**Hairwork in Victorian Literature and Culture: Matter, Form, Craft**

Submitted by Heather Hind to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English
in March 2020



I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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**Abstract**

This thesis is a study of hairwork—the crafting of decorative objects from human hair—in Victorian literature and culture. Hairwork constitutes not only the hair of an individual, but is hair worked into a suggestive form for a particular purpose, whether commemorative, mournful, romantic, reconciliatory or aesthetic and which may be exchanged to reify a relationship. I argue that, in this way, hairwork is a means and process of representation in which hair at once figures its donor while its working signifies a more complex set of associations that are frequently in tension with one another. Hairwork expresses seemingly conflicting or incompatible ideas but holds them in equipoise: body and object; present and past; life and death; presence and absence; nature and craft; sentiment and fashion; authenticity and artifice. This set of antithetical qualities are specific to hairwork, emphasised in forms of hairwork that became popular in the mid-nineteenth century, and represent its unique place in Victorian material culture. As hair was physically worked and worn, it imaginatively shaped and framed the tensions between the affects, relationships, and identities of its donor, maker, and wearer, which rendered it a compelling subject of representation in Victorian fiction. The thesis begins with a chapter addressing the history of hairwork in Britain which is followed by studies of the writings of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Wilkie Collins, and Margaret Oliphant. Through analysis of how hairwork was represented in the fiction of these authors, I demonstrate that hairwork was not just a relatively frequently represented object in Victorian literature but a rich subject of representation in its matter, form, and craft. Considerations of hairwork artefacts are positioned throughout this thesis at points at which they aid and develop my reading of literary texts: they prompt or emphasise ideas latent in textual representations or illuminate something of hairwork's significations. Thus, as I analyse representations of hairwork in literature, I trace the tensions underlying hairwork, whether real or represented.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank a number of people who have helped in the preparation and revision of this thesis and those who have personally supported me in the course of my PhD. A huge thank you to my supervisors, Dr. Patricia Zakreski, Dr. Tara Puri, and Dr. Daisy Hay for all of their time and guidance, and to Dr. Samantha Matthews for her help in my third year. I really could not have asked for better supervisors. Thank you to the SWW DTP for funding my PhD, many research trips, conferences, and training opportunities, and thanks to the team at Bristol. Thank you to Kelly Preece for the many workshops and write clubs she facilitated and to the HUMS PGR Support Team for their assistance. I want to thank everyone at the Armstrong Browning Library for funding my fellowship and for their warm hospitality on my trip. Thanks also to the many librarians, archivists, and museum curators who have helped me in my research at the Harry Ransom Center, Manchester Gallery of Costume, the Brontë Parsonage Museum, National Art Library, British Library, and Harrogate Museums and Mercer Gallery. Thank you to my fellow PhD friends and housemates in Exeter and Manchester who have been simply wonderful. A big thank you to my parents, Angela and Alan, for their eagerness to help in any way they can and my sister, Sarah, for her moral support. Finally, thank you to my partner, George, for going through this with me. Without your patience, encouragement, and composure I would not have written this in such a calm state.

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## Abbreviations

ABL – Armstrong Browning Library, Waco, Texas

ALT – Altham Archive, Waco, Texas

BC – *The Brownings' Correspondence*

BL – British Library, London

BM – British Museum, London

BPM / HAOBP – Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth

CC – Craigdarroch Castle, Victoria, British Colombia

EBB – Elizabeth Barrett Browning

HARGM – Harrogate Museums and Arts Collection, Harrogate

HRC – Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas

M/C CAG – Gallery of Costume, Manchester

NMM – National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

NMS – National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

RAMM – Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter

RB – Robert Browning

RCIN – Royal Collection Inventory Number

VAM – Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## Introduction

In Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), Paulina Home makes an "amulet" from locks of her father's and fiancé's hair:

> [W]ith the tiny pair of scissors, glittering in her lap, she had severed spoils from each manly head beside her, and was now occupied in plaiting together the grey lock and the golden wave. The plait woven—no silk thread being at hand to bind it—a tress of her own hair was made to serve that purpose; she tied it like a knot, prisoned it in a locket, and laid it on her heart. (447)

A great deal of imaginative work goes into Paulina's plait as she physically works the hair. The purpose of the locket is clear: to bring about and maintain harmony in Paulina's newly extended family. It is an attempt to craft connection, with Paulina as the source and mediator of the bond forged between the two men. Yet there are several tensions, even within this symbol of harmony, that the plaited hair evokes. The grey lock of old age interwoven with the fair lock of youth is at once a juxtaposition and incorporation of discrete parts. In uniting the hair of two men who have clashed over the proposed engagement in one piece, she frames antagonists as allies. In wearing the locks of hair of her father and her lover by her heart, Paulina yokes familial and romantic affection. In placing the plait in a locket she will wear hereafter, she takes hairs from her loved ones in the present to project that love and harmony into the future.

This thesis is a study of hairwork—the crafting of decorative objects from human hair—in Victorian literature and culture.[1] Hairwork comprises an array of forms and processes, several of which were inventions of the period: hair was coiled and arranged into jewellery compartments; pasted onto palettes with gum; weighted across circular frames; ground and mixed with pigment; embroidered into fabric; and woven into all manner of intricate braids. Brooches, bracelets, necklaces, lockets, cufflinks, shadow boxes, flower wreaths, monogrammed handkerchiefs, and riding whips are just some of the items made or embellished with hair discussed in this thesis. Yet hairwork constitutes

[1] Hairwork, in the Victorian context, did not include hairpieces such as wigs and extensions, nor did it extend to hairdressing. Hairwork and the making of hairpieces were separate crafts, trades, and cultures. Only in the 1880s and 90s, once hairwork proper had fallen out of fashion, was the term used to refer to wig making and hairdressing. The crossovers between the two are explained in Chapter One.

a peculiar category of object in which value and meaning are more complicated issues than for other forms of craft. The significations of hairwork derive from its bodily material and particular processes. It involves matter, form, and craft: it is hair cut, shaped, and preserved in an intentional and expressive object. An individual's hair is worked in a particular way, or into a particular article, so that it may be exchanged as a token of affection and reify a relationship. In this way, hairwork is a means and process of representation in which hair at once figures its donor while its working signifies a more complex set of associations. As hair is physically worked and worn, it imaginatively shapes and frames the affects, relationships, and identities of its donor, maker, and wearer.

There are two sets of questions underpinning this study of hairwork: one concerned primarily with the *hair* of hairwork, and the other with its being *worked*. With regards to the first, why was hair crafted in this way? Did hair lose or gain significance in being crafted? How was this bodily material used to construct or convey identities and relationships? Secondly, it is essential to understand hairwork as *worked* hair and not just locks of hair. It is hair worked into a form for a particular purpose, whether commemorative, mournful, romantic, reconciliatory or aesthetic. Hairwork codifies skill, patience, touch, labour, taste, and care in a way that unworked hair does not. Some of these aspects may be present in a lock of hair (purposefully sealed in an envelope, for example), and this thesis does make a case for a broader view of what constitutes hairwork, including imaginative and poetic forms: hair worked through processes of literary representation. The lock of hair does not, however, manifest these qualities and investments visibly as plaits and braids, woven chains, wire-twisted loops, and carefully arranged and gummed curls. That hair has been crafted—pulled taut, crossed over, smoothed down, twisted and gripped between the fingers and fixed in place—means that it holds physical tension in its form which manifests the metaphoric tensions of its matter. Further issues in this thesis, therefore, relate to how this process of working produces the significations of hairwork. What desires were satisfied by working hair? What anxieties were engendered in the process? And, as my primary line of enquiry, how were these tensions drawn upon or dealt with in literary representations of hairwork? More broadly, I address hairwork's historical trajectory and how fictional representations of hairwork, like this scene in *Villette* (discussed further in Chapter Two), relate to its place in Victorian culture. My

methodology is key to unpicking this relationship: how does the matter of hairwork—objects—relate to its forms—representations—in literature?

*Villette* was published in 1853 around the high point of hairwork's popularity in Britain. At this time, hair jewellery had already been fashionable for several years and professional hairworkers were enjoying a booming trade. Advertisements, articles, and manuals promoting hairwork proliferated alongside literary representations of the craft. Throughout the 1850s, however, anxieties over the hair trade—though primarily for wigs and hairpieces—cast doubt on the trustworthiness of professional hairworkers, leading to a rise in the amateur practice. Simple forms of hairwork, such as Paulina's plait, were achievable with little or no guidance. Later in the decade, patterns for more elaborate kinds of hairwork became more widely available via newspaper articles and craft manuals, feeding consumer desire for novel forms of hairwork and positioning it as a fashionable handicraft as well as a sentimental accessory.[2] Paulina's hairwork, made to mark her transition from daughter to wife and reconcile the competing demands of these relationships upon her, is represented at a transitional time in hairwork history. Within the text, the plait demonstrates the power of her will and role in effecting amity in her family. In the context of hairwork, it further indicates Paulina's capacity to work hair for herself, simply and with personal meaning, in contrast to the increasingly complex, costly, and modish forms of hairwork offered by professionals and their manuals. Her self-reliance, design, and means of working emphasise the affective over the purely aesthetic, and the centrality of *Paulina*—the worker of the hair and donor of its binding strand—in the network of relationships represented. Hairwork does not appear in the novel, or any other, then, simply because it was culturally prevalent. It is not an innocuous historical detail. Rather, it emerges at moments of tension: when relationships are being redefined or consolidated, transitions are taking place, new ideas of what the future holds are taking shape, or ideas of identity are being questioned and explored. The capacity of hairwork to represent and negotiate such transitions and tensions, along with its dynamic trajectory through the Victorian era, will be explored in the course of this thesis.

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[2] F. L. S., author of *The Art of Ornamental Hair Work* (1856), explains his motives for writing a hairwork manual, beginning that "he cannot find any book on the subject of hairworking in any language, beyond a few descriptions of simple plaits", referring to two 1851 articles, one in *The Lady's Newspaper* and another in *The Lady's Magazine* (iv).

There are three parts to my argument. Through literary analysis, I demonstrate that hairwork is not just a relatively frequently represented object in Victorian literature but a rich subject of representation that evokes complex relationships, identities, and affects. Secondly, I illustrate how the desires and anxieties conveyed in a wider print culture fed into its literary representations by reading hairwork depicted in novels and poems against craft manuals and newspaper and periodical articles. Bringing these two strands of argument together, I argue that Victorian hairwork expresses seemingly conflicting or incompatible ideas but holds them in tension: body and object; present and past; life and death; presence and absence; nature and craft; sentiment and fashion; authenticity and artifice. This set of antithetical qualities are specific to hairwork and represent its unique place in Victorian material culture. Hairwork achieves a kind of reconciliation of supposed binaries not by harmonising its inconsistencies, necessarily, but by holding them in equipoise. Hairwork prompts its maker, viewer, or wearer to waver between abstract and contradictory ideas, expressing and suppressing them at once. As I analyse representations of hairwork in literature, and consider the desires and anxieties that historicise and aid an understanding of its latent significations, I trace the tensions underlying hairwork, whether real or represented.

**New Directions in Hair Scholarship**

Hair scholarship has proliferated over the last few years, particularly with regards to gender, identity, and culture. Edited collections have done much to bring together studies of hair in more diverse contexts and from varied disciplinary perspectives. They include Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang's *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion* (2008) and, addressing the nineteenth century, Sarah Heaton's *A Cultural History of Hair: In the Age of Empire* (2019), one of a six-volume collection on the history of hair.[3] Emma Tarlo's ethnographic study of hair, *Entanglement: The Secret Lives of Hair* (2016), and Esther Berry's forthcoming monograph, *Making Waves*: *The Biopolitics and Cultural History of Hair's Global Trade*, focus on the global trade in hair, wigs, and hair extensions, a topic of prevailing relevance, and popular

[3] Other cultural studies of hair include Wendy Cooper, *Hair: Sex, Society, Symbolism* (1971); Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (2006); and Suzanne Boccalatte and Meredith Jones, *Trunk, Volume One: Hair* (2009).

media scrutiny, from the nineteenth century to today.[4] From these explorations of hair came two exhibitions: Tarlo's "Hair! Human Stories" at the Library Space in Battersea (7 - 26 June 2018) and Berry's hairwork-focused "Talismans of Memory, Love, and Beauty" at the MLC Gallery in Toronto, Canada (27 August - 28 September 2018). Indeed, hairwork seems to be gaining traction with museums, with two other exhibitions taking place over the last two years: "Woven Strands: The Art of Human Hair Work" at the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia, U.S. (19 January - 16 September 2018) and "Woven in Hair: A Recent Gift of Hairwork Jewellery" at the British Museum, London (19 July - 1 September 2019).[5] Recent studies of hair for a general audience, such as Scott Lowe's *Hair* (2016) and Susan J. Vincent's *Hair: An Illustrated History* (2018), are further testament to the topic's enduring appeal to academic and non-specialist audiences alike.

Two mid-twentieth century anthropological studies of hair, Charles Berg's *The Unconscious Significance of Hair* (1951) and E. R. Leach's "Magical Hair" (1958), warrant mention here. Both overstate, in my view, the sexually symbolic (phallic) and abject (faecal) dimensions of hair. Each argues, however, that human hair is charged with associations not only or necessarily because it comes from the body but because of its constructed, imagined links to character, such as hair colour and sexual vigour (Berg 69-70), and its place in ritual practices, such as its being cut in mourning (Leach 159). Leach states most emphatically, "It is the ritual situation which makes hair 'powerful', not the hair which makes the ritual powerful" (159). With this in mind, I argue the act of transforming hair into a ritual object (in the sense that hairwork can be linked to the rituals of engagement, marriage, mourning) substantiates its imagined associations and imbues it with greater meaning. To rephrase Leach, it is the working and not only the hair that makes hairwork meaningful and capable of expressing complex and contrary associations.

Literary representations of hair have received sustained scholarly attention in recent decades. Elisabeth Gitter's essay "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination" (1984) remains, nonetheless, a seminal and compelling

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[4] See, for example, Refinery29's *YouTube* video, "The Truth About Where Hair Extensions Come From" (9 June 2019), a part of their "Shady" series and their most popular video to date with over thirteen million views.

[5] Another recent hair art exhibition (but not involving Victorian hairwork) was "Hair! Human Hair in Fashion and Art" at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, the Netherlands (20 February - 29 May 2016).

argument for the ambivalence of women's hair in the Victorian imaginary as alternately angelic and demonic. Galia Ofek's *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2009) expands and develops Gitter's work, reframing the binary as the "Victorian Medusa-Rapunzel dichotomous paradigm" (104).[6] I draw on both of these formulations when I argue that hairwork was a way for the Victorians to bring seemingly opposing ideas together into a tense but constructive whole. If hair, and particularly women's hair, could constitute an "aureole or bower" or a "snare, web, or noose" (Gitter 936), and indicate its donor to be "sexually mature, 'fallen', threatening" or "innocent, helpless and pure" (Ofek 104), then these oppositional but difficult to ascertain significations must carry across to some extent into hairwork. I build on the work of Gitter and Ofek by considering how hair cut from the body takes on a far greater fluidity of meaning in its potential to be worked. I diverge, however, in arguing that it is in the working of hair that its capacity for ambivalence becomes clear. Ofek, in particular, is concerned with how *hair* gives rise to tensions (such as through fetishism, entertaining two contradictory realities), but not how its being *worked* plays a role in this, as she argues hair jewellery "seemed to merge and fuse together antithetical poles: human beings and objects, possessors and possessed, spirit and matter, mass industry and the most sacred personal emotions" (45). The tensions captured by hairwork are only in part owing to the hair. I argue it is how the hair is worked that brings its ambivalence as well as its capacity to signify to the fore.

