impressions in a letter to her father:

It is a wonderful place—vast—strange, new and impossible to describe. Its grandeur does not consist in one thing, but in the unique assemblage of all things—Whatever human industry has created—you find there—from the great compartments filled with Railway Engines and boilers, with Mill machinery in full work—with splendid carriages of all kinds—with harness of every description—to the glass-covered and velvet-spread stands loaded with the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith, and the carefully guarded caskets full of real diamonds and pearls worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. . . . It seems as if only magic could have gathered this mass of wealth from all the ends of the Earth—as if none but supernatural hands could have arranged it thus—with such a blaze and contrast of colours and marvellous power of effect. The multitude filling the great aisles seems ruled and subdued by some invisible influence. (2: 630-31)²¹

Brontë describes the experience as ultimately leaving one “sufficiently bleached and broken in

²¹ From a letter dated June 7, 1851 written to her father Reverend Patrick Brontë.

bits” (2: 633). When asked for his thoughts on the exhibition, Charles Dickens wrote, “I don’t say ‘there is nothing in it’—there is too much. I have only been twice; so many things bewildered me. I have a natural horror of sights, and the fusion of so many sights in one has not decreased it” (6: 429).²² Dickens and Brontë differ on several points: where she finds “grandeur,” he finds “horror”; where she focuses outwardly on the displays, he focuses inwardly on his reactions; and, where Brontë begins with a singularity that explodes into “*all* things,” Dickens begins with many “sights” that fuse into one. A reader familiar with the novels of these two nineteenth-century writers might be surprised by their uncharacteristic responses. Here, Charlotte Brontë provides the excessive list of details and objects that spins the exhibition into a magical fantasy, and Dickens turns inward to brood on the “natural horror” of the thing. Both authors agree, however, that the exhibition’s effect stems from the extreme accumulation of things.

On July 14, 1851, more than a month after her second visit to the exhibition, Brontë writes to her friend Margaret Wooler,

I went there [the Crystal Palace] five times—and certainly saw some interesting thing—and the ‘coup d’oeil’ is striking and bewildering enough—but I never was able to get up any raptures on the subject and each renewed visit was made under coercion rather than my own free will. It is an excessively bustling place—and, after all, its wonders appeal too exclusively to the eye, and rarely touch the heart or head. (2: 666)

Brontë’s enthusiasm has turned to ambivalence. An experience that began as wonderful, strange, and new has become stale, and attempts to connect on a deeper emotional level have stalled. She finds that prolonged exposure has not granted her the ability to penetrate beneath the surface. Instead, she is relegated to viewing the exhibition through glimpses. She desires to capture the

²² From a letter to Lavinia Watson, dated July 11, 1851 (*Letters* 6: 429).

experience as complete whole, but the exhibition refuses to cohere into a single solid object, remaining instead in a constant (and for Brontë) exhausting state of change and flux.

The exhibition was designed to collect the scientific, industrial, and technological advances of the time in a single space, and to collect large groups of people in a single location. In her letter, Brontë alludes to the multitudes of visitors moving between the displays like a “living tide” (2: 631). Waves of viewers could gaze on with satisfaction, knowing that industry and technology had done away with the dirt, disgust, and other assorted dangers of the century. *Punch* satirized such displays in a series of editorial cartoons that focused on class tensions. Two among those, “Specimens from Mr. Punch's Industrial Exhibition of 1850” and “The Pound and Shilling,” put class tensions which the Great Exhibition had raised at the center. In the first cartoon, four gaunt workers, “An Industrious Needle-Woman,” “A Labourer Aged 75,” “A Distressed Shoe Maker,” and “A Sweater,” are displayed in glass bell jars while a man in top hat and overcoat stares morosely at them with a corpulent Punch beside him. Below the cartoon a caption in parentheses reads, “(To Be Improved by 1851).” The second cartoon shows a moment in which two waves of visitors, those who paid a pound and those who paid a shilling entrance fee, meet in the corridor. The pounds stand on the right in fashionable but generally uniform dress attire; the shillings on the left appear more motley, and their children, in the center of the image, appear patched and ragged. The caption reads “Whoever Thought of Meeting You Here!”—where to place the emphasis is left critically ambiguous. Above the two waves of visitors, spectators crowd a balcony, Punch among them, watching the scene below play out. The unspoken question lingers, “Who or what is really on display?”

“HE WAS NOT MISSED”

In *Bleak House*, which Dickens began drafting the same year as the Great Exhibition, Dickens exclaims, “What connection can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless been very curiously brought together!” (*Bleak House* 197).²³ The exhibition was triumph of organization, but supporters of the exhibition failed to recognize the dangers of grouping diverse sets of peoples into homogenous collectives, which negated the distinct importance of the individual. The number of visitors the exhibition received dwarfed the number of items on display, with the result that visitors came to view one another also as objects (turning people into things), as suggested by the *Punch* cartoon “Specimens from Mr. Punch’s Industrial Exhibition of 1850.” These cartoons satirized the exhibition, changing public opinion, and increasing class tensions. But the cartoons make a valid point; the exhibition did not create social organization but rather a kind of social hoarding—an assemblage masquerading as organization, which exacerbated the problems it pretended to solve.

In the same 1851 letter in which he gives his commentary on the Great Exhibition, Dickens recounts or, perhaps more likely, invents a narrative of a lost child at the exhibition. Many primary schools took their students on excursions to the Great Exhibition. “One school was composed of a hundred ‘Infants,’” writes Dickens,

One Infant strayed. He was not missed. Ninety and nine were taken home, supposed to be the whole collection, but this particular Infant went to Hammersmith. He was found by the Police at night, going round and round the Turnpike—which he still supposed to be a part of the Exhibition. He had the same opinion of the police. Also of Hammersmith Workhouse, where he passed the

²³ Henceforth *Bleak House* will appear as *BH*.

night. When his mother came for him in the morning he asked when it would be over? It was a Great Exhibition, he said, but he thought it long. (*Letters* 6: 429)

Dickens alludes to the Book of Matthew (“If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?”), but reverses the allusion, so that the child, who has gone astray, is not missed (Matthew 18:12). The individual is overlooked in deference to the collective.

The narrative humorously imagines the visitor’s experience from the perspective of the child, but attacks what Dickens saw as the greatest fault of the Exhibition—its applause for technological efficiency in the face of outstanding social negligence. The story criticizes the reduction of each element—the turnpike, the police, and the workhouse—from reality to haphazard spectacle, merely part of the seemingly endless exhibition displays. The child viewer who attends the exhibition under the pretense of an educational excursion leaves unable to discern spectacle from reality.

The lost individual is a staple of Dickens’s oeuvre, appearing with regularity in both his fiction and nonfiction. In August 1853, “Gone Astray” was published in *Household Words* appearing simultaneously with the separate publication of the eighteenth installment of *Bleak House*. Its title a nod to the same passage from the Book of Matthew, “Gone Astray” unfolds a story from the author’s childhood: the day he spent lost in London. In his retelling of events, we hear echoes of Dickens’s 1851 letter and its portrayal of the straying infant who wanders from the exhibition into the city, unable to distinguish spectacle from reality. In this essay, the wonderments of the city appear as an array of spectacles. First describing “[t]he child’s unreasoning terror of being lost,” Dickens adapts himself quickly and, with the child’s power of imagination, determines to “seek my fortune. . . . The idea of asking my way home,” he claims,

“never came into my head” (*Selected Journalism* 36).²⁴ What follows is a wandering journey through London, detailing the sights and scenes through the child’s perspective. He finds the city “a vast emporium of precious stones and metals, casks and bales, honour and generosity, foreign fruits and spices. . . . Thus I wandered about the City, like a child in a dream, staring at the British merchants, and inspired by a mighty faith in the marvellousness of everything” (39). His feet and syntax ramble and wander, “[u]p courts and down courts – in and out,” “peeping,” “running,” “feeding,” roaming,” “wondering,” staring,” “and never tired” (39). When he sees “the shabby people sitting under the placards about ships,” he decides “they were Misers, who had embarked all their wealth to go and buy gold-dust” (39).²⁵ Through fantasy and imagination, the city becomes a playground.

After he finds himself alone in the rain, however, the fantasy of life in the London streets is brought to an abrupt end. Dickens writes, “I felt unspeakably forlorn; and now, for the first time, my little bed and the dear familiar faces came before me, and touched my heart” (43-44). Douglas-Fairhurst points out that “only a few months had passed since [Dickens had] introduced a child into [*Bleak House*] who had perfectly adapted himself to life on the streets . . . and the contrast with ‘Gone Astray’ is striking” (*Becoming* 24). Indeed, Jo, the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House*, “is not lost, because he has never been missed” (24). For the child in “Gone Astray,” the wonderments of the city have been replaced by the remembrances of family, and as he looks back on his child-self, he recalls, “[t]hey used to say I was an odd child, and I suppose I was. I am an odd man perhaps . . . I have gone astray since, many times, and farther afield” (*SJ* 44).

²⁴ Henceforth, *Selected Journalism* will appear as *SJ*.