Victorian hairwork has not received much critical focus in its own right. Articles and book chapters dealing with hairwork are relatively numerous but often subsume it into broader studies of mourning jewellery or consider only its eighteenth-century British or nineteenth-century American contexts, sometimes

[6] Other scholarship that draws on Gitter's argument includes Rose Lovell-Smith's, "Out of the Hair Tent: Notes Further to Elisabeth Gitter's 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination'" (1995), and Tara Puri's "Lady Audley's Duplicitous Hair" (2009) which considers further sources of tension in representations of hair.

interchangeably.[7] The most recent article on the subject, Shu-chuan Yan's "The Art of Working in Hair: Hair Jewellery and Ornamental Handiwork in Victorian Britain" (2019), does not analyse hairwork in itself but instead uses it to explore the relationship between Victorian domestic craft practices and commodity culture. Yan keeps this larger narrative as her focus, arguing that "the making of hair jewellery pinpoints the commercial relation between artifact-making and body parts" (124). In the most substantial study of hairwork, *Love Entwined: The Curious History of Hairwork in America* (2007), Helen Sheumaker shows how American hairwork represented the white middle class and served to create and signify that identity. She argues that hairwork offered a way for American consumers to bring a sense of authenticity to their possessions—and, conversely, to derive market value from something highly personal—and to express their sentimentality while carefully cultivating their public image. She explains:

> Sentimentality provided specific and consistent narrative frameworks and a language of emotion that allowed for the public expression of private suffering. Middle-class culture emphasized control over one's emotions, bodily movement, and self, but sentimentality allowed for the structured loss of control. (30)

Hairwork was thus a way of structuring affect, a way to express emotion, identity, and relationships in a more acceptable, economically valuable and fashionable form. In "'This Lock You See': Nineteenth-Century Hair Work as the Commodified Self" (1997), Sheumaker makes the merging of emotions and relationships with market values even more explicit in framing hairwork as a form of "sentimental consumerism" (427). Though I agree with Sheumaker on many points, there is an overemphasis on the relation between the sentimental and commercial dimensions of hairwork which neglects its potential to hold other qualities: erotic, morbid, vulgar, or otherwise. There is also an unanswered question as to why *hair* might be the chosen stuff of sentimental representation.

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[7] Hairwork is discussed in: Karen Bachmann, "The Power of Hair as Human Relic in Mourning Jewellery" (2017); Shirley Bury, *An Introduction to Sentimental Jewellery* (1985); and Patricia Campbell Warner, "Mourning and Memorial Jewelry of the Victorian Age" (1986). On eighteenth-century hairwork, see: Ariane Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death/Gendering Sentiment: Mourning Jewelry in Britain in the Eighteenth Century" (2013); Christiane Holm, "Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewelry with Hair" (2004); and Kathleen M. Oliver, "'With My Hair in Crystal': Mourning Clarissa" (2010). Articles on American hairwork include: Abigail Heiniger, "Hair, Death, and Memory: The Making of an American Relic" (2015) and Virginia L. Rahm, "MHS Collections: Human Hair Ornaments" (1974). Articles which treat British and American hairwork interchangeably include Cynthia Amnéus, "The Art of Ornamental Hairwork" (2006) and Pamela A. Miller, "Hair Jewelry as Fetish" (1982).

After stating that hair is of the body, Sheumaker does not go on to consider why it may therefore be an appropriate material for use in sentimental fancywork. In detailing the history of hairwork in America, Sheumaker draws almost exclusively on American sources and contexts and, as I will show in my first chapter, there is a different tale to tell about hairwork in Britain.

Talia Schaffer also identifies a particular ideology of middle-class femininity in hairwork as an amateur craft in *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2011): “A woman making a domestic handicraft was involving herself in early-Victorian gender roles. The domestic handicraft demonstrated her leisure time, domestic management skills, thrift, and housewifely skill” (7). The importance of thrift, which Schaffer frames as central to the expression of a proper feminine sensibility, is perhaps not the best term for describing what was achieved by women in making hairwork for themselves. The question as to whether making crafts from human hair is thrifty is not straightforward. The material may cost nothing, and hair mostly grows without particular cultivation. The process of crafting this material, however, could cost a lot (if requiring tools and settings), and the finished product is potentially beyond value (subjectively, as a personal keepsake). In this way, hairwork does not fit neatly within Schaffer’s craft paradigm. Hairwork could not be made “repeatedly and quickly” and was anything but “ephemeral and disposable” (8). To see the paradigm in reverse, perhaps it was precisely because of the value of hairwork that women took to making it for themselves in the home. Its value was tied up economically in jewellery mountings, sentimentally in association, investment-wise in its time-consuming construction, aesthetically in its ornamental qualities, and its material meant that it could not be reproduced or replaced in any straightforward way. Hence hairwork was a means of negotiating and realising these different kinds of value, with the economic and aesthetic a part of a more complex whole.

It can be difficult to think beyond death when viewing articles of Victorian hairwork, especially as those from whom the hair was taken are all long dead. The fact that the hair has survived is itself an account of preservation, a testimony to its having been cut, crafted, and kept. In “The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture” (2011), Deborah Lutz discusses the intersection of the body and its history in death, and finds in Victorian mourning practices, such as cutting a lock of hair from a corpse, a

desire to conclude and preserve the story of that body. Lutz argues that jewellery set with hair has narrative qualities and aligns body relics with last words (128). She notes how hair is used in novels to authenticate identity and links it to written forms such as autographs and handwriting (136). Lutz expands her argument in *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015), maintaining that preserved human matter like hair "stood in for a lived presence, for the narrative of the body" in the Victorian imagination (2). Accordingly, just as fiction can be a means of understanding relic culture, so too can relics be read to better understand their fictional counterparts (3). However, Lutz's point that hair relics became so ubiquitous in popular culture and fiction as to function as "a sort of dramatic shorthand" for an identity or plot point is problematic (130). Though I agree that inscription may be a manifestation of the stories that are embedded in hairwork (145), and that hairwork might readily signify affection, there is always more to unpack with these highly individual and context-dependent objects.

Marcia Pointon has made the most substantial contribution to scholarship on British hairwork, taking up the subject in "Materializing Mourning: Hair, Jewellery and the Body" (1999), "Wearing Memory: Mourning, Jewellery and the Body" (1999), and *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery* (2009). Her argument in "Materializing Mourning" centres on the preserved lock of hair as a defence against death. It is both a disavowal of the death and decay of the donor and a talisman against the death and decay of the keeper. In this sense, the lock of hair functions as a sacred object, the pure and incorruptible lock derived from the impure and corruptible body (52). The meaning of hair is given greater resonance when worked into jewellery, its woven forms demonstrating the "repetitious remembrances of mourning" and the "perpetuity" of the relationship between the donor and wearer of the piece (56). However, Pointon does not clearly distinguish in this sense between the producer, process, and product and how these distinct dimensions of hairwork (the worker, working, and worked hair) facilitate or fulfil a purpose in mourning. In *Brilliant Effects*, Pointon is most concerned with how a viewer engages with hair jewellery. Hair "asserts a difference of scale and material" in jewellery because it takes the place of the gemstone or portrait and is patently of the body and on its scale though enclosed in a tiny compartment (296). Equally, the hidden elements, compartments, and windows of hair jewellery constitute a

structuring medium, functioning as quasi-reliquaries which render the viewing process akin to religious experience (296). This focus on engaging with hairwork raises questions of epistemology and hair: does hairwork frame hair in a way that encourages the viewer to ponder upon it, and does this encounter give the viewer greater access to some form of inarticulable knowledge? Pointon answers that hairwork does, in this way, rank among "textual artefacts that differ from other kinds of texts chiefly by the fact that they are three-dimensional, they bear a peculiar relationship to the body and they have a life history" (298-99).[8]

My argument is *not* that hairwork is inherently textual or that it offers a correlative to or analogy of text. I argue instead that it carries tensions, one of which is a tension between materiality and textuality. These are not corresponding media, nor are they always complementary. While they certainly can and do work together—as we shall see with Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854) in Chapter Four—and may be translated or transformed one into the other—as I argue in relation to the poetry of the Brownings in Chapter Three—I am concerned with the intersection of object and text as the foundation of my methodology. First, I aim to show the resistance of hairwork, whether real or represented, to simplistic, singular meanings. Second, I demonstrate that material engagement with the kind of artefacts under discussion yields a far greater understanding of the formal, material, and affective significations of an object than would only taking account of its literary depictions.

Very few studies have attended to hairwork artefacts in any detail, other than guides to Victorian jewellery. In part owing to the prominence of mourning jewellery, there are also notable gaps in the kinds of hairwork that have been examined, even in Sheumaker's book (for instance, I have found only passing references to Victorian hair embroidery and gimp work, which I explain in Chapter Five). This has meant the various processes involved in hairwork—for example, palette versus table work—have been taken to be inconsequential. I position these different kinds of hairwork as crucial to understanding the distinct significations of a given piece. More importantly, I take account of hairwork as a process through which identities and affects are formed and expressed. I consider the specific significations of the shade, shape, size, and texture of

[8] Pointon reuses this phrase from her earlier chapter, "Wearing Memory", in which it is added that hairwork is equally an object "entangled in discourse" (67).

hairwork, its open and touchable forms, and the implications of its being worn and time-worn.

Elements of the wider print culture of hairwork are occasionally mentioned in prior studies (Pointon, for instance, comments on a couple of hairwork manuals and advertisements), but they are rarely situated in their historical moment in the trajectory of hairwork practice and fashion or analysed as significant representations of hairwork in themselves. The print culture of hairwork—pattern books, instruction manuals, advertisements, and newspaper articles—had an impact on the fashions and meanings of hairwork in the period by disseminating patterns for amateurs, propagating sources of unease with the professional trade, and by circulating particular ideologies around hairwork. These cultural texts provide insights into the implications of gender and class in hairwork as still more tensions emerge from divisions between amateur and professional hairwork; London-based and local hairworkers; mass-produced and bespoke mountings; dated and novel hairwork designs. Yet these texts were also particularly adept at negotiating and reframing the tensions that might otherwise have ended the practice of hairwork far earlier in the period. They articulate hairwork as a craft that encapsulates past, present and future, life and death, and fashion and sentiment, no matter how contradictory those ideas may be. The need for strategic marketing, as well as trying to pitch and cater to a wide array of tastes, budgets, skill sets, and purposes, makes sense of the variety and possibilities of hairwork put forward by print culture. In each chapter, but most comprehensively in the first, I draw on advertisements, pattern books, manuals, travelogues, newspaper articles, trade cards, and other ephemera to give a richer picture of hairwork history and to trace print culture's role in enkindling the desires and anxieties that shaped and sustained its popularity.

**Methodology**

This thesis is formed of five chapters and considers Victorian hairwork primarily through its literary representations. After Chapter One on the history of hairwork, the following four chapters are author-based—on Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, Wilkie Collins, and Margaret Oliphant, respectively—and for the most part in chronological order in terms of the texts studied. My sources range from canonical works such as Emily

Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Robert Browning's "Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic" (*Dramatis Personae*, 1864), to those that have received less critical attention, such as Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854) and Margaret Oliphant's *Kirsteen* (1890). My aim in combining these authors and texts, while incorporating analysis of the visual and material culture of hairwork, is to situate hairwork in its broader literary context while assessing each text's contribution to an understanding of hairwork and its significations.[9] Hairwork is mentioned in passing in the work of many Victorian writers—in Harriet Martineau's *Deerbrook* (1839), Margaret is almost robbed of a hair ring made with her sister's locks; in Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), Charles gives Amy a bracelet of their mother's hair on her wedding day; in George Meredith's *Vittoria* (1867), Camilla's handkerchief is embroidered with her hair—and locks of hair are far more numerous. I have chosen my authors, however, because they show a sustained engagement with hairwork in their novels and poems and, for the Brontës and Brownings, their personal effects. Hairwork is not an incidental detail in these texts: even when only briefly described, it carries narrative weight and consequence. My chosen texts are representative of the way hairwork was commonly portrayed in Victorian fiction—each chapter makes connections with other representations of hairwork in the corresponding form or genre, and elsewhere in the authors' works—and are spread across the period to establish a picture of the literary trajectory of hairwork alongside its historical course.

Each chapter explores a different set of oppositional themes to illustrate the tensions and contrarieties that hairwork encodes. My history chapter considers hairwork's surge in popularity in the mid-century and the desires and anxieties that emerged as a result. Each chapter also explores a secondary theme which supports an understanding of the way these tensions operate in hairwork. In Chapter Two on the Brontës, for example, while each text and object considered demonstrates a desire for connection between loved ones and a corresponding anxiety of disconnection, these desires (and thwarted desires) manifest in hairwork through its enabling and encoding of different kinds and degrees of touch. While my chapters are based around authors and

[9] There are several writers whose representations of hairwork I was not able to analyse in detail in the scope of this study because there was not sufficient material, I felt, for individual or logically-paired author-based studies, notably: Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Yonge, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Thomas Hardy. Deborah Lutz has already written on the latter, "Hair Jewelry as Congealed Time: Hardy and *Far From the Madding Crowd*", in *Relics of Death* (2015; 128-54).

themes, I explore different forms of hairwork as each chapter dictates and take account of the differences between palette work and table work, hair on display and kept hidden, exposed and enclosed, to illuminate the different significations of these forms both as physical objects and in their literary representations.

Given its material focus, literary framing, and chronological structure, this thesis draws upon and contributes to the diverse field of research into Victorian material culture and broader new historicist scholarship, while attempting to expand the methodologies employed in these areas by incorporating object analysis into and alongside literary analysis. I discuss criticism that relates directly to hairwork, including to European, American, and earlier British forms to situate my study in the wider field, and look to related subjects within Victorian studies such as work on domestic handicrafts, jewellery, and mourning, and the areas of theory often associated with them, such as fetishism, touch and affect studies, and thing theory.[10]

Hairwork resonates with Bill Brown's distinction between objects and things in "Thing Theory" (2001):

> You could imagine things, second, as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization, […] the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems. […] thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphysically irreducible to objects). (5)

Hairwork exceeds "mere materialisation" (5) on account of its bodily material and affective implications which in turn give it an "amorphous characteristic" (4), a sense that it sits between categories: body and object; living and dead matter; presence and absence; the natural and the crafted. That hairwork troubles several boundaries in this way distinguishes it from many other crafts and objects and renders it a particularly germane subject, both in terms of thing theory and Victorian culture.[11] While hair alone might arguably have a thing-like quality, I find its "thingness" is most fully realised when it is worked into

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[10] I discuss hair fetishism in Chapter Three, but see in particular Emily Apter's "Splitting Hairs: Female Fetishism and Postpartum Sentimentality in Maupassant's Fiction" (1991), and Pamela A. Miller's "Hair Jewelry as Fetish" (1982). Touch, affect, and thing theory as they relate to hairwork are discussed below.

[11] John Plotz also focuses on this aspect of thing theory in his study of Victorian material culture and justifies his interest in particular objects as on account of their sitting at categorical intersections: "My understanding is that in the emergent field of thing theory, objects or possessions turn into things only when they are located at troubling intersections between clear categories, thus defying ready classification" (*Portable Property* 25).

something more than a lock of hair. Hairwork constitutes an encounter between the body and the body-as-object, a carefully negotiated process of objectification and, simultaneously, thingification. I am less concerned, however, with determining the "thingness" of hairwork than with scrutinising the "magic", "latency" and "excess" it might invoke, particularly when represented in literature. Catherine Waters writes that thing theory "refocuses attention on the kind of symbolic work that objects perform in a novel" (para. 4) and, along the lines of my own reasoning on the tensions that hairwork manifests and thereby works through, that things "seem to relieve us from a sense of disconnection or abstraction" (para. 5). Hairwork not only materialises but helps to negotiate tensions by framing them. It seeks to resolve conflicting desires and anxieties and to some extent stabilises what might be inherently unstable into a cohesive whole. In this way, hairwork makes sense of thing theory (rather than the other way around) because it is an object fundamentally concerned with subjects: "why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies" (*The Sense of Things* 4). Avenues of theory which attempt to move beyond a subject-object relation are less conducive to my study for this reason: whether theories in which objects are figured as beyond a human context and comprehension (such as Object-Oriented Ontology), or as part of a non-human system or network that holds a form of agency (such as Actor-Network Theory).[12] I am guided, instead, by the more historically-focussed avenues of thing theory, such as Elaine Freedgood's close inspection of objects in *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2010).[13] I too am interested in my object of study regardless of whether it is looked at or overlooked, described in detail or mentioned in passing in the course of a text.[14]

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[12] Graham Harman frames OOO as opposed to thing theory and new historicism, arguing they assume "that 'the real' has no other function than to accompany the human agent and mold or disrupt it from time to time" (193). I am, of course, invested in the way hairwork accompanies and moulds or disrupts the human subjects it was derived from and worked by. Jane Bennett's conception of vital materialism in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2011) has informed my thinking more directly than Bruno Latour's ANT. Bennett's idea of an object's "vitality", or capacity for it to have its own trajectory, propensity or tendency (viii), is explored in Chapter Three.

[13] For a reflection on other recent work in Victorian studies on material culture and thing theory, see John Plotz, "Materiality in Theory: What to Make of Victorian Things" (2016).

[14] I am borrowing from David Trotter's summation of Freedgood's methodology here: "the historicist approach emphasises the reader's attribution of social and political meaning to objects the literary text invites her or him at once to look at (by describing them in detail) and to overlook (by doing no more than describe them)" (para. 10).

My aim, however, is not only to rediscover the fugitive meanings behind hairwork in fiction. Moving on from Freedgood, my research operates both ways: I unearth object histories to illuminate their literary counterparts, and examine literary representations to better understand the objects themselves.

In *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (2016), Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett, and Leonie Hannan identify three approaches to the study of material culture: "the study of the object as an end in itself, the study of the object as a means to shed light on its context, and the study of how material things are constructed through other sources" (6).[15] The latter approach is most apparent in this thesis, since its focus is on the representation of hairwork in Victorian literature, but the former two come into play at certain points. As I have stated, it is not my primary aim to shed light on mourning culture by studying hairwork, even though my argument certainly has wider implications for our understanding of mourning practices, Victorian fashion, and domestic handicrafts. To study hairwork only "in itself" (that is to say, the material objects without recourse to their representations) seems equally to forgo the richness that "other sources" can bring to a study of material culture.[16] Hairwork, in my reasoning, is a form of representation in that its material denotes a body and its working signifies that person's identity, relationships, and affects. It is a rich subject of literary representation for this reason. Its expressive qualities are latent in literary depictions but, to grasp them fully, close attention to the artefacts themselves is still necessary. In other words, the literary life of hairwork may be best understood in tandem with its material life.[17]

As I approach the intersections of object and text, the question of how one might engage in object analysis is foremost. In "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method" (1982), Jules David Prown begins his

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[15] On interdisciplinary approaches to material culture, see: Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds, *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (1993); W. David Kingery, *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies* (1996); Carl Knappett, *Thinking Through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (2005); Christopher Tilley et al, eds, *Handbook of Material Culture* (2006); and Kate Smith and Leonie Hannan, "Return and Repetition: Methods for Material Culture Studies" (2017).

[16] The idea of the object "in itself" would also tend more towards object-oriented ontology than thing theory (the more useful avenue for my purposes).

[17] This thesis follows the example of several recent studies which discuss material cultures and histories through their representation in Victorian literature, for example, Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015); Jean Arnold, *Victorian Jewelry, Identity and the Novel: Prisms of Culture* (2011); Suzanne Daly, *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels* (2011); Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2011); and Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006).

method with description of the object, taking this as the foundation from which to form questions rather than beginning with a set line of enquiry: “The analysis proceeds from description, recording the internal evidence of the object itself; to deduction, interpreting the interaction between the object and the perceiver; to speculation, framing hypotheses and questions which lead out from the object to external evidence for testing and resolution” (7). Though some of the questions Prown puts forward are better suited to archaeological research, his suggested trajectory—moving from describing the object, to considering the experience and knowledge of the viewer, to the questions which arise, and finally to seeking some answers from other sources—has the merit of not assuming too much of the object in the first instance. I do not wish to presuppose or project existing ideas of what hairwork is or represents onto the artefacts I encounter and to thereby risk perpetuating certain fallacies (such as assuming a mourning context or that the hairwork is made of a woman’s hair). I begin, therefore, with description because it may better allow the hairwork to prompt the questions I ask of it.[18]

Sharon Marcus, Heather Love, and Stephen Best also argue for the place of description in and as analysis (literary or otherwise) in “Building a Better Description” (2016). I employ several of their suggestions in the course of my descriptions of hairwork, such as to “*embrace stray details*” (11, original emphasis), which allows me to open up new connections between broken and frayed hairs in Chapter Two. I also “*attend to the describers as much as to the described*” (12, original emphasis) when reflecting on my embodied experience of handling and viewing hairwork, as in Chapters Two and Five. Above all, they advocate for description as a means by which we “might *foreground and attend to the protean nature of what we describe*” (12, original emphasis), which is all the more crucial to an understanding of hairwork as an often ambiguous and multifaceted object. In terms of the more specific questions I ask, Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim’s *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion* (2015) has informed my approach most directly. They end their guide with two appendices (216-21), checklists for observation and reflection to work through, including many that are especially pertinent to

[18] Prown emphasises the importance of imaginative and subjective responses to material culture in his introduction to *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (2000), and reiterates that one should not impose too rigid a framework of interpretation onto object analysis.

textural objects like hairwork: for whom might the object be intended? What is its weight and texture? What are its dominant colours and patterns and have they faded over time? Where does the object show wear, or signs of repair? Does it have stylistic, religious, artistic or iconic references? Did the maker want to invoke emotion, status, sexuality, or gender roles? Does the object seek to express joy, sorrow or fear? My approach expands on this methodology in analysing objects alongside and against texts, considering the way each represents its matter, looking for points of crossover, their thematic links and historical linkages.[19] This is the most novel element of my methodology. I reflect on artefacts—hairwork from library and museum collections—as a catalyst for literary analysis, describing and assessing them to tease out points of intersection with and divergence from their textually represented counterparts.

I am conscious that these modes of analysis often, and perhaps unfairly, privilege sight in a way that neglects the tactile and associative dimensions that are so crucial to hairwork as a medium.[20] With this in mind, I approach hairwork with greater haptic awareness, trying to *feel* as well as think through touch.[21] The embodied experience of the researcher analysing these objects brings out some of the tensions and contradictions of hairwork: the apparent vitality of dead matter, the presence of the past, the denial of touch (whether by a locket or archival gloves), the inscrutability of the deeply personal and, in some cases, the anonymity of an individual's hair. Still, physical proximity and touch can illuminate more about an object than only reading about it can. The scale,

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[19] In her chapter in *Gender and Material Culture*, Karen Harvey begins her analysis with a description of the objects of her study, which includes an elaboration on what the catalogue says about them, what her research has discovered about them (with corrective notes on dates and such), and at the end she explains where her objects differ and hold similarities and how grouping them in this way "is arguably the most promising way to write a rich history of them" (75). I argue along similar lines for grouping artefacts with their contemporary representations.

[20] Michael Yonan makes this point concerning the privileging of visual and pictorial analysis in Art History in his article "Toward a Fusion of Art History and Material Culture Studies" (2011): "One central revelation is the idea that art has a physical, sensual dimension, and not just a visual one. […] this knowledge has been present in art-historical thinking for a long time, but its implications have been explored only intermittently and in recent years often suppressed entirely" (243). Yonan pushes this further in "Materiality as Periphery" (2018) and looks to archaeological perspectives to recentre the medium of the object in place of its visual appearance.

[21] There are several kinds of touch and ways of thinking about it (for example, as reciprocal, as excessive, as close or distant, as in telepathic touch), which I explore in Chapter Two, drawing on Mark Paterson's *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (2007), Ann M. C. Gagne's *Touching Bodies/Bodies Touching: The Ethics of Touch in Victorian Literature (1860-1900)* (2011), Ingrid Hanson's *William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1856-1890* (2014), and Heather Tilley's "Introduction: The Victorian Tactile Imagination" (2017).

texture, opacity or translucency, incongruous lightness or heaviness, and the fragility or sturdiness of an object simply cannot be worked out even with a high definition image. These qualities need to be defined if we are to understand something of the affective power hairwork held for the Victorians.[22] Handling and examining hairwork—seeing the way locks want to uncurl and escape from envelopes and regarding the light-reflecting litheness of woven hair bracelets two hundred years on—makes sense of its capacity to evoke complex identities, relationships, and affects.

I find "affect" a usefully abstract and slippery term with which to express the kinds of response—hard-to-define feelings and sensations—that might arise from, or be inscribed in, hairwork. In their introduction to *Sensitive Objects: Affect and Material Culture* (2016), Jonas Frykman and Maja Povrzanović Frykman argue that "Objects become sensitive through use, but also serve as beholders of affects" and that "tangibility is crucial for the transmission of affects" (24). They explain affect as an embodied experience of a subject that may nonetheless be prompted by encounters with, or even inhere in, material culture.[23] As an object that borrows its material from subjects, hairwork makes sense of this potential two-way flow and containment of affect, which is both physically and presently felt yet ever incorporeal, fleeting, and abstract. I might have used "sentiment" to refer to the deeply personal, felt core of what hairwork signifies to, or captures from, an individual. Affect, however, recognises the difficulty of pinning down, describing, and interpreting complex and sometimes contrary feelings and their expression. Ben Anderson, for example, discusses "Affective Atmospheres" (2009) as holding "a series of opposites—presence and absence, materiality and ideality, definite and indefinite, singularity and generality—in a relation of tension" (80) in a way that chimes with my interpretation of hairwork. Affect conceptualises ambiguity as much as

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[22] Sophie Ratcliffe makes similar points about her research on curl-papers: "In reflecting on whether and how nineteenth-century books and journals might have been plundered and torn up to create curl-papers, a researcher needs to access the actual journals themselves – they need to feel and weigh their weight and thickness. The critical importance of concrete, rather than digital, research is apparent here. Methodologically, a study of the curl-paper also highlights the need to acknowledge the embodied and affective encounter with material culture. It demonstrates the critical need for practical history and sensory methodologies in an understanding of how we have lived and felt in the past" (205).

[23] For further discussions of material culture, materiality, and affect see: Cara Krmpotich, Joost Fontein and John Harries, "The Substances of Bones: The Emotive Materiality and Affective Presence of Human Remains" (2010); Jo Labanyi, "Doing Things: Emotion, Affect, and Materiality" (2011); and Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles, eds, *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions Through History* (2018).

experienced intensity.[24] As each of the tensions outlined in my chapters indicate, more complex expressions of affect, rather than straightforward articulations of sentiment, are present in hairwork and its literary representations.

Considerations of hairwork artefacts are positioned throughout this thesis at points at which they aid my reading of literary texts. They prompt or emphasise ideas latent in textual representations (such as the sense of disconnection manifest in Emily Brontë's broken hair necklace and Catherine's locket in *Wuthering Heights* in Chapter Two), or illuminate something of hairwork's specific significations (for instance, as a betrothal gift of hair embroidery, when a pocketbook cover is read against the handkerchief in *Kirsteen* in Chapter Five). Close reading is pushed further and given new avenues to explore by a parallel analysis of the objects of representation. The processes and results of close reading and object analysis are also reflected on as necessarily tentative for hairwork, such as with regards to Wilkie Collins's detective plot in *Hide and Seek*. Mat Grice's analysis of a hair bracelet within the novel is considered alongside my own attempt to analyse hairwork, to determine something of the history of a real two-donor hair bracelet. Each chapter features a discussion of "Hairwork and its Hindrances" as a means of reflecting on the limits and learnings of analysing hairwork in this way. A more nuanced understanding of hairwork, and material culture more broadly, may be gained from the confluence of touch, sight, and proximity, and from the embodied experience of viewing, handling, and describing hairwork in detail to analyse more carefully its distinct characteristics and implications.

**Chapter Outlines**

Chapter One charts the history and print culture of hairwork. I begin with the historical antecedents of Victorian hairwork, from medieval hair tokens to early modern hair bracelets and eighteenth-century sepia and memento mori hair rings. I then come to the rise of palette and table work jewellery in the early to mid-nineteenth century and the decline of hairwork in the 1870s and 80s. The human hair trade, the rise in the professional hairwork industry, the publication

[24] Anderson understands atmospheres in terms of affect because they "express something vague […] an ill-defined indefinite something […] Something that hesitates at the edge of the unsayable" (78).

of hairwork manuals for amateurs, and hairwork fads such as snake bracelets emerge as pivotal points in hairwork's history. I argue that while these factors initially aided the popularity and accessibility of hairwork, they ultimately brought uncertainty and mutability to what was supposed to be an authentic and timeless form. The wider and quicker but transitory circulation of fashions and practices proffered by adverts and guides in newspapers and periodicals, in particular, turned hairwork into a modish but thereby ephemeral phenomenon. Throughout the chapter, I highlight the ways hairwork played upon particular desires and anxieties which were ever in tension with one another.