²⁵ The list of gerunds may foreshadow the syntax at the ending of *Bleak House*, which Dickens was finishing simultaneously.

II. *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* (1843)

In 1843, eight years before *Bleak House*, Dickens's first Christmas book, *A Christmas Carol in Prose: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* appeared, and in many ways, *A Christmas Carol* forms a significant part in the genesis of *Bleak House*. In *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens displays many facets of the miser character, drawing the most attention to Scrooge's bitter loneliness. The novella asks whether a man, who is entirely removed from society, can become a part of society again? The answer seems to be yes, but on the condition that he make emotional and economic investments into that society.

The character of Scrooge shares many similarities with that of Krook, the hoarder who appears in Dickens's 1853 novel *Bleak House*. As hoarders and misers, Scrooge and Krook live, by choice, on the fringes of society; they possess many things but reject personal relationships, preferring to surround themselves with inanimate objects. Even Krook's death by spontaneous combustion, which caught many of Dickens's readers and critics by surprise, is foreshadowed when Scrooge imagines for a brief moment his own death by spontaneous combustion. As contentious and unbelievable as Krook's death in *Bleak House* proved to be for Dickens's contemporaries, he explores connections between hoarding and combustion in *A Christmas Carol*.²⁶ In his first description of Scrooge, Dickens describes him as

a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! . . .

The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his

²⁶ George Henry Lewes publicly mocked the cause of Krook's death. Dickens wrote to Lewes "three weeks later [and] claimed that [he had] 'looked into a number of books with great care, expressly to learn what the truth was'. But this was a lie; despite all his show of learning . . . all he had done was to open a copy of Robert Macnish's *The Anatomy of Drunkenness* and transcribe all the 'authorities' from this second-hand source" (Ackroyd 662). One important distinction between the scenes of spontaneous combustion in *A Christmas Carol* and *Bleak House*, is that in *Bleak House* there are repeated suggestion that Krook's spontaneous combustion is in part a result of his alcoholism, which the medical journals of the day cited as potential source of combusting. In *A Christmas Carol*, however, Scrooge shows no signs of alcoholism; his thoughts, by way of Dickens, about spontaneous combustion must stem from something else.

cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree on Christmas. (*Christmas Carol* 10)²⁷

The description begins with an ironically generous serving of participles detailing the constrictive nature of his character. Scrooge's internal coldness manifests outwardly in his pinched look and stiff movements. In the cold month of December, neither Scrooge's body nor his heart has the least intention of thawing out.

When Scrooge meets the second ghost, the spirit of Christmas present, the warm light emanating from the generous spirit envelops him and begins the process of thawing his heart, warming his soul, and restoring circulation to both. As the bell strikes one, Scrooge

lay upon his bed, [in] the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless to make out what it meant . . . [he] was apprehensive that he might be at that very moment an interesting case of spontaneous combustion, without having the consolation of knowing it. (42-43)

Scrooge fears the unknown light because he has no control over it. At its core, Scrooge's hoarding is about control. Money and emotion are liquid assets; they circulate and ebb and flow over time. Scrooge freezes his heart and his bank account in order to control them. The warm light that penetrates his body consumes him in a metaphorical combustion, gradually thawing his heart. Dickens uses the blaze of light and warmth as counteractive energies to break-up the ice in Scrooge's veins and his wallet, and it works. Whereas Scrooge went unwillingly with the first

²⁷ Henceforth *A Christmas Carol* will appear as *CC* in citations.

spirit, he agrees to accompany the second spirit. He says, “conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it” (44). Yet even as Scrooge submits himself to the spirit’s teachings, he describes the experience in metaphors of economy and profit.

When the last spirit takes him to a pawnshop, Scrooge does not grasp immediately the purpose of their visit, but he assumes there is “some latent moral for his own improvement” and “resolve[s] to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw” (66). Initially, Scrooge displays no signs of sincere emotional attachment to his gold beyond the ugly desires associated with greed and avarice. The money he hoards is common and holds no special meaning outside of its monetary value. Dickens’s use of “treasure up” implies a move from empty accumulation to an accumulation that is emotionally charged and purposeful. The vernacular shift from the common to the idiosyncratic is indicative of a change in Scrooge’s relationship with the things he hoards; he turns from hoarding money to treasuring words, lessons, and morals. “Treasure up” may allude also to the book of Matthew: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matthew 6:20).

We might connect *A Christmas Carol* with the book of Matthew and the parable of the talents. The parable begins with a master giving three servants a number of talents each according to the servant’s ability. To the first servant, he gives five talents, to the second servant he gives two, and the third servant receives one. The first and second servants invest or trade their talents, ultimately increasing the number of talents each possesses. The third servant buries his talent in the ground. When the master returns, he praises and rewards the first two servants

for using their talents to increase their profit; he condemns the third servant who hoarded his talent and did not use it. The parable can be interpreted several ways and can teach several morals about the responsible use of one's talents. With Dickens's story, one can read Scrooge's expenditure of money at the conclusion as a wise use of his talents; his new spending habits increase not only his emotional and spiritual profits but also those of the people around him.

After Scrooge wakes, he begins to circulate about the town. He goes to church, walks in the streets, approaches children and beggars, "look[s] down into the kitchens of houses," and finds "that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk – that anything – could give him so much happiness" (81). From witnessing the rot and decay of the stagnating pawnshop and graveyard, Scrooge becomes active and reenters circulation. He leaves his home and visits his nephew, and he buys the Christmas feast for the Cratchit family. The last image of Scrooge depicts him and Bob sharing a bowl of punch that Scrooge has provided. With his appetite for gold having turned into an appetite for food, drink, and good company, the tale concludes.

Throughout the novella, Scrooge has been characterized as a "covetous old sinner," but in the end, it is Scrooge who dismantles his own hoard by giving it away (10).²⁸ Don Richard Cox suggests that "Scrooge saves his soul in the same way that Pickwick so often finds atonement—he spends money Scrooge does not return to a state of innocence . . . nor does he really undergo a spiritual or moral conversion. Scrooge simply exchanges one set of economic values for another" (923). Scrooge no longer hoards money; he spends freely and widely, and in exchange, he receives thanks, friendship, and a family:

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all . . . to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die,

²⁸ Don Richard Cox aptly points out that "the word 'sin' is seldom used by Dickens, and the religious connotations that might be implied by the concept are lost in Dickens' usually vague nonsectarian Christianity, which often seems to be more a mixture of angels, holly, rum punch, and the Golden Rule, than anything else" (922).

he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew . . . His own heart laughed; and that was quite enough for him. . . . and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. (CC 83)

With the conclusion, the didactic lesson of the narrative has shifted. Hoarding money is immoral, but hoarding good feelings, relationships, experiences, and memories—and “keep”-ing Christmas—are not. As a story for Christmas, the novella’s conclusion fits with the season’s emphasis on the home and the family. As a story for the Victorian perspective on hoarding, the novella fits with other didactic works of the period that teach that hoarding is disruptive to the moral stability and vitality of life. In *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens demonstrates the edges to which hoarding can go and how the hoarder can be rescued from self-destruction. But in his later piece, “Bill-Sticking” (1851), he examines the destructive extremes of hoarding.

“BILL-STICKING” (1851)

Even before the serial publication of *David Copperfield* concluded in November 1850, Dickens was beginning a new novel. From his periodical essays and letters to friends, there are clues that as 1850 ended and 1851 began, the author was in the process of collecting material with which to build *Bleak House* (1853). As evidence of this, much attention has been paid to the essays “On Duty with Inspector Field” and “A Flight,” published in *Household Words* in July and August 1851, which preceded the first installment of *Bleak House* by seven months. Few scholars have considered, however, an earlier essay titled “Bill-Sticking” that appeared on March

22, 1851 in the same periodical.²⁹ Bill sticking was a popular form of nineteenth-century advertising that involved men pasting paper banners and posters on walls, temporary scaffolding, and fences. These “walls of words” were known as hoardings (*BH* 6). With the hectic pace of new construction in London in the 1830s, new walls and surfaces were the ideal locations for billstickers to display their signs and placards. In “Bill-Sticking,” the ubiquity of hoardings becomes clear when Dickens comes across a warehouse

thickly encrusted with fragments of bills. . . . All traces of the broken windows were billed out, the doors were billed across, the water-spout was billed over. The building was shored up to prevent its tumbling into the street; and the very beams erected against it were less wood than paste and paper, they had been so continually posted and reposted. . . . Here and there, some of the thick rind of the house had peeled off in strips, and fluttered heavily down, littering the street; but still, below these rents and gashes, layers of decomposing posters showed themselves I thought the building could never even be pulled down, but in one adhesive heap of rottenness and poster. (*SJ* 284)

Gazing upon the rotten mess of paper, paste, and brick, Dickens is awed by the power of the bills – of words – that hold the crumbling structure together.

Dickens imagines ways to use the hoardings as tools for revenge.³⁰ “If I had an enemy whom I hated,” writes Dickens, “and if I knew of something which sat heavy on his conscience, I

²⁹ On the beginning sketches of *Bleak House*, Harry Stone suggests that “[a]s early as 21 February 1851 Dickens had begun the intricate process of creation. The symptoms of that process were tenuous but unmistakable: ‘the first shadows of a new story hovering in a ghostly way about me’” (183).