Chapter Two places the collection of hairwork in the Brontë Parsonage Museum in relation to the fiction of Charlotte and Emily Brontë. By beginning my series of author-based chapters with two sisters who owned (and very probably made) hairwork, I aim to demonstrate the fruitful connections to be made between material objects and the writings of the people who owned them. Through a series of interspersed object readings which act as thematic prompts for close reading Charlotte's *The Search After Hapiness* [sic] (1827) and *Villette* (1853) and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and "Long Neglect Hath Worn Away" (1837), I consider questions of touch, wear, and breakage in relation to hairwork. I argue that while Charlotte represents hairwork as a means of connection between friends through scenes of carefully presented and lovingly worked hair, Emily's depictions of hairwork evoke disconnection through their twisted strands and enclosures. Touch is crucial to both of these readings, alternately careful but affectionate, passionate but violent. I begin my consideration of "Hairwork and its Hindrances" in this chapter by exploring the embodied experience of handling (and not being allowed to touch) hairwork in the museum.

In Chapter Three I consider the "poetic working" of hair in the poetry and personal effects of the Brownings. The romantic exchanges and gifts passed between Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning—poems, letters, and locks of hair—form the body of this chapter. I analyse the couple's locks of hair and hairwork held in the Armstrong Browning Library and a selection of their poetry representing hair: "I never gave a lock of hair away" (1850), "The soul's rialto hath its merchandize" (1850), "Only a curl" (1862), "Porphyria's Lover" (1836), "The Flight of the Duchess" (1845), and "Gold Hair: A Story of Pornic" (1862). The question of what it is to "work" hair is most crucial here. I explore what

alternative forms working with hair might take—how poetic representation might transform the lock of hair into hairwork—and how the extent of working affects the significations of hair. A tension between authenticity and artifice comes to the fore, particularly when hair is given in gift. I argue that while affection may be authenticated with the gift of hair, there is a persistent anxiety that hair can be a false gesture, a counterfeit, particularly as it intersects with economic exchange. Hair, and especially golden hair, may be worked (or put to work) by the donor for their own ends. I trace the poetic trope of the golden lock of hair which troubles the boundaries between the body, gold, and economic exchange.

Chapter Four discusses Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854), a novel in which a detective figure attempts to trace what became of his sister and her illegitimate child using a hair bracelet. The desire to unravel identity is at the centre of this story, yet the hair bracelet that drives Mat Grice's investigation demonstrates how hairwork may alternately reveal and obscure the identities of its donors. I read the novel in light of the anxieties of the professional hairwork trade detailed in Chapter One and consider the limits of what hairwork can convey in terms of identity. I argue that in *Hide and Seek* hairwork functions not as a precise analogue to documentary evidence but as an alternative form of record that resists a like mode of reading, privileging material over textual engagement.

The fifth and final chapter focuses on two different forms of hairwork represented in two novels by Margaret Oliphant: a palette work hair brooch in *Phoebe, Junior* (1876) and a hair-embroidered handkerchief singled out from a set in *Kirsteen* (1890). I read these novels in the context of the decline of hairwork, and in particular against Alexanna Speight's call for a revival of the craft in his 1871 manual *The Lock of Hair*.[25] Phoebe cannot connect with the outmoded craft which, I reason, her grandmother likely did not have a hand in making either, while Kirsteen makes, diverts, and later reclaims her own hairwork. Though Speight champions hairwork and its power to connect people, moments, and places remembered, the eponymous heroines of the novels negate its connective potential by disrupting its familial circulation. I reflect on the practice of hairwork in this chapter and how making hairwork for oneself

[25] Though "Alexanna" might be assumed female, Speight refers to himself with male pronouns in *The Lock of Hair*, such as when he advertises private lessons (123).

might shape its affective charge.

In the course of these chapters, I shed light on several neglected aspects of hairwork: its purposes outside of mourning contexts; its variety of forms and their different processes; its wider print culture; its links with the hair trade; and the impact of professional hairwork on the amateur practice. Equally, by considering literary representations of hairwork, and selecting appropriate texts for this purpose, I offer new readings of canonical texts as well as centring lesser studied texts in the course of my analysis. My methodology presents an intervention in itself as I show how placing hairwork artefacts alongside and in conversation with its literary representations can aid an understanding of its material significations. In terms of my overarching argument, the way hairwork produces yet reconciles tensions has been hinted at by some scholars but never articulated as characteristic of and particular to hairwork.[26]

This thesis makes an original contribution to scholarship in addressing Victorian hairwork directly and comprehensively in a way that has not previously been attempted outside of American historical studies, such as Sheumaker's *Love Entwined.* By doing so from a literary perspective, I hope to open up a new way of thinking about the intersections between object and text that brings into focus the commonalities and limits of these two modes of representation. In analysing artefacts, I consider the embodied experience of handling and viewing these objects as well as aspects of the craft that might be only implicit in literary representations (for instance, fragility, translucency, gaudiness). Correspondingly, analysing texts allows me to situate hairwork in its lived context and to consider the themes and ideas arising from its literary representations. What is gained from this approach is a more nuanced understanding of hairwork and its significations as well as an appreciation of how literature responds to and encodes material culture.

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[26] Marcia Pointon hints at the tensions in hairwork in several of her articles on the subject, yet frames particular tensions as qualities of the hair rather than its working. Writing on Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), for instance, she writes, "the saving of a lock of hair marks a moment of transition, a vain attempt to counteract the impossibility of bridging the gap between two individuals, between the then and now, the living and the dead" ("Materializing Mourning" 48). Christiane Holm attributes tension to "[t]he cut edge of hair" and not necessarily its hairwork form because it "marks the act of remembrance as the very moment when its natural status was transformed into a cultural status, and when the present presence of the body is anticipated as a future absence" (140).

## Chapter One: A History of British Hairwork: Anxiety and Desire in Print

The history of hairwork is difficult to unravel, not least because of the blurry lines between unworked locks of hair, hairwork, and hairdressing. Alexanna Speight, in the vein of other essays on hair from the period, begins his guide to hairwork, *The Lock of Hair* (1871), with a history of hair, meandering through the significance of hair in other countries, cultures, and ages before coming to uniquely Victorian fashions for hairwork.[1] Still, there is much that needs to be teased out of the history of hairwork in Britain, and in particular the life of hairwork in print, in order to understand its place in Victorian literature and culture. I trace hairwork and its antecedents through sources such as hairwork manuals, catalogues, newspaper and periodical articles, and advertisements, as well as existing scholarship and literary representations, to provide a short history of hairwork that explains the trajectory of the craft. I begin with medieval, early modern, and eighteenth-century forms of hairwork, which provide a basis for hairwork's use in religious, romantic, and mourning contexts, before coming to the rise and decline of hairwork in the Victorian period. I consider the distinct desires and anxieties arising from self or professionally-made hairwork and account for how particular tensions came to the fore at certain points in its history owing to factors such as the introduction of new forms of hairwork, the expansion of the human hair trade, and the styling of hairwork as a fashionable accessory. I argue that while the broader print culture of hairwork, such as newspaper and periodical articles, developed the desires and anxieties surrounding hairwork, the manuals, catalogues, and advertisements written by hairworkers were a means by which they responded to and negotiated these tensions for the benefit of their businesses. In this way, hairwork print culture was not only a part of the greater milieu of handicraft culture but utilised tensions specific to hairwork in subtle and strategic ways.

The small body of scholarship on the history of hairwork is at times inconsistent and incomplete, giving conflicting accounts of its rise and decline, relying more on assumption than evidence, and neglecting the role and

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[1] Such essays on hair include Alexander Rowland's *An Essay on the Cultivation and Improvement of the Human Hair* (1809), *An Historical, Philosophical and Practical Essay on the Human Hair* (1816), and *The Human Hair: Popularly and Physiologically Considered* (1853), and James Rennie's *The Art of Preserving the Hair; On Philosophical Principles* (1825).

resource of print culture. Irene Guggenheim Navarro writes that the production of hair jewellery in Britain was fuelled by constant warfare (486). In the 1850s, the Indian Mutiny and Crimean War "took heavy tolls on England's male population and put many a wife, mother, sister, and friend into mourning" (Navarro 486).[2] Yet this cannot be the reason behind the majority of mid-century hairwork found in museum collections today which is, according to inscriptions and museum acquisition notes, made predominantly from women's hair in commemoration of the living, rather than for mourning purposes. Kate Hill suggests that as a result of the 1832 Anatomy Act, which granted doctors freer licence to dissect corpses, "people became less keen to view bones and other preserved organs which were redolent of the possibility of dismemberment after death; instead, an interest developed in more easily detachable elements such as hair" (156), which explains the collecting of hair but not the desire to work it. K. M. Oliver points out that "[hairwork's] popularity coincides with emerging industrialization, nascent consumerism, and transitional attitudes towards death" (39). Yet, as I argue later in this chapter, amateur hairwork, as a middle-class feminine pastime, resisted the impersonal economies of industrialisation and consumerism and was an affective, and not necessarily death-focussed, handicraft. Shirley Bury blames the gradually lowering cost of hairwork for the rising levels of suspicion that jewellers were substituting hair taken from convents and elsewhere on the continent for their commissions (*Sentimental Jewellery* 41). Accordingly, Bury states that hairwork declined in fashion after 1850 (45), several decades earlier than the estimations of other scholars.[3] Ginny Dawes and Corinne Davidov add that for a brief moment in 1838, "for some reason, hair jewelry was reviled" (140). Though specific in date, Dawes and Davidov provide no source or further comment. Equally puzzling is the way that Pamela A. Miller uses British and American examples of hairwork interchangeably when discussing its history, adding to the sense that many aspects of hairwork history have not yet been examined, differentiated, and explained.

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[2] Marvin D. Schwartz writes that "Hairwork jewelry was favoured by women in mourning" for being "appropriately somber", until the 1870s "when jet replaced it in popularity" (27).

[3] Ann Louise Luthi, in *Sentimental Jewellery* (2001; not to be confused with Bury's *An Introduction to Sentimental Jewellery*), writes that by Queen Victoria's State Jubilee in 1887 hair jewellery had gone out of fashion (29). Though it is impossible to put a precise date on the decline of hairwork, many scholars maintain its relative popularity throughout the 1860s and a little into the 1870s.

Historians of jewellery are mainly concerned with the finished products of an era and can sometimes neglect the processes by which those products were made. This poses a specific problem for understanding hairwork. Though many kinds of jewellery are handcrafted and highly artisanal, with hairwork there is the potential, even an incentive, for it to be made at home by the donor or recipient of the hair. Scholars who consider regional museum collections of hairwork, as opposed to more marketable jewellery from private collections, appear far more aware of the implications of the hairwork process for the pieces they discuss, perhaps because they are better placed to see hairwork as a local historical record of labour, whether domestic or commercial. Virginia L. Rahm, commenting on the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, imagines how “Patiently and laboriously, they would weave, knit, plait, mold, braid, crochet, and otherwise torture strands of hair into a variety of shapes and devices” (70). For those working hair for themselves, the process “was as important as the object itself. It articulated the owner’s familial, domestic, and artistic (as well as national) claims” (Schaffer, *Novel Craft* 14). The fact that hair was not always given over to a jeweller to be worked, but was sometimes worked in the home—whether to unite family members’ hair in a floral wreath or to weave a departed loved one’s hairs into mourning jewellery to be worn by the worker—situates the process as an expression of familial and local affiliation and a means of reinforcing personal and private associations.

Many histories of Victorian jewellery miss these issues surrounding the production of hairwork, most often noting its provenance in the form of mourning jewellery in the late eighteenth century and its use as a romantic token for the living in the nineteenth century before moving swiftly on to other jewellery styles (Dawes and Davidov 124; Gere 247; Lichten 192). Aesthetic judgement takes precedence over an appreciation of the process in many studies. Its epithets rarely go beyond “strange and rather morbid” (Laver 145) and “macabre” (Rahm 70). It is framed as a quirk of the time, at best another fugitive decoration of “the flamboyant Victorian imagination” (Lichten 192) and at worst it is “the worst of Victorian design” (Miller 103). One jewellery historian, Ernle Bradford, is deliberately brief on the topic of hairwork, despite a concession that “at one time there were a number of London manufacturers engaged in the production of little else” (92). Bradford presents a justification for the omission in his otherwise comprehensive *English Victorian Jewellery* (1959):

> [W]hat seem to me aberrations of taste, like human-hair jewellery, I have been content to dismiss in a sentence. Inevitably, where a subject requires the exercise of choice and discrimination, it is the writer's own taste and judgment which are on trial. (12)

Hairwork reappears in the course of the book as "one of the strange and sentimental aberrations of the Early Victorian period" but is kept, as promised, to one sentence (92). Bradford's attitude is typical of mid-twentieth-century evaluations of hairwork. "The gruesome idea of wearing jewelry made from the hair of a loved one who has died", write Lillian Chaplin Bragg and Cornelia Wilder in 1945, "is hard for the matter-of-fact person of today to grasp" (3). There is a hint of relief in Margaret Flower's one comment on hairwork in *Victorian Jewellery* (1957) that, after the trend for prominent hair jewellery in the mid-Victorian period, the fashion for enclosed locket forms returned: "Hair no longer composed earrings or bracelets, but was relegated to a small box on the underside of a brooch or pendant" (32). This distaste for hairwork may go some way towards explaining the lack of, or at least gap between, substantial accounts of the subject that I seek to rectify with this chapter.

### Medieval and Early Modern Hairwork: Romance and Relics

Hairwork is often discussed as a quintessentially Victorian phenomenon.[4] This is not strictly true. While there are particular hairwork techniques and fashions for hair jewellery that are unique to the period, similar ornaments have been found at least as far back as the medieval period. As Margaret Sleeman explains in "Medieval Hair Tokens" (1981), references to hairwork, of a sort, feature in medieval literature: "we read of hair embroidery, hair belts, ropes, bowstrings, even hair 'plumes' in helmets" (322). Locks of hair were sometimes given between lovers or as trophies to knights, such as in the romance of *Le Chastelain de Couci,* a French trouvère of the twelfth century in which a lady cuts off her braids to adorn her lover's helmet before he leaves to fight in the Crusades (Sleeman 329).

Mourning rings featuring the death's head were first made in Britain in the

[4] Frances Lichten writes that "It remained for the flamboyant Victorian imagination to develop to the full the possibilities of hair as a decorative material" (192), and Patricia Campbell Warner that hairwork "lent itself so beautifully to the somewhat maudlin sentimentality of the period" (57).

fifteenth century (Bury, *Rings* 46), and by the sixteenth century various kinds of memento mori jewellery featuring skulls, crossbones, and whole skeletons over a ground of woven hair were worn to remind the wearer of their mortality. But by the seventeenth century, Ann Louise Luthi explains, "these same symbols were beginning to be used for jewellery which was made not to warn of mortality in general but to commemorate the death of specific individuals" (4). The memento mori purpose of hairwork changed, in Maureen DeLorme's terms, to memento illius, from reminder of mortality to "the commemorative remembrance of 'another'" (65). Hair no longer stood for corporeality in general, but for the one specific body from which it was cut. It became a means through which to memorialise, and even to venerate, an individual. Following the execution of Charles I in 1649, for instance, relic-seeking royalists prized locks of his hair and kept them enclosed in ornate rings (Luthi 4). The growing desire for mourning jewellery to contain hair, notes Shirley Bury, was such that the absence of hair for this purpose could pose a problem. The relatives of William Webb (d. 1685), an Alderman of the City of London, settled for funerary rings instead of lockets for the reason that they would look better given the lack of hair (Bury, *Rings* 46). Still, a second shift from momento illius to memento moveri—a reminder of sentimental ties—was not fully realised until the eighteenth century, when grave skulls and skeletons gave way to more delicate funerary scenes, love knots, and flowers (Fennetaux 34).