³⁰ “Bill-Sticking” has two distinct parts. In the first, Dickens explores the ubiquity of bills, and in the second part he meets and interviews the “King of the Bill-Stickers,” who proceeds to divulge the history, methods, and working conditions of the billstickers of London. The two distinct parts of the essay may be the result of the partnership between Dickens and William Henry Wills, the assistant editor of *Household Words*, in which Dickens was responsible for the imagination and Wills for the more historical and research-focused parts. For the purposes of this discussion and the connection between Dickens’s essay and *Bleak House*, I will focus exclusively on the first part.

think I would introduce that something into a Posting-Bill I can scarcely imagine a more terrible revenge what an awful thing it would be, ever to have wronged – say M. JULLIEN for example – and to have his avenging name in characters of fire incessantly before my eyes” (283-84). Dickens envisions using the power of suggestion to enact a psychological revenge. Imagine “that, at a certain period of his life, my enemy had surreptitiously possessed himself of a key. I would then embark my capital in the lock business, and conduct that business on the advertising principle. In all my placards and advertisements, I would throw up the line SECRET KEYS” (283). By making “a dead wall” come “alive with reproaches,” Dickens can haunt his enemy “night and day,” and to the enemy possessed of a guilty conscience, “SECRET KEYS” would leap out and demand attention (283).³¹ Using words as weapons, he exacts a public revenge but without the public’s knowledge. Pursued by words, the overwhelmed enemy succumbs. Overrun with words, the warehouse collapses under their weight. Hoardings reduce both man and building to heaps “of rottenness and poster” (284).

III. *BLEAK HOUSE* (1853)

When Dickens’s close friend and biographer John Forster described *Bleak House*, he used a phrase from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: “*edax rerum*,” meaning “the devourer of all things” (406). *Bleak House* is a novel consumed by hoarding. Like the buildings in Parry’s paintings or the dog-seller figurine on Dickens’s desk, the hoards in *Bleak House* simultaneously hold it together and threaten to overwhelm it. Such is the sensation first-time readers of the novel also experience. The novel challenges readers to develop an interpretative eye to sift through the

³¹ Dickens plays with the image of anthropomorphic walls in his earlier novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In one scene, as Tom passes from the streets to the inner court-yards of the Temple, he imagines that “[e]very echo of his footsteps sounded to him like a sound from the old walls and pavements, wanting language to relate the histories of the dim, dismal rooms; to tell him what lost documents were decaying in forgotten corners of the shut-up cellars, from whose lattices such mouldy sighs came breathing forth as he went past” (582).

hoard of characters, details, and descriptions, which may conceal facts and hide truths, and interpretation is key to unlocking its secrets. “Out of the lumber of [Krook’s] shop,” writes Forster, “emerge slowly some fragments of evidence by which the chief actors in the story are sensibly affected” (406). *Bleak House* reveals that bits of information, when taken alone, may mean nothing, but hoard them, add them together, and the bits and pieces begin to form new wholes. Peter Schwenger claims that narrative “[i]n its broadest sense . . . is an arrangement and, consequently, a relationship between parts” (143). Dickens effectively trains readers to search out the relationships between parts, but in order to do this, readers must become hoarders as well. To uncover the connections, readers hoard the small details, seemingly insignificant characters, and quirky moments, never certain which ones are trash or which ones will become keys to unlocking the secrets.

The title *Bleak House* draws immediate attention to the roles buildings and structures play in the novel. Other titles Dickens considered included “Tom-All-Alone’s/The Ruined House”; “Tom-All-Alone’s/ The Solitary House/ That was always shut up”; and “Tom-All-Alone’s/ The Ruined House/ That got into Chancery and never got out” (*BH* 773-75). Allan Pritchard points out, “some critics have charged that the [title] he finally chose is irrelevant or misleading, and that the novel might better have been titled ‘In Chancery’” (433-34). I would argue that “In Chancery” would not have offered a better title, as the Jarndyce v. Jarndyce case and Chancery fall further and further into the background as the novel progresses. When Dickens reaches the point at which the lost will is discovered, the settlement of the case leads nowhere. Pritchard suggests that Dickens’s choice of title situates the novel firmly in the Gothic tradition, in which the title of novels, such as Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), placed the setting front and center. “Dickens could scarcely have

marked the novel more unmistakably as one in the Gothic mode than by calling it ‘Bleak House’” writes Pritchard, who argues that Dickens adapts elements of the Gothic tradition to reflect Victorian mid-century horrors.

Dickens’s descriptions of the clutter in the domestic settings of *Bleak House* draws attention to the relationship between domestic spaces, hoarding, and Esther’s role in the novel. When Esther Summerson first enters Bleak House, she finds it “one of those delightfully irregular houses where you go up and down steps out of one room into another, and where you come upon more rooms when you think you have seen all there are” (*BH* 62). Her first descriptions reflect the home’s cheerful clutter and nature-themed decorations:

Our sitting room was green; and had, framed and glazed, upon the walls, numbers of surprising and surprised birds All the moveables, from the wardrobes to the chairs and tables, hangings, glasses, even to the pin-cushions and scent-bottles on the dressing-tables, displayed the same quaint variety. They agreed in nothing but their perfect neatness, their display of the whitest linen, and their storing-up, wheresoever the existence of a drawer, small or large, rendered it possible, of quantities of rose-leaves and sweet lavender. (62-63)

Esther notes the quantity of different objects, but everything has a place, and with her bunches of keys Esther maintains a calm but efficient order. Esther comes to Bleak House from the chaos of the Jellyby household, which demonstrates a kind of confused assemblage that is paralyzing and which Dickens comes to associate with an urban environment.

Later in the novel as part of the preparations for Caddy’s wedding, Esther and Caddy attempt to reign in the things that threaten to overwhelm the Jellyby home. Esther writes,

Mr. Jellyby . . . became interested when he saw that Caddy and I were attempting

to establish some order among all this waste and ruin, and took off his coat to help. But such wonderful things came tumbling out of the closets when they were opened—bits of mouldy pie, sour bottles, Mrs. Jellyby’s caps, letters, tea, forks, odd boots and shoes of children, firewood, wafers, saucepan-lids, damp sugar in odds and ends of paper bags, foot-stools, blackhead brushes, bread, Mrs. Jellyby’s bonnets, books with butter sticking to the binding, guttered candle-ends put out by being turned upside down in broken candlesticks, nut-shells, heads and tails of shrimps, dinner-mats, gloves, coffee-grounds, umbrellas—that he looked frightened, and left off again. (373)

Initially, Mr. Jellyby appears interested and desirous of helping, but when the “waste and ruin” of the household takes shape in the form of a monstrous list, he becomes overwhelmed. The list paralyzes Mr. Jellyby from performing any action; Esther comments that he appeared “as though he would have helped us, if he had known how” (373). The confusion of things overwhelms Mr. Jellyby. The list is full of decaying objects, marked as “mouldy,” “sour,” and “damp,” and we have the sense that this is the image of the urban domestic, a world which has been turned “upside down” and brought to a standstill (373).

Living above Krook’s Rag and Bottle Warehouse, his tenant Miss Flite creates another type of domestic stagnation more deadly than those in the Jellyby household. A hoarder of birds, living creatures, she states plainly that the danger of stagnation, like the kind enacted in Chancery, is suffocation and death. Her birds, “larks, linnets, and gold-finches,” numbering “at least twenty,” symbolize the trapped individuals in Chancery proceedings (54). She says to Esther,

I began to keep the little creatures . . . [w]ith the intention of restoring them to

liberty. They die in prison, though. Their lives, poor silly things, are so short in comparison with Chancery proceedings, that, one by one, the whole collection has died over and over again. . . . I positively doubt sometimes, I do assure you, whether while matters are still unsettled . . . I may not one day be found lying stark and senseless here, as I have found so many birds. (54)

Miss Flite fears, that like her birds, she will die from stagnation and bureaucratic impasse, but her words and actions reveal the real danger of hoarding – death.

ESTHER'S KEYS

In *Bleak House*, it is Esther's job to set "things a little to rights" (373). Her two bunches of keys are symbols of her roles in the novel, one bunch representing her role as narrator of *Bleak House* and the other symbolizing her authority as the housekeeper of Bleak House. With *Bleak House*, Dickens demonstrates a special interest in keys, an interest only hinted at in his earlier works.³² His special interest in keys may reflect a historical milestone in the world of things, as Asa Briggs points out in *Victorian Things*. Briggs suggests that one product indebted to nineteenth-century industrialization was the cheap door. Indeed, at the 1851 Great Exhibition, Alfred C. Hobbs, an American lock maker, won the 1851 Prize Model for his lock which "was deemed 'impregnable against every practicable method of picking, fraud, or violence'" (Briggs 42).³³ Nicholas Shrimpton takes Briggs's implication a step further, claiming

³² I am thinking particularly of the Marley's chains and lock boxes, which he does not possess the keys for in order to escape, and the secret key that Dickens's speaker in "Bill-Sticking" imagines his enemy possesses.

³³ On 22 July 1851, Hobbs gave a lock-picking demonstration at Westminster, wherein he picked a vault door lock known as the Detector, consisting of three bolts and six tumblers, in 25 minutes on his first attempt. Asked to demonstrate his skills a second time, he took only seven minutes. Tom Vanderbilt writes, "Indeed, since [the Detector's] patenting in 1818 by Jeremiah Chubb, a Portsmouth ironmonger, it had become one of the country's most popular locks, advertised in the *Bleak House* serials" ("The Lock Pickers").

Without affordable locks the poor could scarcely possess things at all, because they were liable to be robbed of them every time they left their houses. With locks, they could leave clothes in their wardrobes, cutlery and china in their kitchens, even ornaments on their mantelpieces. Home became, for the poor as well as the rich, a repository rather than a mere dormitory. The advent, of technical development, of one thing, the lock, transformed the human relationship to things in general. (19)

According to this account, the cheap lock and key extends the concept of ownership to the lower classes, while at the same time leading to an increase in and collection of *bric-à-brac*. As symbols, keys are double-edged, representing access and restriction, knowledge and secrecy.

Keys are also small kinetic objects that can exert tremendous force, like Esther Summerson herself, and keys appear all over *Bleak House*, as single keys, in bunches, or heaped up by the hundreds. When Esther first enters the shop, she studies intently the keys Krook has accumulated. “I could have fancied,” writes Esther,

that all the rusty keys of which there must have been hundreds huddled together as old iron, had once belonged to doors of rooms or strong chests in lawyers’ offices. The litter of rags tumbled partly into and partly out of a one-legged wooden scale, hanging without any counterpoise from a beam, might have been counsellors’ bands and gowns torn up. One had only to fancy . . . that yonder bones in a corner, piled together and picked very clean, were the bones of clients, to make the picture complete. (49)

Esther’s speculations are her attempts at retrieving the lost narratives behind these objects. Her thoughts are surprisingly conditional; she does not fancy but rather she “could have fancied”; the

rags are not the remains of bands and gowns, but they “might have been” (49). Esther’s words become entangled within the very hoard she is attempting to describe. The hoard resists narration, revealing how ineffective language is when confronting a non-narratable thing. When she finds herself unable to narrate the thing she is charged with describing, she resorts to list making, a methodical way to bring chaos under control. Any reader of Dickens knows to expect lists, the stylistic fixtures in all his writings. Lists suggest the delineation of space, making all things appear – on paper at least – equal. But lists, much like keys, offer only a false sense of control. As readers of Dickens, we are also prone to making lists as keys to the novel, as if listing out the characters in *Bleak House* could help us uncover the connections between them, or listing the things in Krook’s shop could capture an accurate image of the shop – it does not. When Esther attempts to describe the hoard, narrative and lists fail her.

Such a failure of narrative presents a dramatic shift in Dickens’s perceptions of objects. At the heart of an earlier sketch “Meditations in Monmouth Street” (1836), Dickens, as Boz, revives a whole host of individuals by turning his speculative powers on dispossessed objects in a second-hand store. “We love to walk among these extensive groves of the illustrious dead” writes Dickens, “now fitting a deceased coat, then a dead pair of trousers . . . 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” (*Sketches* 98). He imagines a small boy with an “indulgent mother,” a group of young men “putting cigars into their mouths, and their hands into their pockets,” an anxious mother, and “[a] very smart female, in a showy bonnet” (99-102). Dickens conjures and speculates until “the whole of the characters . . . were arranging themselves in order for dancing; and some music striking up at the moment, to it they went without delay” (103). In Monmouth Street, the articles of clothing form relationships with one another, and the

specters of past owners, which Dickens creates, are detailed and sure. In *Bleak House*, however, the detached papers, keys without locks, broken scales, and rags of robes are disassembled, and Esther's attempt to narrate the hoard yields only an incomplete grouping of conditional fragments.

In the *Bleak House* manuscript, Chapter VIII "Covering a Multitude of Sins" begins originally with Esther sharing an early morning dream. She writes, "I was in such a flutter about my two bunches of keys, that I had been dreaming for an hour before I got up, that the more I tried to open a variety of locks with them, the more determined they were not to fit any. No dream could have been less prophetic."³⁴ Esther's dream actualizes her fear that, like her keys, she is not a good fit in Bleak House. But Dickens cancels her dream in the proof, revising the paragraph as follows:

Every part of the house was in such order, and every one was so attentive to me, that I had no trouble with my two bunches of keys: though what with trying to remember the contents of each little store-room drawer, and cupboard; and what with making notes on a slate about jams, and pickles, and preserves, and bottles, and glass, and china, and a great many other things. (*BH* 85)

In the original, Esther finds herself barred from the home's many things. In the revision, the cupboards and drawers readily pour forth their hoards of "jams, and pickles, and preserves, and bottles, and glass, and china, and a great many other things" for her perusal (85). Such a revision makes Esther an agent of order and underscores Dickens's interest in accumulating things in Bleak House and in *Bleak House*.

On the *Bleak House* hand-corrected proofs, below the passage in which Esther wakes

³⁴ Corrected Proofs of *Bleak House*. 2 vols. 1853. Forster Collection, Forster 2412. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

after her first night at Bleak House, Dickens has written in “Esther has bunches of keys.”³⁵ With no indication he intended it for insertion into the print, it stands alone, a bold reminder—Esther *must* have bunches of keys. “There is something strangely cryptic and forlorn about a single key,” writes Steven Conner; “[i]t seems to be in the nature of keys to cluster. There is comfort and copiousness in the very word we use for this aggregation: ‘bunch’” (105). Esther has in her possession not just one bunch of keys but two—so many keys that she needs a small basket to contain them. Her personification of the rusty keys in Krook’s shop suggests she identifies with them. Steven Conner calls this concept “the logic of the fit. According to this logic there is nothing in the universe that can be wholly solitary or singleton, for everything has its couple or complementary other half” (103). Esther is another misplaced key looking for its other half—looking for its lock. She will discover it later in *Lady Dedlock*.

After attempting to nurse Jo, the street-sweeper child, through an unnamed illness (presumably smallpox), Esther contracts the same disease and falls into a fever dream:

While I was very ill . . . divisions of time became confused with one another At once a child, an elder girl, and the little woman I had been so happy as, I was not only oppressed by cares and difficulties adapted to each station, but by the great perplexity of endlessly trying to reconcile them. . . . Dare I hint at that worse time when, strung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which *I* was one of the beads! And when my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest. (431-32)

In her fever, Esther splinters, existing simultaneously as child, girl, and woman, and striving to

³⁵ The phrase appears in the lower left-hand corner of the proof page.

bring the disparate duties of each role into harmony with one another. She imagines her subjective self as a mere bead, one in a collection of similar beads. Her desire to be taken off the string rejects the anonymity of a piece in a hoard. As a key, Esther is unique, but as a bead, she is indistinguishable from the rest.

Esther finds security in her bunches of keys because they give her a vital place within Bleak House and *Bleak House*.³⁶ As a narrator, Esther often avoids excess—the excess of details, the excess of self-absorption, and the excess of melancholy reflection. When she finds herself confronted with excess, such as the hoard in Krook’s shop, she retreats from overly descriptive narration to lists. The security she feels in her bunches of keys, however, is due to the pleasure she takes in their excess and the sound they make, evidence of their excess. Esther’s role as housekeeper closely mimics her position as a narrator; with a flick of her wrist, she can open a cabinet or reveal a secret. She can contain things or she can release them. She chooses which cupboards of information will be opened and when. As readers, we come to realize, Esther is the key to unlocking the secrets of Bleak House and *Bleak House*.

“WALLS OF WORDS”

The court of Chancery and Krook’s Rag and Bottle Warehouse offer two instances of the dangerous effects of hoarding. In Chancery, the solicitors seem “mistily engaged in one of the ten thousand stages of an endless cause, tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities, running their goat-hair and horse-hair warded heads against walls of words . . . with bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them” (6). The attention to “walls of words,” “bills,” and “mountains of costly-nonsense” recall

³⁶ There is pleasure in the breathy alliteration of “hundreds huddled”; the phrase offers the sensation of excess contained but open to Esther’s fingertips. The proofs reveal the original phrase was “thousands huddled” to which Dickens struck out “thousands” and wrote “hundreds.”

the billed-over walls of words that coated mid-Victorian London in a thick layer of paper and paste (6). Dickens draws connections between the papers of the billstickers and the papers of the Chancery court. The waste from Chancery accumulates in Krook's Rag and Bottle Warehouse.