Egeus's complaint in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600), that Lysander has secretly courted his daughter, Hermia, and "stolen the impression of her fantasy / With bracelets of thy hair" (I.i, lines 36-37), marks the emergent romanticising of hair jewellery in the seventeenth century.[5] Poems such as Thomas Carew's "A Pastoral Dialogue ('As Celia rested in the shade')" (1640), Thomas Stanley's "The Bracelet" and "The Bracelet: Tristan" (1651), and Henry King's "Upon a Braid of Hair in a Heart sent by Mrs. E. H." (1657) pick up on this romantic turn. John Donne's "The Relic" and "The Funeral" (1633) are particularly pertinent in dealing with the tensions underlying

[5] Erik Gray argues that Shakespeare plays upon the contemporary homophone of "hair" and "heir" in his sonnets as he implores the young man to find a match, and also in some of his plays, for example, *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), in which the fifty hairs on Troilus's chin are said to represent Priam's fifty sons, adding a further romantic/reproductive resonance to the conceit (225, 238). For further discussion of Shakespeare and hair, see Jonathan Gil Harris, "Shakespeare's Hair: Staging the Object of Material Culture" (2001).

this transitional period for hairwork.[6] In placing older superstitions surrounding death and relics in the context of romance and erotic love, Donne's poems use hairwork as a means to merge the sacred with the secular. In both poems a male speaker possesses a hair bracelet given to them by a woman as a love token, binding them together in spite of death. The "bracelet of bright hair about the bone" in "The Relic" may even enable their souls to "Meet at this grave, and make a little stay" (lines 6, 11).[7] These poems would seem to highlight an earlier appreciation of hair jewellery as more romantic than morbid, except that the bracelet is, in both, imagined as placed on the corpse of the speaker and buried with him, connecting the pair in death rather than life.[8] Tension is thus already key to hairwork's expressiveness. Like Mary's hair bracelet in Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854), which I discuss in Chapter Four, Donne's hair bracelets are objects of mourning, devotion, and erotic love enmeshed.

The conceit of sainthood and relic culture in these poems brings additional tension to the commemorative and connective function of the hair bracelets.[9] Locks of hair were preserved and worn as religious relics at least as far back as the ninth century. Charlemagne was buried at Aix-la-Chapelle wearing an amulet professing to contain the Virgin Mary's hair (Blersch 42).[10] The formal and symbolic connection between locks of hair and relics was at its height in the seventeenth century (Pointon, *Wearing Memory* 73). Hair was one of the first kinds of relic to be taken from saints' bodies because it was seen as superfluous to the body and was preferred to fingernails or teeth since it could

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[6] For a discussion of each of these poems and their hair bracelets in relation to sacramental union, see Megan Kathleen Smith, "Reading It Wrong to Get It Right: Sacramental and Excremental Encounters in Early Modern Poems about Hair Jewelry" (2015). On Donne's poems in relation to artefacts and memory, see William N. West, "'No endlesse moniment': Artificial Memory and Memorial Artifact in Early Modern England" (2005).

[7] "Stay" has several affectionate associations, mostly textile. It may refer to something that supports or steadies, such as the "stay" rope used to support the mast of a ship, in which case the hair bracelet is seen as a binding tie. It could also be a pun on "stays", a laced underbodice stiffened with whale bone like a corset and thereby phallic like the busk removed in Donne's "To His Mistress Going to Bed" (1654).

[8] For a less ambiguous depiction of romantic hairwork from this period, see Sir Anthony Van Dyck's 1632 portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria which shows her wearing a hair bracelet on her right wrist as part of her light, feminine, fashionable attire. The portrait is in the picture gallery of Buckingham Palace as part of the Royal Collection (RCIN: 404430).

[9] For a broader discussion of saints' body relics and reliquaries, see Elizabeth Hallam, *Anatomy Museum: Death and the Body Displayed* (2016; 99-103).

[10] William Shepard Walsh, in *Curiosities of Popular Customs* (1897), notes that Charlemagne also collected the locks of hair of St. Bartholomew and St. John the Baptist (20).

be collected without compromising the body's wholeness (K. Knight, para. 5).[11] Even in the eighteenth century, as belief in the sensibility of the pre-burial cadaver persisted, uncertainty over the workings of the soul (where it lived or slept until judgement day) meant that the longer-lasting parts of the body, like bones, hair, and nails, were granted special spiritual significance (Richardson 15; Oliver 40). In this explicit association, Abram Steen notes, Donne's hair bracelets become controversial burial charms since they "draw on the power of saints, relics, and older burial practices during a period in which these traditional forms of remembrance were being forgotten and completely eliminated from the English church" (96). One sixteenth-century injunction calls on the clergy to reject altogether the practice of putting objects "secretly upon or about the dead body; or else whether any pardons, cloths, relics, or such other be buried with the dead body" (Gittings 43). The devotion to and burial of these bracelets with the corpse is thus heretical: a transgression, a secret. They relate to Catholic and ancient folk customs which sought to create a point of contact between the living and the dead and, as Donne envisions, between the dead.

It is at this point that touch becomes important, though not in the same way as for the Victorians, whose open and directly touchable forms of hairwork I will come to later. Hairwork in the seventeenth century most commonly took the form of hair plaited beneath glass or coiled into compartments (as it remained for most of the following century). But when we consider the way that relics were treated and imagined as "working" in Counter-Reformation Europe, that hair was preserved behind a barrier begins to matter far less. James E. Kelly explains that relic-holders, such as glass cases and sculptures holding or adorned with relics, were believed to take on the same thaumaturgic powers as the relic itself through a kind of transference or emanation (49-50). "Such containers", Kelly argues, "became second-class relics and could possess their own supernatural qualities," citing reports of empty reliquaries healing the sick via the residual power of the removed relic (49). If we are to posit that hairwork in some way replicated or drew upon the religious relic in this period, it becomes apparent that its affective charge could be felt, if not directly touched, despite its

[11] Kimberley Knight adds that even after the ninth century, when "the reluctance to divide up a saint's body waned, hair continued to be an important relic" (para. 5).

enclosure and perhaps even because of it.[12] While secular hairwork may not generate miracles, its binding of two people spiritually and bodily might still tell of "These miracles we did" (Donne, "The Relic" 31), enclosed and preserved in the wearable, touchable form of a ring or brooch.

### Eighteenth-Century Hairwork: Mourning Jewellery and Sepia

In the eighteenth century, mourning jewellery, with or without hair, consisted mainly of rings, lockets, and brooches. Rings with a ground of silk or woven hair overlaid with initials started to appear at the end of the seventeenth century, though macabre designs with skulls and skeletons were also common (Mason 251). Mourning rings were ordered en masse throughout the century, distributed after funerals to family and friends as a mark of social distinction but with no real indication that they were meant to be worn by the recipients (Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death" 29).[13] Luthi gives the notable example of Samuel Pepys, who died in 1703, leaving one hundred and twenty-three rings to be given out in his memory (5). The public performance of social ties was at the centre of mourning jewellery in this period, rather than private feeling and deep affection. The emphasis on the giving and receiving of mourning rings, rather than on the wearing of them, places these articles as less important in themselves than in their exchange, particularly given the far smaller number of mourning jewels with hair commissioned. As Marcia Pointon notes, the culture of recycling in the eighteenth century meant that goods like jewellery were often bought with the expectation that they would at some point be repurposed or resold ("Valuing the Visual" 16), diminishing their particular value in relation to the deceased to a more general economic one: a small portable inheritance. Still, to give or receive mourning jewellery set with hair altered and embellished the social and economic dimensions of the gift. Hair was something to keep, to

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[12] The aforementioned connection between hairwork and royalism becomes entangled with catholicism in William Makepeace Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), a novel set in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The widowed Lady Castlewood prepares a bedroom for a royal guest: "there was a copy of 'Eikon Basilike' laid on the writing-table; a portrait of the martyred King, hung always over the mantel, having a sword of my poor Lord Castlewood underneath it, and a little picture or emblem which the widow loved always to have before her eyes on waking, and in which the hair of her lord and her two children was worked together. […] Lady Castlewood made a curtsy at the door, as she would have done to the altar on entering a church, and owned that she considered the chamber in a manner sacred" (193).

[13] On the large quantities of mourning rings ordered for funerals, see Margaret Hunter, "Mourning Jewellery: A Collector's Account" (1993).

treasure, despite the fungibility of its precious metal encasement.

Given its symbolic weight as a token of bodily intimacy, hair was far less liberally bestowed than the scores of mourning rings. Samuel Richardson's eponymous Clarissa Harlowe (1748) makes this distinction clear when she bequeaths around twenty mourning rings to friends and family on her death but reserves "four charming ringlets" for a select few, "her hair to be set in crystal" and held in a locket by Colonel Morden's heart (1381).[14] The lock of hair as a poetic trope appears most commonly in the eighteenth century in the form of an address to a woman who refuses to part with her hair. Through the figure of the lock, the speaker condemns vanity and coyness and reminds the woman of the inevitability of ageing and mortality, much like the trajectory of hairwork in the period, in which hair embellished the underside of romantic eye portraits and portrait miniatures but also provided the ground for memento mori jewellery featuring skeletons and crossbones. Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) would seem to be the epitome of the trope, framing the lock of hair in parodic terms as uniquely precious and analogous with feminine purity and virginity. In William Cowper's "Apology to Delia: For Desiring A Lock of Her Hair" (1752; also known by its first line, "Delia, th'unkindliest girl on earth"), the speaker chastises the addressee for her apparent haughtiness: "I sought it merely to defraud / Thy spoiler of his prey" (lines 11-12). As a consequence of its sexual and bodily connotations, hair was not prominently displayed for others to see but more often encased in a ring or inconspicuously preserved within a locket, or else worn beneath clothing.[15] Portrait miniatures and eye portraits of lovers gained popularity later in the century and sometimes incorporated locks of hair, though the hair was almost always concealed on the reverse of the brooch as an intimate, private centre facing in towards the body of the wearer. Worked hair in this period marked the recipient as of particular social consequence while *privately* distinguishing them from others in the affections of the donor.

In the last quarter of the century, hairwork and other forms of mourning jewellery began to take on more romantic associations, in part influenced by the popularity of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) by Johann Wolfgang von

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[14] See Kathleen M. Oliver, "'With My Hair in Crystal': Mourning Clarissa" (2010).

[15] In Henry Fielding's *Amelia* (1751) Captain Booth wears a lock of Amelia's hair beneath his shirt on his bosom after she leaves it for him in a casket along with an assortment of medicines.

Goethe. Alongside this, sepia painting, a new form of hairwork in which “the hair relic literally becomes image” (Grootenboer 503), merged pictorial representation and bodily fragment (see fig.1.i). There are two ways of preparing the hair for sepia painting. One involves finely cutting and mixing the hair with an adhesive such as gum arabic or musilix, and the other, often referred to as dissolved hairwork, grinding and mixing the hair with brown or grey pigment before painting it onto an ivory palette (DeLorme 66). Hair painted *en brunaille* or *en grisaille* in this way was well suited to cyphers, flowers, landscapes and graven subjects, such as figures with bowed heads beside memorials, much like popular images of Charlotte mourning Werther’s death (Miller 98).

Fig. 1.i — Gold bracelet clasp with river scene painting in sepia and hair on ivory under glass, late eighteenth century. BM: 2008, 8007.6. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Sepia designs with neo-classical motifs along with urns, tombs, weeping willows and columns were, however, coming into vogue before the publication of Goethe’s novel. In 1762 the *Bath Journal* printed an advert for “HAIR WORK, in all its extensive Forms, Fancies, and Devices, such as Likenesses, Landscapes, Cyphers, Altars, Urns, Trees, Plats [sic], &c.” (3), a service offered

not by a professional hairworker but by the daughter of Mr Chilcot who, writing this advert for her, vouches that she is "inimitable in HAIR WORK".[16] Hairwork in the eighteenth century was either a skill advertised locally by the amateur or a secondary service offered by jewellers of mourning wares. There is one notable example of a jeweller's book of patterns from the era that deals explicitly with hairwork. R. Rogers of 12 Duke's Court, St Martin's Lane (not far from Soho where many Victorian hairworkers had their premises) designed *A New Book for Hair Work* in 1790, a small hand-illustrated catalogue which features designs for mourning scenes, monograms, neo-classical pieces, urn epitaphs and landscapes. Some designs draw on the older memento mori tradition—such as those on a plate shaded in black, the centre-top design showing a winged spirit or cherub above a skull, or death's head, a symbol of the soul leaving the body (Keister 136)—and some are moralising in other ways—such as the designs on Plate 6 for "Prudence", "Justice", "Fortitude", and "Temperance" (see fig. 1.ii). Still, many of these designs are joyfully romantic rather than morbid. Also on Plate 6, design 11 features two figures drinking from a fountain beside a lake with foliage above them. Encircling this design are four winged cherubs carrying floral garlands and to the left are two birds tying a knot between their beaks above two hearts. Plate 8 includes three landscapes, presumably places recognisable by their bridges and spires, maybe intended as souvenirs for tourists or as cherished scenes of home. As these designs suggest, hairwork was beginning to be used for lighter, more positive expressions of sentimentality. There is a latent tactility to Rogers's designs, partly on account of their being hand-drawn but also owing to their paired compositions. On an unnumbered plate the central image is of two women in an embrace over an urn, while above them two cherubs reach across a memorial plaque to touch their arrows together, and to the centre-left two figures straddle a wide urn, touching feet. As I discuss in Chapter Two, touch became an increasingly important part of hairwork as the touchability of the hair, or at least the representation of touch as in these designs, became a means of materialising a connection between the living and dead, the present and the absent.

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[16] The *Bath Journal* was Bath's first newspaper, published by Thomas Bodley in 1744. Phyllis Hembry notes that local newspapers such as this one emerged early in Spa towns as they were a means by which to provide advertisements for houses and lodgings to let, local shops and businesses, and vacancies for servants as well as information on upcoming events and local society news (150). Even in this early advertisement, hairwork is advertised to a fashion-conscious, middle-class audience with wealth and leisure time at their disposal.


Fig. 1.ii — Hairwork designs. R. Rogers. *A New Book for Hair Work.* London: N.p., 1790. Plate 6.