In one part of the window was a picture of a red paper mill, at which a cart was unloading a quantity of sacks of old rags. In another was the inscription, BONES BOUGHT. In another, KITCHEN-STUFF BOUGHT. In another, LADIES' AND GENTLEMEN'S WARDROBES BOUGHT. Everything seemed to be bought, and nothing to be sold there. In all parts of the window were quantities of dirty bottles: blacking bottles, medicine bottles, ginger-beer and soda-water bottles, pickle bottles, wine bottles, ink bottles: I am reminded of mentioning the latter, that the shop had in several little particulars, the air of being in a legal neighbourhood, and of being, as it were, a dirty hanger-on and disowned relation of the law. There were a great many ink bottles. (48-49)

The windows of Krook's warehouse are crammed with bottles and billed over with placards, not unlike the warehouse in "Bill-Sticking" with its broken windows "billed out" (*SJ* 284). The inkbottles cluttering the windows remind Esther of the warehouse's position among the law offices, as a receiver of legal detritus. Compared to the warehouse in Dickens's earlier piece "Bill-Sticking," Krook's warehouse is bursting at the seams from within, not pulled down from without. The warehouse in *Bleak House* serves as a metaphor for Dickens's interpretation of the Victorian novel form because both serve as repositories. Krook fills his warehouse in the way that Dickens *wants* to fill the novel, with an unlimited number of persons, things, details, plot lines, etc. For Dickens, the hoarder is the author's own double.

Using the character of Krook, however, Dickens demonstrates why the hoarder can never

become the author. Krook's problems with narrative and language are linked to his hoarding. He says to Esther, "I have so many old parchmentses and papers in my stock. And I have a liking for rust and must and cobwebs. And all's fish that comes to my net. And I can't abear to part with anything, or to have any sweeping, nor scouring, nor cleaning, nor repairing going on about me. That's the way I've got the ill name of Chancery" (50-51). The language of Krook's speech, specifically his use of polysyndeton, mimics his hoarding.

When Esther walks into Krook's shop, she finds him bent over and hiding "a quantity of packets of waste paper, in a kind of well in the floor . . . [and with] each separate package or bundle down . . . [he] made a crooked mark on the panelling of the wall" (*BH* 49-55). The narrative of each packet is reduced to a "crooked mark," a sign of something less-than literate.³⁷ Krook trains himself to make the motions of writing by memorizing the shapes of the letters he sees on the Chancery papers in his shop. Krook "chalked the letter J upon the wall—in a very curious manner, beginning with the end of the letter, and shaping it backward . . . he rubbed it out and turned an A in its place . . . He went on quickly, until he had formed . . . the word JARNDYCE, without once leaving two letters on the wall together" (55). He then repeats the process to form the words "BLEAK HOUSE" (56). In order to form complete words, each letter must be retained in the memory, and then the letters must be connected together. Krook, who views the world as collectible bits and pieces, understands letters as things to be collected. With each successive letter covering over the previous one, the individual letters form no relationship to each other. Krook tells Esther, "I have a turn for copying from memory . . . although I can neither read nor write" (56). While his writing on the wall may mimic the acts of literacy, Krook

³⁷ Krook's crook might suggest comparisons with a shepherd's crook, making Krook a shepherd of things and turning his nightly forays into searches for stray things. Additionally, Krook's name may derive from the phrase "by hook or by crook," translated from the French "*à bric et à brac*," which "suggests something of the drive and determination of the collector, and the Anglo-Saxon term 'bric' [as in *bric-à-brac*], meaning 'fragment', gestures to its status as a collection of bits and pieces" (Mills 35).

cannot create narrative or retrieve it from the fragments, “JARNDYCE” and “BLEAK HOUSE.”

Krook is the classic stagnant character, and his warehouse encourages an inertia that affects everything around it.

As Krook’s warehouse fills with things, his hoard begins to form a metaphorical clot in the narrative. In Esther’s description of Krook’s shop, she draws attention to the windows. Windows suggest transparency, but the windows of the Krook’s warehouse are occluded, suggesting that the way forward is equally unclear. In addition to her roles as narrator and housekeeper, Esther is a writer, and the blocked windows combined with the image of empty inkbottles point to the difficulties facing the author. How does the author move the narrative forward when his path is blocked and his view obscured? With Krook’s hoard forming a serious clot in the center of the novel, Dickens must purge it from the narrative.

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

Krook’s spontaneous combustion is the result of a pressure that has been building-up throughout the first half of the novel, a pressure that then bursts at the mid-point of the novel. Dickens had explored already the nature of unchecked avaricious desires in the characters of Nell Trent’s Grandfather in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, and he hints at the relationship between hoarding and combustion in *A Christmas Carol*.³⁸ But in *Bleak House*,

³⁸ In his earlier works, Dickens reveals avaricious desires through physical transformations, such as in the following moment when Fagin argues with Nancy over Oliver’s worth:

“What is it?” pursued Fagin, mad with rage. “When the boy’s worth hundreds of pounds to me, am I to lose what chance threw me in the way of getting safely . . . ?” Panting for breath, the old man stammered for a word; and in that instant checked the torrent of his wrath, and changed his whole demeanour. A moment before, his clenched hands had grasped the air; his eyes had dilated; and his face grown livid with passion; but now, he shrunk into a chair, and, cowering together, trembled with the apprehension of having himself disclosed some hidden villainy. (*Oliver Twist* 177)

Nell Trent’s Grandfather undergoes a similar transformation when he hears other men gambling:

Dickens slowly builds the threat of spontaneous combustion, drawing attention to the metaphorical fire alight within Krook and the mounting pressure that builds within the hoard. When Esther, Ada, and Richard first meet Krook, he is described as “short, cadaverous, and withered; with his head sunk sideways between his shoulders, and breath issuing in visible smoke from his mouth, as if he were on fire within” (49). As Krook shows them about his shop, he stops abruptly at the sight of Ada’s hair: “‘You see,’ said the old man, stopping and turning round, ‘they—Hi! Here’s lovely hair! I have got three sacks of ladies’ hair below, but none so beautiful and fine as this. What colour, and what texture!’” (50). Richard possessively halts the movement of Krook’s hand as it grasps Ada’s hair: “That’ll do, my good friend . . . You can admire as the rest of us do, without taking that liberty” (50). Krook “shrunk into his former self as suddenly as he had leaped out it” (50). Fueled by his avaricious desire to possess Ada’s hair, Krook transforms. As quickly as he appears, he shrinks back, his desire subdued by Richard. The language of the scene emphasizes Krook’s passion for hoarding objects as transformative. He turns, leaps out, and shrinks back, like a gas flare turned up and then quickly turned down. His movement is explosive and representative of the powerful desire that burns within him.

On the evening of Krook’s demise, Guppy and Weevle sit together whispering of their plans. The exaggerated use of sensational language and supernatural imagery primes our senses into excesses of suspense. “One disagreeable result of whispering,” says the narrator, “is, that it seems to evoke an atmosphere of silence, haunted by the ghosts of sound—strange cracks and tickings, the rustling of garments that have no substance in them, and the tread of dreadful feet that would leave no mark on the sea-sand or the winter snow” (400). When Guppy and Weevle

Do you hear, Nell, do you hear them!” whispered the old man again, with increased earnestness, as the money chinked upon the table. . . . The child saw with astonishment and alarm that his whole appearance had undergone a complete change. His face was flushed and eager, his eyes were strained, his teeth set, his breath came short and thick, and the hand he laid upon her arm trembled so violently that she shook beneath its grasp. (*The Old Curiosity Shop* 226)

enter Krook's room,

They go down, more dead than alive, and holding one another, push open the door of the back shop. The cat has retreated close to it, and stands snarling—not at them; at something on the ground, before the fire. There is very little fire left in the grate, but there is a smouldering suffocating vapor in the room, and a dark greasy coating on the walls and ceiling. The chairs and table, and the bottle so rarely absent from the table, all stand as usual. (402)

Hablot Knight Browne, or “Phiz,” the illustrator for *Bleak House*, depicts the moment when Weevle and Guppy first enter Krook's room, which is obscured by a white bilious smoke. On the left of the plate, Guppy stands just inside the door, peering into the room, with one hand raised as if to dislodge the smoke, and holding a candle in the other. Weevle appears behind him looking uncertain. Hanging from the rafters above are groups of rags and bags, and a black-faced doll that appears to float specter-like above the men. At Guppy's feet, Krook's familiar Lady Jane appears, as Dickens describes, “snarling,” looking like a caricature of a black cat with arched back and bristled tail (402). On the right of the plate, a chair stands visible in front of the fireplace, and a pair of spectacles, pipe, shoe, and crumbled letter-shaped object appears haphazardly strewn on the floor. Guppy and Weevle “advance slowly, looking at all these things Here is a small burnt patch of flooring; here is the tinder from a little bundle of burnt paper, but not so light as usual, seeming to be steeped in something; and here is—is it the cinder of a small charred and broken log of wood sprinkled with white ashes, or is it coal? O Horror, he IS here!” (403). Moments before Krook is to relinquish a piece of his hoard, he spontaneously combusts. The volatile energy of his monomania burns so strongly that Krook bursts covering the room in smoke and soot and leaving behind only fragments of himself in the form of cinders,

ash, and “thick nauseous pool[s]” of “yellow oil” (402). His desire to accumulate and hoard consumes him in death as in life. The force of the combustion breaks apart the clot blocking the narrative and purges away the debris to reveal not only the pathway forward in the novel but also the secret key, which was buried within the hoard, a key which Tulkinghorn will use to unlock Lady Dedlock’s secrets.

SECRET KEYS

A collector of secrets, as well as a lawyer, Mr. Tulkinghorn possesses a keen interest in locks and keys as well as a particular dexterity for interpretation. He collects fragments of information, tucking them neatly away in his memory for later, when he can interpret their significance at his leisure. He is “[a]n oyster of the old school, whom nobody can open He wants no clerks. He is a great reservoir of confidences, not to be so tapped. His clients want *him*; he is all in all” (*BH* 119-120). He works “among his many boxes labeled with transcendent names,” and “everything that can have a lock has got one: no key is visible” (119). Tulkinghorn reads the signs of Lady Dedlock’s unusual interest in the legal handwriting and follows his analysis to Krook’s warehouse, where he sends Guppy to retrieve the letters. When Tulkinghorn is alone in his chambers, he “takes a small key from his pocket, unlocks a drawer in which there is another key, which unlocks a chest in which there is another, and so comes to the cellar key, with which he prepares to descend to the regions of old wine,” before he is interrupted by a knock on his door (517). Tulkinghorn has keys for keys, and he keeps his keys like he keeps his secrets—hidden away. The contrast between Esther’s bunches of keys and Tulkinghorn’s solitary keys reflects their characters; where Esther is open and engaging, Tulkinghorn is closed-off and reserved. Esther’s keys are for opening cabinets and releasing things; Tulkinghorn’s are for

locking things away. When Hortense, Lady Dedlock's dismissed maid, brings Tulkinghorn information regarding Lady Dedlock's disguise, he fidgets with a key throughout the exchange:

He stands the candle on the chimney-piece in the clerk's hall and taps his dry cheek with the key. . . . tapping the key hastily upon the chimney-piece rubbing his nose with the key. . . . Mr. Tulkinghorn rubs his head with the key, while she entertains herself with a sarcastic laugh. . . . 'Look, mistress In this city, there are houses of correction (where the treadmills are, for women) the gates of which are very strong and heavy, and no doubt the keys too. I am a afraid a lady of your spirit and activity would find it an inconvenience to have one of those keys turned upon her for any length of time.' (517-519)

For Tulkinghorn, keys are symbols of power, and he fetishizes them. As Hortense relays information, Tulkinghorn is storing it away. He taps and rubs the key on his person, as if he is locking the information away inside his chambers of memory.

When Tulkinghorn deduces Lady Dedlock's relationship to Esther, he confronts her with the knowledge. She reveals that her greatest fear is not his knowing, but that her secrets will be publicly exposed, "chalked upon the walls" like a common advertisement on the street (508). Her fears allude to the idiom "the writing on the wall," a biblical allusion that Dickens employs in both "Bill-Sticking" and *Bleak House*. In Daniel 5, Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, throws a feast and allows his guest to drink wine from several sacred vessels. When they had drunk from the vessels, "[i]n the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand and, wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace" (Daniel 5:5). King Belshazzar offers a scarlet robe and a chain of gold to the man who can decipher the message, and after his astrologers and soothsayers attempt to read the writing, Daniel is called forth and proceeds to

translate the message, “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN” (Daniel 5:25). Daniel interprets the message as, “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES: Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:26-28). Later that evening, the prophecy comes true as King Belshazzar is killed and his kingdom divided. The supernatural writing on the wall prophesies the destruction of the Babylonian Empire; as a colloquial expression, it is a metaphor for approaching doom. Lady Dedlock fears to see her secrets exposed to public scrutiny, and when Esther appears at Chesney Wold, Lady Dedlock sees the “writing on the wall” in the features of Esther’s face. Esther is the “secret key” that haunts Lady Dedlock. As the reader becomes aware that Esther is the key to unlocking the secrets of the novel, we realize that Esther is the key to unlocking Lady Dedlock’s dead lock. Esther, the misplaced key, has found its lock, its perfect fit. With her kinetic energy, Esther unlocks Lady Dedlock, freeing her from an emotional stagnation and returning her, briefly, to life.

“IT IS A DEADENED WORLD”

In *Bleak House*, the allusion to the writing on the wall portends the division and downfall of the Dedlock family. Chesney Wold is a world “wrapped up in too much jeweller’s cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air” (*BH* 11). In Austen’s *Emma*, Harriet Smith wraps valueless items in cotton in order to give them value or to turn them into relics. The items become symbols of a budding relationship. In *Bleak House*, however, the jeweller’s cotton, which metaphorically surrounds Chesney Wold, suffocates it. “On Sundays,” writes Dickens, “the little church in the park is mouldy; the oaken pulpit breaks out into a cold sweat; and there is

a general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves. My Lady Dedlock (who is childless) . . . has been put quite out of temper” (11). Suffocated by the dead Dedlocks, the living Dedlocks cannot thrive, and Lady Dedlock, “who is childless,” is so because nothing can grow in the suffocating atmosphere of Chesney Wold.

In this deadened world, it is perhaps fitting that the keystone to Chesney Wold is not Lady Dedlock but Tulkinghorn, and it is his death that signals the initial collapse of the Dedlock Empire. When Lady Dedlock learns of Tulkinghorn’s death and that the letters between Nemo and herself have survived, she fears

[a]ll is broken down. . . . her shame will be published—may be spreading while she thinks about it—and in addition . . . she is denounced by an invisible accuser as the murderess of her enemy. . . . wicked relief she has felt in his death. What was his death but the key-stone of a gloomy arch removed, and now the arch begins to fall in a thousand fragments, each crushing and mangling piecemeal!
(666)

Dickens’s metaphor of Tulkinghorn as the keystone to a “gloomy arch” emphasizes the central role he played in holding Chesney Wold together. With his removal, what once seemed sound becomes chaotic and collapses into “a thousand fragments” (666). The breakup of Chesney Wold signals the demise of the old guard, the landed gentry, making way for new industry. Mrs. Rouncewell’s son, George, sells his shooting gallery and rides north to the iron country, a land of “coalpits and ashes, high chimneys and red bricks, blighted verdure, [and] scorching fires” (741). It is a land of “Steel and Iron,” a symbol of the new industrialism, which contrasts sharply with the stale splendor of Chesney Wold, which is “a show-house no longer . . . less the property of an old family of human beings and their ghostly likenesses, than of an old family of echoings and

thunderings which start out of their hundred graves at every sound” (765-66). Chesney Wold becomes an empty shell, “with no family to come and go, no visitors to be the souls of pale cold shapes of rooms, no stir of life about it;—passion and pride, even to the stranger’s eye have died away from the place in Lincolnshire, and yielded it to dull repose” (767).

Fleeing Chesney Wold, Lady Dedlock flies to the burying ground of Tom-All-Alone’s and the site of Nemo’s, or Captain Hawdon’s, grave. Earlier in the novel, Jo led Lady Dedlock, disguised as Hortense, to the gates of Tom-All-Alone’s and pointed out Nemo’s grave, “[a]mong them piles of bones . . . They put him wery nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to git it in” (202). Nemo’s body is deposited unceremoniously and indiscriminately among the remnant bones of other nameless individuals. Jo offers to uncover Nemo’s body for Lady Dedlock: “I could unkiver it for you with my broom, if the gate was open. That’s why they locks it . . . It’s always locked” (202). Dickens’s Gothic engagement with the city is symbolized by Jo’s macabre offer to uncover or, literally, dig up the past. The burying ground of the inner city represents hoarding in its worst form, as an accumulation of bodies and souls. This layering of corpses and bones echoes an image of urban collage but with a horrifying Gothic twist.

Following her mother to the burying ground, Esther finds it “a dreadful spot . . . I could dimly see heaps of dishonoured graves and stone, hemmed in by filthy houses . . . on whose walls a thick humidity broke out like a disease” (713). Esther’s description of the burying ground echoes that of the graveyard in *A Christmas Carol*: “[w]alled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation’s death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with replete appetite” (CC 75). In both descriptions, the atmosphere is suffocating as the living appear to live, literally, on top of the dead. The walls of houses close in upon the graves, as if the dead threaten to spill out into the living and must be contained. Jo reveals the reality of this horror:

“They dies everywhere . . . [t]hey dies in their lodgings . . . they dies down in Tom-all-Alone’s in heaps. They dies more than they lives” (*BH* 308, 277, 383). When Esther finds Lady Dedlock, she is lying under the gated arch “with one arm creeping round a bar of the iron fate, and seeming to embrace it” (713). She dies in the gateway, a liminal space that divides life from death and the present from the past. Hablot Browne composed illustrations for each of Lady Dedlock’s visits to Tom-All-Alone’s. The first illustration titled “Consecrated Ground” shows Lady Dedlock, disguised as a servant, standing beneath the stone archway with Jo, looking inward to the graves; the perspective is from inside the cemetery. The second illustration titled “The Morning” shows a woman lying underneath the gated archway with her arm wrapped around the bars. The perspective is, however, from the street outside, underscoring Lady Dedlock’s inability to enter the graveyard. A key – the key, Esther – connected Lady Dedlock and Captain Hawdon in life, and yet it is also a key that keeps Lady Dedlock from reaching Captain Hawdon in death.