Some of the Werther-inspired overwrought sentimentality that shaped the subjects of sepia in the late eighteenth century was carried over into nineteenth-century hairwork. Palette work initially maintained a similar style of emblematic design to sepia (hence the survival of the term “hair device”, which was also used to describe sepia jewellery), drawing on sources such as Samuel Fletcher’s *Emblematical Devices* (1810) and Frederick Knight’s *Knight’s Gems; or, Device Book* (1836). Indeed, Fletcher’s book features the same emblem of two birds tying a knot as they fly apart as the one shown in Roger’s *New Book for Hair Work,* with the added motto “The further apart the closer united” (28). New designs for hairwork, however, tended to be more sanguine than the mournful designs of the eighteenth century and more often depicted flowers and feathers than urns and weeping willows. Margaret Hunter cites an 1819 letter from an Edinburgh jewellery firm advising their client:

> [W]e are extremely sorry that owing to the urns and willow trees being so long out of fashion that we could not find anyone in Edinburgh that could execute them. There is two men in [Edinburgh] that used to be in the habit of doing these things about twenty years ago, both of which made an attempt to do them for us, but owing to their hands being so long out of that work none of them could make a proper job of them (13).[17]

Although Whitby jet jewellery quite commonly featured compartments for enclosing the hair of the deceased (and this industry likewise didn't reach its peak until the mid-century), the link between mourning and hair was on account of the jet rather than the hair (Roos 51). By the turn of the nineteenth century, romantic and sentimental designs for hairwork were supplanting overt mourning jewellery, with the use of hair in jewellery denoting love but not necessarily bereavement (Bury, *Sentimental Jewellery* 36; Luthi 10; Sheumaker, "This Lock You See" 426-27).[18]

Garnet Terry, a print-maker and jeweller of Paternoster Row, published in the same year as Rogers's hairwork book *A Complete Round of Cyphers for the use of Engravers, Painters, Sculptors, Jewellers, Hair Workers, Enamellers, Pattern-Drawers, &c* (1790). This emblem book, a set of examples of ornate lettering that might be copied in various mediums, demonstrates how hairwork was for many artists and workers in the late eighteenth century simply another form of surface decoration. In contrast to Rogers's catalogue of hand-drawn illustrations purposefully designed to be recreated in hair, Terry presents a series of precisely formed lettering styles, better suited to engravers than hairworkers. There is nothing in Terry's designs to suggest an engagement with hair as a distinctive material. It is simply that the hairworker might, like the engraver or enameller, wish to draw from a repository of decorative lettering. The Brontë Parsonage Museum holds a piece that calls to mind Terry's designs, a tiny brooch with a flat palette of hair overlaid with curly initials (HAOBP: J64). The hair in this piece seems subordinate to the lettering, a background of dull blonde against which the white lettering stands out in shade and relief. Indeed,

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[17] I refer to the clients, as opposed to customers, of hairworkers throughout on the basis that they provided a service rather than a product.

[18] Despite the common assumption that hair would have been cut from the corpse to be used in mourning jewellery, there are more accounts from the early nineteenth century of hair cut during life than in death for this purpose. Fennetaux notes a man who sent a ring containing a lock of his hair to his sweetheart to act as mourning jewellery in the eventuality of his death: the ring was half inscribed, pending date of death ("Fashioning Death" 32). Patricia Jalland gives numerous examples from this period of locks of hair being cut and worked in times of illness, as well as inscriptions for mourning jewellery being drafted by the dying (214, 288, 298).

Terry's own ventures in hairwork rather bury hair behind fancy print. Of the many trade cards in the British Museum that advertise his work as an engraver, printer, bookseller, black buckle and steel seal manufacturer, and jeweller, only one mentions his selling "Devices in Hair" halfway down the list of services offered (BM: Banks, 59.195). Terry's following book, *A Book of New and Allegorical Devices for Artists in general, and Particularly for Jewellers, Enamel Painters, Pattern Drawers etc*. (1795), omits "hair workers" from its title, perhaps because hairwork was an increasingly popular area of diversification for jewellers and so did not necessitate the explicit reference or, more likely, because this emblematic style of sepia was already beginning to lose its appeal. By the Georgian era, sepia jewellery depicting mourning scenes was out of fashion and ceased to be used at all in hairwork after 1830 (Gere 247; Navarro 489-90). The elderly ladies of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851-53) show their woefully provincial and out-of-date sensibilities in wearing an array of "old brooches" decorated "like small picture-frames with mausoleums and weeping-willows neatly executed in hair inside" (120).

### Victorian Hairwork: Palette Work, Table Work, and Gimp Work

Victorian hairwork utilised new techniques and designs, with distinct motifs and trends taking shape from the 1840s onwards. Following a run of three articles on "Hair-Work" in *The Lady's Newspaper* in 1850*,* several periodicals and newspapers began publishing instructions for those wishing to make hairwork for themselves. Guides to table work were far more prevalent than any other kind of hairwork. William Martin's *The Hair Worker's Manual* (1852), F. L. S.'s *The Art of Ornamental Hair Work* (1856) and a hairwork chapter in *Elegant Arts for Ladies* (1856) focused primarily on table work techniques for bracelets. As the publication dates of these craft manuals suggest, it was not until the 1850s that instructions and specific tools for earlier forms of hairwork, such as palette work and sepia, became available to the amateur at home, despite being by this time less fashionable than table work. Indeed, palette work was a form of hairwork carried over from the eighteenth century which went through a few key modifications in the mid-nineteenth century.

Fig. 1.iii (left) — Brooch enclosing lock of hair (date unknown). HARGM: 5024.

Fig. 1.iv (right) — Palette work swivel brooch (daguerrotype on reverse), circa 1855-65. M/C CAG: 1980.40.

Palette work involves arranging hair on a flat surface and using gum or glass to preserve it within a receptacle such as a brooch or locket.[19] It is found in its most simple form—a curl or plait of hair behind glass—in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century brooches, lockets and rings (see fig 1.iii). These encased locks were most often placed on the back of a piece of jewellery (especially with eye and portrait miniatures) so that the hair would face the body when worn. Christiane Holm argues that the concealing of hair in hidden compartments in this way served to "connect it to the intimate sphere of the body" and to mark the wearer as "a participant in a hidden intimate network, from which other viewers are excluded" (140). Hairwork became in these early decades a visible component of jewellery, rather than its hidden centre, as its social function shifted from a token of private intimate connection to one of public fashionable sentimentality.

There were two new techniques within palette work by the mid-century which went along with the shift towards more decorative and elaborate styles of hairwork. Both begin with hair being gummed onto a flat surface. The flattened

[19] Gum was used in Victorian palette work because with it the hair could be manipulated into more elaborate designs. In earlier and simpler palette work, gum was often avoided so that the jewellery receptacle might be reused or the hair replaced, as Princess Augusta Sophia indicates in a letter to Sophia Charlotte Feilding: "I take the liberty of offering You a locket which I hope You will do me the favour to accept - It is to contain the Hair of Your invaluable Mother and I would not let the Jeweller put in any Hair least it might be spoilt by Gum" (29 August 1813).

strands could then be left to dry before being cut into shape and arranged into a design, producing “cut work” (DeLorme 66), or they could be manipulated while still wet and pliable, pushed into shape with a brush or pointed tool (see fig 1.iv). These styles were often executed using the hair of several donors, not only for sentimental reasons but aesthetic purposes of creating the light and shade of pictorial designs. Palette work was thus a bridge between sepia and table work in technique and effect. Its composition was more obviously hair-like than with sepia because the shades and shapes created came from the hairs themselves and not from pigment mixed with ground hair. It may be aligned with table work in that hair is also the primary material of its composition—woven and worked, albeit to be placed into a frame or enclosure. Palette work consequently stands at an awkward point in the century. The number of adverts for professional hairwork began to rise in the late 1840s, with jewellers such as Benjamin and J. Lee and George Dewdney offering their services in *The Lady’s Newspaper* from 1847 onward. But what is being promoted, even at this point, are “New Invented Secure Hair Bracelets” and “new elastic Hair Bracelets”: not palette work at all, but table work.[20] Palette work filled the gap between fashions for sepia and table work but, likely to its detriment, came before the boom in instructional material in the mid-century. Guides to palette work, such as William Martin’s, were eventually printed in the 1850s, but at a point when it had already become subordinate to table work.

The method of table work involved arranging a bundle of hair into strands around a circular frame (freestanding or fixed to a table) with a hollow centre, securing these strands with weights at either end, and crossing them over one another to form a braid (see fig. 1.v).[21] This technique preserved hair in a way that meant it could be openly seen and touched. Hair was no longer pressed behind a glass barrier or enclosed within a metal compartment: it formed the chains, bands, and beads of jewellery rather than its obscure centre (see fig. 1.vi). It was more complicated than earlier forms of hairwork, requiring more hair, specific tools, and far more time and skill.

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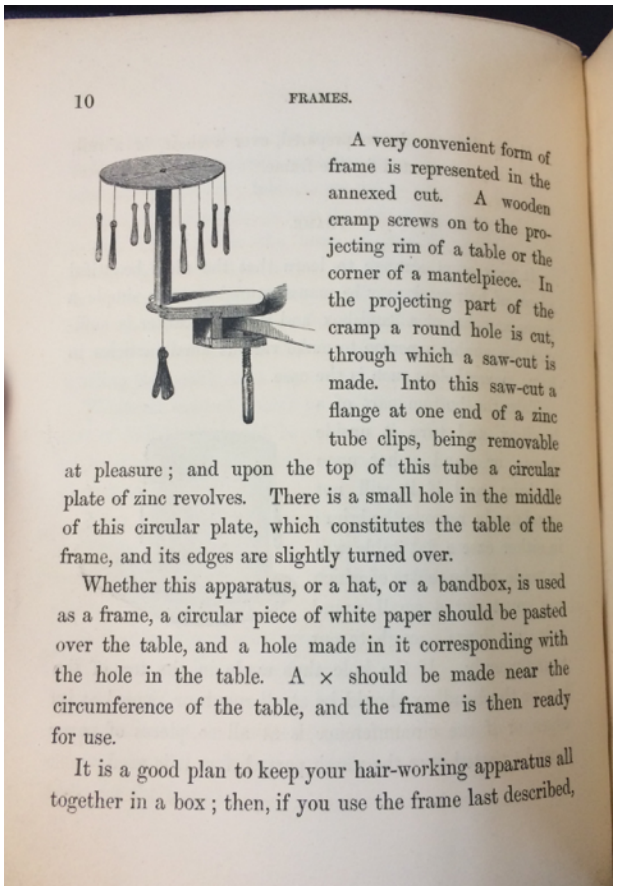
[20] J. Lee advertised his “New Invented Secure Hair Bracelets” for the first time in *The Lady’s Newspaper* in January 1847, and in March 1848 Benjamin Lee, of the same address, added “new elastic Hair Bracelets” to their services (“Souvenirs in Hair”).

[21] Table work is very similar in apparatus and process to the Japanese craft of Kumihimo (“gathered threads”) in which silk is woven around circular tables called Marudai or rectangular frames called Takadai for flat braids.



10 FRAMES.

A very convenient form of frame is represented in the annexed cut. A wooden cramp screws on to the projecting rim of a table or the corner of a mantelpiece. In the projecting part of the cramp a round hole is cut, through which a saw-cut is made. Into this saw-cut a flange at one end of a zinc tube clips, being removable at pleasure; and upon the top of this tube a circular plate of zinc revolves. There is a small hole in the middle of this circular plate, which constitutes the table of the frame, and its edges are slightly turned over.

Whether this apparatus, or a hat, or a bandbox, is used as a frame, a circular piece of white paper should be pasted over the table, and a hole made in it corresponding with the hole in the table. A × should be made near the circumference of the table, and the frame is then ready for use.

It is a good plan to keep your hair-working apparatus all together in a box; then, if you use the frame last described,

Fig. 1.v — Illustration of table work frame. F. L. S. *The Art of Ornamental Hair Work*. London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1856. 10.


Fig. 1.vi — Table work hair bracelet, circa 1840-60. M/C CAG: 1954.1082.

Table work was practised in Germany before it came to Britain, with Emilie Berrin's *Gründliche Anweisung für Frauen auf alle mögliche Art Haargeflechte nach der jetzigen Mode zu fertigen* (*Thorough Instructions for Women on the Production of All Possible Kinds of Hairbraids According to the Current Fashion*) published in Leipzig in 1822. The frontispiece shows four women engaged in different kinds and stages of hairwork (see fig 1.vii). On the left a woman works on a circular table similar to those depicted in British hairwork manuals, except the frame is domed rather than flat. In the centre, two women work a flat braid using a similar set-up to one depicted in William Martin's *The Hair Worker's Manual* except their braid is weighted around a cushion rather than a wooden frame, much like in the making of bobbin or pillow lace.[22] A woman boils her finished hairwork above a stove on the right.

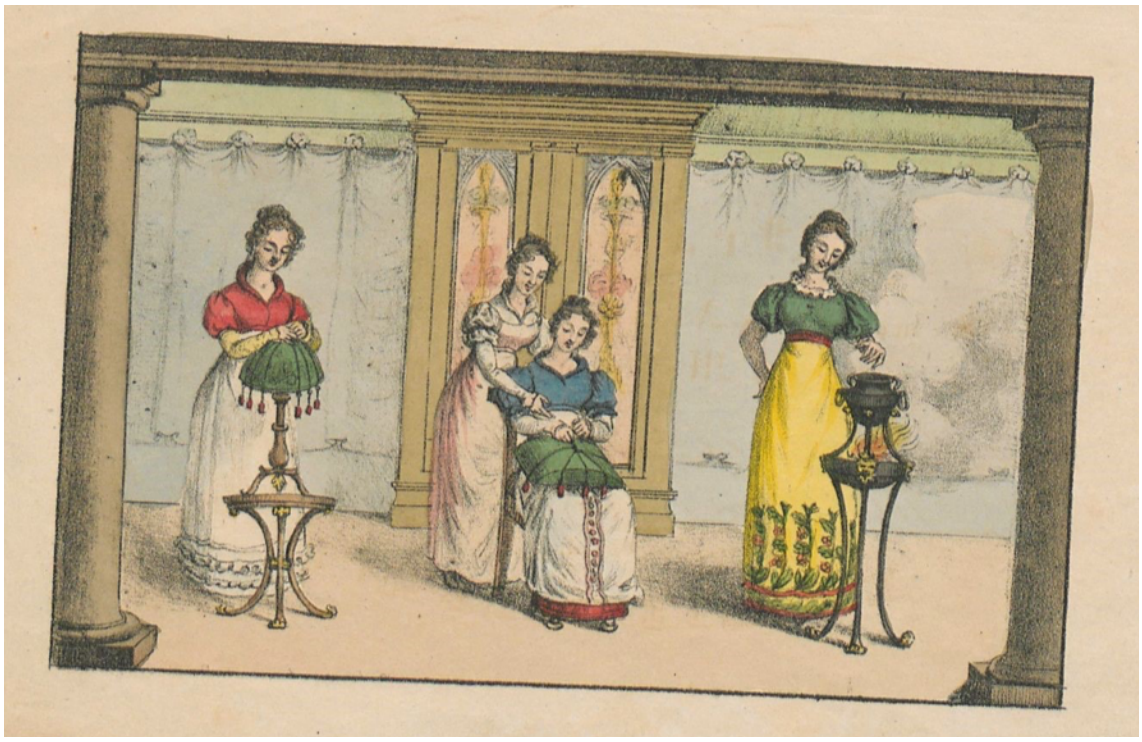


Fig. 1.vii — Frontispiece showing table work at various stages. Emilie Berrin. *Gründliche Anweisung für Frauen auf alle mögliche Art Haargeflechte nach der jetzigen Mode zu fertigen, als: Elastische Leibgürtel, Armbänder, Halsbänder, Uhrbänder, Ringe, Kniebänder etc*. Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1822. N. p.