The death of Lady Dedlock signals the end of one family, but as one family fades, several new ones spring up to take its place. Following closely on the heels of the discovery of the lost will, Esther marries Woodcourt, becomes the permanent housekeeper of Bleak House, has two children, helps Ada raise her son after Richard’s death, and mentors Caddy in her new role as wife and mother; all find a home in Bleak House. Just as the home’s “moveables” display a “quaint variety” and “[agree] in nothing but their perfect neatness,” so too do the home’s inhabitants, offering a new type of domestic harmony, a family made from fragments and seemingly mismatched pieces. It seems key that what *Bleak House* needs are people, rather than things. As Chesney Wold ends in “dull repose,” Bleak House and *Bleak House* close in the midst of Esther’s kinetic energy. She is “bustling,” “preparing,” “sitting,” “thinking,” “thinking,”

“thinking,” and “even supposing—” (769-70). It is a life full of movement and activity, continuous until “The End” (770). *Bleak House* ends in ways similar to *A Christmas Carol*, not with stagnation and death, but with energy, movement, and life.

IV. HOARDING AFTER *BLEAK HOUSE*

Hoarding in *Bleak House* allows Dickens to address serious social problems affecting mid-century England. Two years after finishing *Bleak House*, Dickens returns to the subject of hoarding and reform in a speech to the Administrative Reform Association on 27 June 1855. In it, he addresses excessive government spending, specifically the economic burden the public was carrying for rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament after their destruction twenty years earlier on 16 October 1834 in one of the biggest fires ever seen in London. Dickens traces the destruction of Parliament to a hoarding of old, wooden tally sticks. Once used by treasury officials for accounting, the sticks dated back to the seventeenth century. Officials discontinued their use in 1724, but the use of tally sticks did not cease entirely until 1826. Indecisive officials then could not reach an agreement on whether or not to dispose of them, and the tally sticks were stored in Westminster. Dickens satirizes the uselessness of these tally sticks in his speech, ultimately revealing the destruction and havoc they created. “In 1834,” begins Dickens,

it was found that there was a considerable accumulation of them; and the question then arose, what was to be done with such worn-out, worm-eaten rotten old bits of wood? . . . [I]t would naturally occur to any of us unofficial personages that nothing would have been easier than to allow them to be carried away for firewood, by some of the many miserable creatures in that neighbourhood. However, they never had been useful, and official routine could not endure that

they ever should be useful, and so the order went forth that they were to [be] privately and confidentially burnt. It came to pass that they were burnt in a stove in the House of Lords. The stove, overgorged with these preposterous sticks, set fire to the panelling; the panelling set fire to the House of Lords; the House of Lords set fire to the House of Commons . . . [and] the two houses were reduced to ashes. (*Speeches* 205)

Dickens's critique of government officials and his humorous retelling of the events rouses laughter and cheers from his audience. "It came to pass" is a common expression chiefly associated with the Bible, and Dickens's use of it suggests parallels between the destructive hoarding of Parliament and Biblical prophecy. It is his next sentence, however, that delivers his most direct condemnation of hoarding. "I think we may reasonably observe . . . that all-obstinate adherence to rubbish . . . is certain to have in the soul of it more or less that which is pernicious and destructive . . . which, freely given to the winds would have been harmless, which persistently retained is ruinous" (206). He makes plain his frustration with the British government's continued observance of impractical and worn-out rituals and blames the destruction of Parliament on itself, citing its lack of common sense and its resistance to change.

In *Bleak House*, hoarding is the burden of the individual, as demonstrated in the character of Krook. But in Dickens's next novel, *Little Dorrit* (1855-7), he pivots from an individual pathology of hoarding to social pathology of hoarding, effectively illustrating the expansive and destructive reach of that hoarding can achieve. In December 1855, six months after Dickens's speech to the Administrative Reform, the first serial number of *Little Dorrit*, a novel that satirizes the redundancy of government offices, appeared in print. In his reform speech, Dickens had offered a kind of preview of the far-reaching and pernicious effects of hoarding. With *Little*

Dorrit, he examines the destructive force of hoarding and secrets, as the following passage demonstrates:

As [Arthur Clennam] went along, upon a dreary night, the dim streets by which he went seemed all depositories of oppressive secrets. The deserted counting-houses, with secrets of books and papers locked up in chests and safes; the banking-houses with their secrets of strong rooms and wells, the keys of which were in a very few secret pockets and a very few secret breasts . . . he could have fancied that these things, in hiding, imparted heaviness to the air. The shadow thickening and thickening as he approached his source, he thought of the secrets of the lonely church-vaults, where the people who hoarded and secreted in iron coffers were in their turn similarly hoarded, not yet at rest from doing harm. (*LD* 110)

In this excerpt, we hear clear echoes of *A Christmas Carol* and *Bleak House*, but Dickens's conceptualization of hoarding has evolved. The air is thick with untold secrets; the counting house is deserted; and, the hoarder, who lies dead and buried, is "not yet at rest from doing harm" (110). In *Little Dorrit*, hoarding has taken on a supernatural power and becomes darker, heavier, and more dangerous. The hoarder has become a ghostly other. The hoarder as phantom haunts many of Dickens's later works, such as *Great Expectations* (1862), another novel in which Miss Havisham, the ghostly hoarder, meets with a fire of uncertain origins. The ghostly hoarder is not contained to Dickens's public writings; it comes to haunt his personal writings as well.

In 1860, as if cautiously aware of the far-reaching "pernicious and destructive" nature of hoarding, Dickens burned his entire correspondence of the past twenty years in the famous

bonfire of Gad's Hill Place.³⁹ Critics and biographers have speculated on two possible motives for the burning of his letters: one, a wariness that after his death private information, such as his clandestine affair with actress Ellen Ternan, would become public and harm his legacy, and second, a desire for dissolution or a purging of his past. In the years after the bonfire, Dickens mentioned the letter burning several times in letters to friends and acquaintances. In September 1860, Dickens wrote to William Henry Wills informing him, "Yesterday I burnt, in the field at Gad's Hill, the accumulated letters and papers of twenty years. They set up a smoke like the Genie when he got out of the casket on the seashore; and as it was an exquisite day when I began, and rained very heavily when I finished, I suspect my correspondence of having overcast the face of the Heavens" (*Letters* 9: 304). When in 1864, Samuel Reynolds Hole contacted Dickens requesting letters by John Leech, Dickens replied,

There is not in my possession one single note of his writing. A year or two ago, shocked by the misuse of private letters of public men, . . . I destroyed a very large and very rare mass of correspondence. It was not done without pain, you may believe, but, the first reluctance conquered, I have steadily abided my determination to keep no letters by me, and to consign all such papers to the fire. (*Letters* 10: 465)

To William Macready in 1865, Dickens writes that, "[a]fter seeing improper uses made of confidential letters . . . I made, not long ago, a great fire in my field at Gad's Hill, and burnt every letter I possessed. And now I always destroy every letter I receive—not on absolute business,—and my mind is, so far, at ease" (*Letters* 11: 21-22). If Dickens's close friend and biographer Forster knew of Dickens's intentions to burn his correspondences, he does not

³⁹ Although it is impossible to determine the size of the correspondence Dickens burned, it must have been impressive considering that as of today more than 14,000 letters authored by Dickens are known to have survived.

mention it. In all likelihood, Forester was uninformed until after the event.

Dickens's desire to control his legacy manifests subtly in his fiction long before the events of 1860. Perhaps it is no coincidence that a bundle of letter is ultimately responsible for revealing the secrets of *Bleak House*. As an author and editor, Dickens was responsible for making decisions about which materials to keep and which to discard. Looking to future biographers, he finds himself unable to relinquish control, fearing biographers will dig into his letters, his personal life, his private memos, and drag them out into the light under the guise of a biography. His fear and inability to relinquish control leads him to burn his collection of letters, an act he hopes will prevent future biographers from returning to his own past.

CHAPTER 5

CODA: THE LEGACY OF HOARDING

In the last chapter, I argued that Dickens reveals the pernicious nature of hoarding, a point he reinforces through repeated scenes of conflagration. Indeed, there is a repeated connection between hoarding and fire throughout the nineteenth century. When the Houses of Parliament burned down in October 1834, all of London poured out onto the Thames riverbanks to watch. J. M. W. Turner immortalized the moment in one of his most famous paintings *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16 October 1834* (1835), and Dickens immortalized the hoarding and the lumber-room responsible for the fire in his 1855 speech.

The Crystal Palace, which housed the Great Exhibition that so exercised Charles Dickens's imagination, stood at the turning point of the century as a symbol of England's material progress. Offering solutions to the country's commercial and social ills, it hid mounting social problems beneath layers of gold and glitter. The Crystal Palace, the magnificent glass pavilion designed and built in less than 22 months, offered up a jewel box setting in which to house the nation's treasures. Its glass panels suggested transparency, but that transparency was only an illusion. Like a hoarding, the exhibition was a densely layered composition—offering one reading on the surface and a contradictory one underneath. The Great Exhibition was a symbol of inheritance, what one-generation creates and passes down as to the next.