The technique of gimp work involves the looping of hair and wire around a pencil or knitting needle and can be used to create hair flowers, hearts, and all manner of three-dimensional designs. Gimp work was used for various kinds of

[22] Table work techniques do appear to be very similar to the processes of lace-making and hairwork as a whole may well be indebted to other established needlework practices (hair embroidery is an obvious hybrid form).

hair flowers, as well as their leaves and tendrils, with hair wrapped or looped around wires. Whole wreaths could be formed using hair flowers of different coloured hair, and wreaths comprised of the hairs of family members (as in the mother-daughter wreath of Lady Emma Hamilton and Horatia Nelson's hair) were a common use of the technique (see fig. 1.viii).

Fig. 1.viii — Gimp work wreath of the hair of Lady Emma Hamilton and Horatia Nelson, 1807. NMM: REL0063. © National Maritime Museum Collections.

Hairwork put to this kind of decorative purpose, however, was far more common in America in the mid- to late nineteenth century. American manuals such as Levina Buoncuore Urbino and Henry Day's *Art Recreations* (1859) and C. S. Jones and Henry T. Williams *Ladies' Fancy Work: Hints and Helps to Home Taste and Recreations* (1876) provide instructions for gimp work and elaborate on this technique with instructions for making various kinds of hair flowers: roses, pansies, forget-me-nots, fuchsias, leaves and tendrils. Gimp work and other wire techniques are not explained in British hairwork manuals, though the fourth volume of *Cassell's Household Guide* (circa 1874) mentions

the use of hair in household ornaments and mementos. “The purpose to which hair-work is usually devoted is that of jewellery,” writes Cassell, “though designs thus made are sometimes mounted and framed, in the same manner as photographs and miniatures, for hanging upon walls” (357). An 1885 article in *Cornhill Magazine,* “Hair-Device Workers”, also makes clear reference to the practice of gimp work, along with palette work, in decades past: “of all the old *clientèle* there remain only a few who arrange curls like ostrich feathers in albums; a few who indulge rarely in a wreath of hair forget-me-nots and pansies round enlarged photographs” (68). Though gimp work was practised in Britain, then, it was made at home by the amateur enthusiast without written instructions or with those borrowed from the many American sources on decorative household hairwork.[23]

### Desire: Advertising and Affect, Femininity and Fashion

The hairwork industry peaked in the 1850s alongside a corresponding increase in printed hairwork advertisements and catalogues, as well as literary representations of hairwork as we shall see in the proceeding chapters.[24] If ubiquity in print can be taken as an indication of ubiquity in reality, then it may be granted that in this decade women—and men, too—were likely to be aware of, if not already adorned with, the latest designs in hair jewellery.[25] On 2 March 1850, Christian Olifiers announced the publication of his *Album of Ornamental Hair-work* in *The Lady’s Newspaper*, offering his skills that “Ladies and gentlemen may see their own hair worked in any souvenir” (126), rewording and reprinting this advert fifty-five times over four years.[26] Rivalling Olifiers’s

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[23] Mark Campbell’s *Self-Instructor in the Art of Hair Work* (1867) is often cited as a key factor in the popularity of hairwork in America, with a new edition published in 1875 and a further book on dying hair in 1879. It is possible that copies of Campbell’s *Self-Instructor* made their way to Britain, along with other popular publications such as *Godey’s Lady’s Book,* which featured adverts and articles on hairwork throughout the 1850s and 60s.

[24] Literary representations of hairwork from the 1850s not mentioned elsewhere in this thesis include: Charlotte Yonge’s *Heartsease* (1854), in which Emma has a locket holding her father’s, brother’s and mother’s locks of hair together; Lord Alfred Tennyson’s “Maud” (1855), in which Maud’s brother wears his mother’s hair in a ring; Christina Rossetti’s *Maude: A Story for Girls* (1850, published 1897), in which a bracelet of Maude’s hair is given to Mary.

[25] I discuss the use of hairwork in masculine accessories in Chapter Four. Hairworkers such as Henry Rushton and Christian Olifiers included hairwork cufflinks, watch guards, shirt pins, and gentlemen’s rings in their catalogues.

[26] Olifiers’s adverts appeared regularly in *The Lady’s Newspaper* between 2 March 1850 and 8 July 1854.

campaign, Davorens, “artists in hair”, advertised their “Hair Snake Bracelets” and “Forget-Me-Not Hair Rings” in the same paper on sixty-three occasions between 28 September 1850 and 25 December 1858. George Dewdney outweighs all, advertising his hairwork services over eighty times across *The Lady’s Newspaper, The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine, Le Follet, John Bull, The Times, The Examiner* and *The Illustrated London News* over a period of twenty-five years.[27]

As this boom in advertising would suggest, the number of hairworkers in Britain rose substantially in the mid-century. According to the London Directory of 1853, Rowland writes, there were twenty-four “artistes or workers in hair—hair jewellers, or device workers” at this time in London, plus seventeen ambiguously termed “hair-manufacturers” whom Rowland thinks may belong with the number of workers in hair since there are separate tallies for hair-merchants, hair-dressers, barbers and wig-makers (*The Human Hair* 161). Though London was the centre of the hairwork trade, other cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Dublin, Belfast, Carlisle, and Edinburgh had a small share of professional hairworkers who advertised their services in local papers and travel guides.[28] There were businesses offering hairwork in smaller towns, such as Tunbridge Wells and Taunton, but they were almost exclusively manufacturers and traders of other wares, such as watchmakers and barbers, who were able to add hairwork to their repertoire given their particular skill set.[29] Hairwork, along with other handicrafts, was made and could be purchased at institutions for the blind across the country (“Blind Mechanics” 102), and was taught to blind children in York to “enable them to gain a livelihood” (Hunton 171). Many London jewellers and hairworkers widely advertised their mail-order services, posting out their catalogues across the country for clients to post their selected design and the hair to be worked back. Those outside the city were,

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[27] Dewdney’s first advert appeared on 10 April 1847 in *The Lady’s Newspaper* and apparently his last (a short notice in response to a reader) on 1 February 1872 in *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine.* There were also adverts placed as early as 1808 for W. Dewdney, a possible relative of George, who states “All kinds of Hair Work and Jewellery made, altered, and repaired” (“Wonderful Productions of Nature” 51).

[28] Such hairworkers included Charles Rankin of 12b Nassau Street, Dublin; J. L. Martinez of 104 Brunswick Road, Liverpool; Thomas Deare of Castle Street, Liverpool; P. Mullan of 49 High Street, Belfast; and John Nutsford of 23 Bank Street, Carlisle.

[29] W. Loof of Tunbridge Wells, a watchmaker, advertises “Jewellery of every description repaired and cleaned. Hair work executed” (Phippen 13); an advert for F. J. Spiller of Taunton, watch and clock maker and jeweller, states that “In hairwork, engravings and electro-gilding Mr. Spiller has a good reputation” (*Where to Buy at Taunton* 41).

therefore, by no means restricted to their local hairworker. Indeed, London offered the services of several international hairworkers—Hansen and de Konig of Soho Bazaar from Germany, an unnamed Swedish hairworker patronised by Jenny Lind, the opera singer, and several *artistes en cheveux* from France—adding variety and European flair to its attractions.[30] The competition posed by advertising and hairwork manuals from London hairworkers meant that, even in the country, city-made hairwork was most desirable. Perhaps as testament to this, much of the Victorian hairwork found in museums in the North of England bears the mark of London jewellers. The Harrogate Museums and Arts Collection, for instance, situated in a Victorian spa town, holds a chain still in its original box from Charles Packer of Regent Street, hairworker to the Queen.[31] Some hairworkers located outside of London made their connection to the capital clear as shorthand for their good reputation and skilled services. An 1815 advert in *Wright's Leeds Intelligencer* for "Powell, Working Jeweller and Fancy Hair Worker" places the hairworker in large bold capitals as "FROM LONDON", though now situated "Opposite the Bank, in George Street, Halifax" (1). Prestige, expertise, variety of designs, and knowledge of the latest fashions lay firmly in the hands of the London hairworkers.

Within London, hairworkers' premises were concentrated around Soho and Fitzrovia, nearby or within Soho Bazaar and the Pantheon.[32] These commercial bazaars are important to note as they situate hairwork as part of a middle-class feminine craft culture. The location of London hairworkers' premises around bazaars shows how the commercial spaces of hairwork, as well as its domestic contexts, were feminised. Selling "objets d'art, curiosities, knick-knacks" and all sorts of fancywork, mid-century London bazaars, writes Rohan McWilliam, facilitated the curating of decorative objects to adorn the home and cultivate an

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[30] An article on "Hair-Device Workers" printed in *Cornhill Magazine* in 1885 mentions the Swedish hairworker who made pieces for the famous opera singer Jenny Lind, adding that she "learned the art as a girl in her native province, from no master, but, as an accomplishment, from her companions in the village" (65).

[31] The stamp on the box states "Packer late Forrer" dating the production of the chain to sometime between 1852 and 57 since Antoni Forrer was in partnership with Charles Packer at his 136 Regent Street premises during this period (Gere and Rudhoe 166), before moving alone to a premises in Baker Street in 1858.

[32] Hairworkers who held premises in Soho include: Alexanna Speight of Soho Bazaar, Hansen and de Konig of 440 Soho Bazaar, William Cleal of 53 Poland Steet, Christian Olifiers of 35 Old Compton Street, Alfred Shuff of 43 Great Marlborough Steet, Antoni Forrer of 136 Regent Street, and Charles Packer of 78 Regent Street. Those who held premises in Fitzrovia include: E. Soutten of 80 Oxford Street, Cook and Birchett of 150 Oxford Street, Richard Townley of 93 Oxford Street, Benjamin Lee of 41 Rathbone Place, E. Ayres of 52 Mortimer Street, and Thomas Mildenhall of 53 Warren Street.

individualised middle-class identity (19). Hairwork, commissioned and sold at bazaars, plays a clear role in this as a uniquely individual form of ornament. Soho Bazaar was known for haberdashery supplies, dress and accessories for women and children, and fancywork with stalls run by women for an almost exclusively female clientele (McWilliam 22-23). Along with professionally-made hairwork, women could purchase the tools for making hairwork and other crafts, adding to the sense of the bazaar as a place of feminine decorative individuation. Significantly, in these commercial centres, men were treated with condescension while women were encouraged to buy or make crafts. The bazaar was a space for women to proclaim their roles "as mothers and guardians of the house-hold" through their purchases, and a place for "the performance of trustworthiness and probity" (McWilliam 23, 22). This atmosphere of virtue was an important factor for hairworkers because their trade was viewed with some suspicion, as I will come to shortly. Bazaars thus played a part in framing women as the primary consumers of hairwork, while locating hairwork businesses as part of a larger culture of domestic handicrafts and female creative agency.

William Martin's *The Hair Worker's Manual* opens with an introduction "To the Ladies", which gives the motive for writing his book as stemming from the suggestions of several "patronesses" of his business (i). As addressees of these craft manuals, women were assumed to be the primary consumers of professional hairwork and its amateur makers.[33] Hairwork flourished alongside other domestic handicrafts which utilised natural, accessible, and affectively suggestive materials like shells, flowers, seaweed, and ferns. Constance Classen argues that the use of such organic products, as well as the representation of the natural world through motifs such as flowers and trees, rendered a particular craft feminine, though an engagement in feminine forms of craft "was not just the result of an oppressive redirection of feminine creativity into trivial pastimes, but, in many cases, a considered elaboration of a feminine aesthetic" ("Feminine Tactics" 236-37). Far from being trivial, bringing the practice of handicrafts into the home provided women with a pastime that demonstrated, at the same time as it developed, a series of desirable attributes

[33] The extended title of Martin's book—"C*ontaining Directions and Instructions to Enable Ladies to Prepare and Work Their Own Materials*"—is explicit in the gender of its intended audience, whereas F. L. S. is more subtle in his gendering of the craft and goes some way before mentioning the need for tools such as knitting needles, "which all ladies possess" (14).

such as thrift, taste, delicacy, and patience. Domestic handicrafts provided an outlet for creativity while morally improving the crafter and, by extension, her household.[34] In his chapter on relics in *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions* (1841), Charles Mackay characterises locks of hair and hairwork as "home-relics, whose sacred worth is intelligible to all" (154), supposing them to memorialise and sanctify the place and idea of the home, as well as the memory of their donor. *Elegant Arts for Ladies* lists "weaving or plaiting hair ornaments" in its contents alongside "sea-weed pictures", "pictures in sand", "feather flowers", and "etiquette, politeness, and good breeding" (i), picking up in this last entry on the moral dimension of handicraft as a means of refining the behaviour of crafters. The mere presence of handicrafts in the home, states *Elegant Arts,* "unquestionably tends to keep a household together, while they also purify the taste and exalt the minds of its members" (iv), symbolically unifying the family in bringing them to an appreciation of the products of female labour and cultivating in all a lovingly hand-made aesthetic.

Hairwork incorporated many natural materials besides human hair, from precious metals and gemstones like gold and jet surrounding the work, to animal products such as ivory and goldbeater's skin forming its base.[35] Animal furs, feathers, and body parts were widely used in Victorian jewellery and decorative arts, sometimes for their rich jewel-like iridescence, as with hummingbird jewellery and fish-scale embroidery, or simply for their taxidermy-able vitality, as with immortelles of stuffed animals and wax flowers (Curl 21). In almost every form, it appears that animal components were used symbolically as a codification of human affects and relationships. Scottish mizpah brooches, given a boost of popularity by Queen Victoria's fondness for Balmoral, were composed of red grouse feet with the Hebrew "mizpah" meaning "the lord watch over me and thee" inscribed on the pin, and would be attached to kilts ahead of hunting trips (Hillier 81). Within hairwork specifically, animal hair was used alongside or instead of human hair. White horsehair, for instance, could be used to stitch seed pearls in place (DeLorme 95). Owing to its comparative thickness,

[34] Writing on American hair wreaths, Beverley Gordon argues that, as beauties and beautifiers of the household, women's bodies were inscribed on the nineteenth-century interior as it was dressed and embellished with products of their crafting. This holds true for some British hairwork since to make ornaments out of hair was to turn a part of the body into a part of the home (Gordon 290), though hair was more commonly made into jewellery than decorative pieces in Britain.