After the exhibition officially closed in October 1851, the Crystal Palace was dismantled and moved from Hyde Park in central London to Penge Common in south London. In its new

location, the pavilion became a recreational venue. But on 30 November 1936, a fire of unknown origins destroyed the Crystal Palace. It was the largest conflagration in London since the fire that destroyed the Houses of Parliament a century earlier. Winston Churchill, who witnessed the blaze, remarked, “It is the end of an age.” When asked by the *Daily Sketch* for his opinion on rebuilding it, George Bernard Shaw said, “I have no wish to see the Crystal Palace rebuilt. Queen Victoria is dead at last” (qtd in Colquhoun 6). Scenes of the Crystal Palace engulfed in flame and collapsing to the ground were captured by newsreels and immortalized on film.

If we examine hoarding beyond 1860, we discover that hoards and the spaces in which hoards are stored become useful metaphors for authors wishing to explore a variety of other concerns. Beyond 1860, lumber-rooms (the nineteenth-century term given to the contemporary box room) become the metaphorical that some authors use instead of hoarding – replacing the accumulative process with the space in which that accumulation is stored. Elizabeth Gaskell’s unfinished *Wives and Daughters* (1864-6) tells the story of Molly Gibson, a seventeen-year old girl whose widowed father remarries. Upon coming to live with Molly and her father, the new Mrs. Gibson expresses a desire to refurbish the home. She tells Molly, “I must get this drawing-room all new-furnished first; and then I mean to fit up [Cynthia’s] room and yours just alike” (182). Surprised and unsettled by the new changes, Molly exclaims, “Oh, please, mamma, not mine. . . I don’t want it to look different. I like it as it is. Pray don’t do anything to it . . . [The furniture] was my own mamma’s before she was married” (183). Her new stepmother considers Molly request but refuses her: “Most girls would be glad to get rid of furniture only fit for the lumber room. . . . It’s very much to your credit that you should have such feelings, I’m sure. But don’t you think sentiment may be carried to far? Only think what would be said of me by everybody; petting my own child and neglecting my husband’s!” (183). Molly’s “cherished

relics of her mother's maiden-days, were consigned to the lumber-room," removing the last vestiges of her mother (183). The attic lumber-room in *Wives and Daughters* serves as a symbol of forgetting; Molly Gibson's mother and her old way are stored away in order to make room for her new stepmother and stepsister.

The obsession of the nineteenth century for organizing and cataloging information contrasts sharply with metaphor of the mind as a lumber-room. The desire to systemize knowledge is a desire to measure and define the components of knowledge and the parameters of knowledge with the goal to control the production and use of knowledge. The human mind presented the ultimate challenge to nineteenth-century researchers, eventually giving rise to the twentieth-century fields of psychology and the behavioral sciences. In Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes adventure, "A Study in Scarlet" (1887), the detective claims that other people treat their minds like lumber-rooms. Holmes says to Dr. Watson,

I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. . . . It is a mistake to think that the little room has elastic walls and can distend to any extent. (Doyle 17)

The distinction, Holmes suggests, between his brain and ordinary people's, is that he knows how to identify and select information that will be useful. He does not fill his mind with information which he cannot change or which does not matter. In *A Study in Scarlet*, he points specifically to knowledge of the solar system as information that does not warrant space in his memory.

George Eliot connects the lumber-room with knowledge as well in her novel *Middlemarch* (1871-2), but she uses the image as a metaphor for Casaubon's dated research in his unfinished work *The Key to All Mythologies*. In a conversation between Dorothea and Will Ladislaw, Dorothea argues for the value of Casaubon's knowledge and research: "But there are very valuable books about antiquities which were written a long while ago by scholars who knew nothing about these modern things; and they are still used. Why should Mr. Casaubon's not be valuable, like theirs?" (Eliot 207). Will's rejoinder questions the use-value of Casaubon's research: "The subject Mr. Casaubon has chosen is as changing as chemistry: new discoveries are constantly making new points of view. . . . Do you not see that it is no use now to be crawling a little way after men of the last century . . . and correcting their mistakes?—living in a lumber-room and furbishing up broken-legged theories [?]" (207-8). Ladislaw argues that Casaubon's research comes to him second-hand, and rather than create innovative research that takes into account the newest discoveries, Casaubon spends his time correcting the past mistakes of others, a task which will never end and will never produce any research of value.

From the 1860s until the outbreak of World War I, the relationships between people and things shift from an accumulation driven by industry to an accumulation driven by taste. The Aesthetic Movement of the 1860s and 1870s rejected the motley miscellany of bric-à-brac, desirous to "give consistency and coherence" to things (Shrimpton 30). In its pure form "the Aesthetic Movement was certainly the enemy of *bric-à-brac*, of indiscriminate clutter, and of the cult of content" (31). The decadent tastes in the 1880s and 1890s provide hoarders a brief cultural reprieve as the end of the century welcomes the collecting mania, resulting in a surprising surge of collectors and antique dealers whose stores more closely resemble hoards of miscellaneous goods than organized inventories. In *Household Gods* (2006), Debra Cohen

emphasizes the 1880s resurgence of antiques that began with china in particular and then spread to general bric-à-brac. Cohen suggests that the late-nineteenth century turn towards antiques “reflected a deeper discontent with the status quo,” namely the rise of manufacturing, that “to cherish antiques was to proclaim a taste that required cultivation beyond the means of the vast majority,” and “where people were often false, the right objects were always true” (153, 155, 161). Henry James captured the late-Victorian aesthetic for bric-à-brac in his *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897). About a collector and her collection, James’s novel ends with “a cleansing fire that destroys the collection, divesting the realist novel of its things in what [Bill] Brown characterizes as a move towards modernism” (Mills 37).

The legacy of nineteenth-century hoarding touches us today most frequently in the form of literary tourism. In her essay “Jane Austen’s Relics and the Treasures of the East Room,” Claudia Johnson comes the closest to connecting nineteenth-century hoarding with today’s cult of the author, and although she never uses the term *hoarding*, she certainly invokes its image. In her discussion on the collectability of nineteenth-century authors, Johnson laments that not much remains of Austen; only “a few personal effects—items of jewelry and clothing that Cassandra distributed as keepsakes along with locks of hair shorn from her sister’s dead body. . . . her pens and inks and blotters, for example—no one appears to have saved” (230). One can visit Austen’s home at Chawton Cottage, but with its lack of relics, Johnson suggests, there is “something disconcerting about the spectacle . . . something misleading” (217). Indeed, Chawton Cottage is full of objects that belonged to Austen’s family—but not to her. In a moment, someone decided that Austen’s literary heirlooms were not worth saving—this decision changed forever the representations of Austen.

The writers, who followed her, such as Scott, the Brontës, Dickens, and Tennyson, have had their literary and day-to-day lives preserved with a surprising amount of vigor. From Dickens's quills, Charlotte Brontë's pen wiper, and Tennyson's desk, we can also look upon Anne Brontë's bloodstained handkerchief or a commode chair once owned by Dickens at Gad's Hill. Miriam Bailin's essay "The New Victorians" explores the enthusiasm of contemporary collectors for Victorian memorabilia, noting with particular relish that the Victorians' "ornamental clutter . . . have provided the inexhaustible inventory of artifacts in our own, to be collected and reclaimed, itemized and pored over, authenticated, photographed, reproduced, and displayed" (44). Bailin continues, claiming that in our contemporary "disposable culture, the ability to transform the discarded objects of another century into the 'found' treasures of our own may offer some reassurance that here, at least, in the perdurable world of things, all is not lost" (45). Christine Krueger also contends that "[l]iving in the disposable culture Victorian technology and capitalism made possible, we too seek to transform discarded objects into treasures in order to reassure ourselves" (xvi).

Today, there is a persistent longing and mourning for those things that were not saved, such as Austen's manuscripts. Present-day curators and scholars shoulder the burden not only of preserving those objects that have survived but also of imbuing them with preternatural significance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the preservation of Snowhill Manor, the home of eccentric collector, artisan, and hoarder Charles Paget Wade (1883-1956). During his life, Wade filled the manor home with objects he found or made, items ranging from keys, police batons, nails, screws, children's toys, spinning wheels, bicycles, oil paintings, Japanese samurai suits, antique clothing, globes, guns, and antique furniture. The home became so cluttered that he and his wife were forced to move out of the main house and into a smaller structure on the

property. Wade's favorite author was Charles Dickens, and Wade's personal motto was "Let nothing perish." Preserved by the National Trust, the home remains in the same state as the day Wade died. While the Wade collection is fascinating to view, there is no way to appreciate the individual items it contains, and many of the items are of dubious or no value. For scholars of nineteenth-century literature and culture, tasked with preserving the items and ideas of the period, the manor stands as reminder that by hoarding the objects of nineteenth-century culture, we perpetuate a cycle that encourages us to hoard the objects of our own contemporary culture, forever trapping ourselves in a stagnant world of things.

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