[35] Goldbeater's skin is a thin, flexible, transparent sheet made from the outer membranes of cattle guts.

the incorporation of a little horsehair could add strength and springiness to hairwork. Jewellery composed entirely of horsehair was harder to work, however, because of these same qualities and was less fine in appearance. It was made mostly as a novelty.[36]

Horsehair was more commonly used to make long-wearing textiles, utensils such sieves, and stiff materials like crinoline since, according to Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Fashions* (1829), it was a "fine clear stuff, not unlike in appearance to leno, but of a very strong and durable description" (78).[37] Horsehair was also crimped and used to stuff chairs and other furniture, though this was a more common practice in the eighteenth century.[38] There is, however, some crossover between the underskirts of crinoline and the open display of hairwork. A mid-Victorian bonnet in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, features crinoline lace, a yellow net of horsehair trimming the pale green silk (RAMM: 82/1929/18). That this material was used for decoration, and not golden thread or plain lace, is intriguing. Perhaps horsehair was a cheaper option or more readily available to the maker. Alternatively, these may be the hairs of a particularly well-loved or prized horse, their hairs deliberately chosen and worked to adorn the bonnet of the rider. The bonnet may romanticise country life through its natural bucolic material. Whatever the reason, the bonnet demonstrates the aesthetic appeal of horsehair as a shiny golden mesh and shows a clear link between worked horsehair and ornament. Among the "Great Novelties in Hair-Work'" (22) offered by Henry Rushton in his *Illustrated Catalogue of the Newest Designs of Hair Jewellery* (circa 1858) are several riding whips, though the price list specifies the first as a "Gold Mounted *Human* Hair Ladies' Riding Whip" (36, my emphasis). While there may have been an imaginative link between horses and hairwork, this example appears more telling of the desire to work hair into an object associated with the donor or receiver's lifestyle and pastimes, whether

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[36] An article on "The Rochester Anti-Slavery Society Baazar" of 1855 advertised "novel horse-hair work and bracelets from Cork" for sale as part of their fundraising efforts (143).

[37] Slovenia had a large horsehair sieve-making industry in the nineteenth century and the Gorenjska Museum in Kranj holds many related tools and artefacts. The craft of weaving these sieves was practised in Britain, too, as an 1888 illustration of "The Sweating System" in the *Illustrated London News* shows. Moose hair was used in textiles in North America and Siberia for similar purposes: sometimes for decorative embroidery and sometimes purely for its durability. See Geoffrey Turner, *Hair Embroidery in Siberia and North America* (1955).

[38] *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift plays on the use of hair in furniture as well as the scale of different types of hair (human to horse to Brobdingnagian) when Gulliver weaves the hairs of the Queen of Brobdingnag over a frame to create a kind of rattan chair.

riding or hunting, than a revering of horses and their hair.

Pet mementos were not dissimilar to human hairwork in design, as Charlotte Gere and Judy Rudoe explain: “Cherished pets were commemorated by jewels enclosing their hair, sometimes with their portraits. Mostly these remembered dogs, a practice that goes back to Augustin Edouart’s early nineteenth-century dog portraits painted with particles of hair” (167).[39] The scores of dog and horse portraits made and exhibited by Edouart in the 1810s come very close to the sepia mourning scenes popular in the late eighteenth century, though they were sealed with wax rather than trapped beneath glass. An 1862 brooch in the British Museum is inscribed, “FAITHFUL & TRUE / MUFF”, and features a portrait of the Pomeranian on crystal enclosing a white curl of his fur, very similar in composition to eighteenth-century portrait brooches or photograph hair jewellery (BM: 1978, 1002.201). One Georgian brooch noted by DeLorme is composed of a mix of sepia and cut work, common in brooches of this period, but features a dog or possibly a cat standing beneath a tree and was likely made using their gingery brown hair (82). In one fictional example, animal hair is used in remembrance of the owner rather than the animal. In Tobias Smollett’s *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), Tabitha discovers the drowned horse of Lieutenant Lismahago and, believing him to be dead, pulls a few hairs out of the horse’s tail “to be worn in a ring in remembrance of his master” (305).

If not exclusively the preserve of human hair, hairwork cannot be said to be exclusively concerned with the “human” aspects of relationships. Yet pet mementos structure and frame the relationship as a human one, with the aforementioned Muff’s portrait and obituary on his brooch a form that replicates mementos of deceased family members. In pet hairwork, human feelings are projected onto animals and human-animal relationships framed as human relationships by using the same means of memorialisation. A lock of dog’s hair in one of T. H. White’s journals complicates this a little, though it is a twentieth century example (HRC: Journal of T H White 1939-41). After an array of preserved moths on the first page of the journal, followed by tens of pages of photographs of and notes on falconry and fishing, there is one page featuring

[39] Cat and dog hair feltwork is one of the most popular forms of hairwork today, though very different in style to Victorian pet mementos. The animal is brushed and the shed hair is collected and then washed and rubbed into a felt fabric which can be cut and sewn into accessories or ornaments. The collected hair can also be rolled into beads to make jewellery.

photographs and the hair of Brownie, White's Irish Setter. The long reddish-brown lock of hair is tied with blue thread and next to it is written "Died Saturday Nov. 25th 1944, after about 12 years of perfect love". The human-animal dichotomy of the memorial is blurred in the human-like appearance, tying, and annotating of the hair and its animal-like placement among records of fish, fowl, and insect specimens. The bringing of animals into hairwork supposes that their preserved hair might specifically satisfy a longing for touch, bodily proximity, and companionship in their absence in a way that other kinds of craft cannot. Though the vast majority of hairwork commemorated relations between people, animal hairwork demonstrates the scope of affective bonds and tactile modes of remembrance made possible by the craft.

Still, some wore hairwork not for its affective associations, but purely for fashion. On 13 August 1838, Emily Shore recorded a gift of hairwork from a friend in her diary. She writes:

> Eliz. has given me a chain made of her beautiful rich brown hair before she left England. I have generally worn a pretty little chain of *bought* hair, and when people have asked me "whose hair is that?" I have been mortified at being obliged to answer, "Nobody's." *Now*, when asked the same question, I shall be able to say it is the hair of my best and dearest friend. (269, original emphasis)

Shore was not alone in wearing "nobody's" hairwork. As certain designs proved popular, such as the trend for snake bracelets in the 1850s, ready-made hairwork (of "bought hair" from hair merchants, as I will come to shortly) was sold and worn as a fashionable accessory.[40] Though this anonymity of the donor may appear to go entirely against many of the aspects that gave hairwork meaning for its possessor—its being the hair of a beloved person, cut at a particular time, worked perhaps by oneself or a family member—this demonstrates that some desired hairwork predominantly for its aesthetic appeal. The *work* of hairwork is, in fact, most valued here for the lack of investment in the hair itself. Shore's excitement at gaining the hair of her friend worked into a chain supposes that affects reinforce, but do not necessarily override, aesthetics in the appreciation of hairwork. Indeed, fashions in hairwork

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[40] As early as October 1827, *La Belle Assemblée* mentions hair bracelets in "Records of the Beau Monde" as part of fashionable walking dress, advising "Long sleeves *à la Marie,* confined at the wrists by dark hair bracelets, clasped with gold" (166). By December of the same year, walking dress sleeve fashions had already changed, now to be worn "*en gigot,* with antique points at the wrists, on which are worn hair bracelets, finished at each edge with small gold beads" (258).

also had an impact on those who did prize the hair itself. In the mid-century there was a steep rise in the number of hairworkers advertising their services and in the number of designs offered by each, yet there was a large degree of similarity between them: snake bracelets, Albert chains, lover's knots, and all manner of cable plaits were offered as standard. Certain designs held particular associations which could meaningfully frame the purpose of the hairwork—such as a fiancé's lock of hair worked into a promissory ring—but this also led to a degree of social conformity and posturing in the wearing of hairwork.

In June 1853, at the height of hairwork's popularity, *The Lady's Newspaper* went into exacting detail in "The Paris and London Fashions" over two hair bracelets:

> Two hair bracelets recently completed for a lady of rank, are so unique in design and beautiful in execution, that we are induced to offer some brief description of them, for the information of those of our lady readers who may be ordering hair bracelets, now more than ever fashionable. One, made of very soft glossy fair hair, is in the form of a serpent, having the rings on its back, distinctly marked, by a peculiar method of plaiting the hair. The serpent is represented as creeping gracefully on a long reed leaf, made of green enamel in natural shades. The serpent's head is studded with emeralds and brilliants. The other bracelet consists of a flat band, formed of plaited hair of various shades, and the shades so disposed as to intersect each other transversely, formed a sort of chequered pattern. Five medallions, set with precious stones, are affixed to this band; each medallion opens by a spring, in the manner of a watch case, and within it is enshrined a name, a date, two cyphers intertwined, or a flower: sacred mementos of affection, every one of which is calculated to revive a recollection, to inspire a hope (Issue 338; 384).

There are several tensions in this passage, even at the level of description, that waver between the affective, sentimental matter of hair and the aesthetic, novel, and fashionable form it takes here. Firstly, that these bracelets belong to a "lady of rank" supposes there to be an aspirational dimension to the representation of this hairwork to "lady readers". Her taste, decorum, and expense are made clear because the diction of "design" and "execution" elevate the work of the professional hairworker while veiling, to some degree, their commercial associations. The "very soft glossy fair hair" of the first bracelet and "various shades" of the second suppose numerous bodies who go unnamed and undetermined in their relationships to the wearer. That each medallion holds "a name, a date, two cyphers intertwined" effectively anonymises the donors which, though allowing the reader to project names and affections onto this

blank canvas, is equally at odds with the commemorative function of the jewellery. In the final line, the past and future are interwoven in the "recollection" revived and "hope" inspired by the worked hair. In this way, this description shuttles between the sentimental and economic implications of the hairwork, its personal (though unspecified) matter and fashionable form.

*The Lady's Newspaper* mentions hair bracelets within its reports on "The Paris and London Fashions" on five occasions in 1853 alone, the final word in December being that "Hair Bracelets of all descriptions continue very fashionable" (384).[41] The relative abundance of hairwork—"all descriptions" in vogue and available, specific in style though not in significance—speaks to its material desirability as an accessory in the mid-century. The hair worked into these fashionable forms continued to hold affective meaning for the possessor whether worked at home or by the hairworker, providing it was derived from a beloved donor. On this latter point, however, there arose anxiety.

**Anxiety: The Hair Trade**

The increased variety and complexity of styles meant that Victorian hairwork required more hair, specific tools, a fair amount of time and skill and, in many cases, the services of a hairworker. Yet the introduction of table work, in particular, coincided with a growing suspicion of the hair trade and its related professions. Women's magazines looked to Germany and France for the latest fashions in dress, jewellery, and hair-styling while cultivating fear in their readers over the imported materials used by tradesmen. An 1850 article in *The Ladies' Companion*, "A Recent Importation from Germany", comments that: "Of the various employments for the fingers lately introduced among our country women, none is perhaps more interesting than that we are about to describe, via. hair work; a recent importation from Germany, where it is very fashionable", though the writer is careful to add the caveat that only ladies working hair for themselves may "insure [sic] that they do actually wear the memento they prize, and not a fabric substituted for it, as we fear has sometimes been the

[41] Hair bracelets feature under "The Paris and London Fashions" in issues 338 (18 June), 347 (20 August), 350 (10 September), 351 (17 September), and 365 ("The London and Paris Fashions" 24 December).

case" (377).[42] In this way, newspapers and periodicals established a series of concerns surrounding professionally-made hairwork, even while framing it as fashionable and desirable. Though anecdotes tended to involve hair destined for wigs and hairpieces, because of the blurred lines between the two trades they nonetheless fed into the recurrent anxiety that hair sourced from elsewhere might be making its way into British hair jewellery.[43]

The huge scale of the hair trade was enough to suggest the possibility of this material being used for purposes other than wigs and hairpieces. The tradition of the annual "hair harvest" in the South of France, along with imports from Germany, Switzerland, and Prussia, meant that bought hair was not only abundant but available in a variety of tones and textures.[44] Hair merchants sought out hair from particular regions, with different "hair-crops" fetching higher or lower prices according to demand for specific shades. As Alexanna Speight explains, "like any other merchant, he can put his finger upon the places in [sic] the map where the different shades are produced with as much ease as a dealer in indigo or cotton could point out the districts in which these commodities grow" (*Lock of Hair* 55-56). Hair from Brittany was one of the most desirable for use in hairpieces owing to its being fine, abundant, and relatively cheap for hair merchants to source in a place where "custom enforces among the young people the use of the cap" (Sutton 21). In his travel memoir, *A Summer in Brittany* (1840), Thomas Adolphus Trollope writes on "Hair Dealers", recalling peasant girls lining up to meet the barber to sell their hair, "sheared one after the other like sheep […] their long hair combed out and hanging down to their waists" (323).[45] Fifty tons of human hair were imported annually by the early 1850s, according to Alexander Rowland's estimation (*The Human Hair*

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[42] This article was reprinted under the title of "Hair Work" in the American publications *Peterson's Magazine* and *Godey's Lady's Book* in the same year. The latter has been used as the source for this citation.

[43] An 1897 interview with a former hairworker substantiates the suspicion still surrounding the trade "quite thirty years ago": "I am afraid that in too many cases hair that had nothing whatever to do with that left by the customer used to be woven in to complete the design" ("A Bygone Occupation" 386). The hairworker also notes how one fellow hairworker was so busy at the height of hairwork's popularity that they believe "he pretty often got the hair mixed up" (386).

[44] Johanna Wassholm and Anna Sundelin discuss the hair trade in late nineteenth-century Finland (then an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire) in "'Det hänger på ett hår'. Praktiker, moral och varuflöden i handeln med människohår i Finland 1870-1900 ['It depends on a hair'. Practitioners, morals and product flows in the trafficking of human hair in Finland 1870-1900]" (2018).

[45] Emma Tarlo notes that this became such a public event that local authorities in Brittany introduced hair-cutting tents at fairs to deter spectators (41).

157).[46] Rowland goes on to reason that:

> Wigs of course absorb some portion of the spoil: and a cruel suspicion arises in our mind, that the clever artistes in hair in this our Babylon, do not confine themselves to the treasured relics entrusted to their care, but that many a sorrowing relative, kisses, without suspicion, mementoes [sic] eked out from hair that grew not upon the head of the beloved one. (160)

Professional hairworkers were thus suspected of supplementing or even entirely substituting the hair given to them by their clients, matching it with more workable (or even ready worked-up) foreign strands from a full palette of shades.[47]

Distancing the human source of hair was crucial to the sustainment of the hair trade, especially when luxuriant hair might derive from the labouring classes closer to home. As Speight notes, "If people will wear the tresses of others they will do well to rest quiet with an easy faith, and whilst rejoicing in all the attractions they have borrowed, carefully abstain from troubling themselves as to the individuality of the last wearer" (*Lock of Hair* 52).[48] Felice Charmond's appropriation of Marty South's chestnut locks in Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (1887) epitomises this attitude. Marty's hair is bought from her by Mr Percomb, the barber, sent on behalf of Mrs Charmond at night in a deliberate distancing of the consumer from the desired commodity. There is also a kind of alienated labour at play as Marty sits at her "trade" splitting spar-gads by hand while Mr Percomb makes his offer of two gold sovereigns for her hair. The speed with which she picks up her sick father's skilled, delicate craft aligns her work with that of Mr Percomb, while in turn her hair is aligned with the natural crop she works and refines. Though there was monetary value to be derived purely from the material of hair—Marty is offered no measly sum in exchange—there was still greater value to be derived from hair following its

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[46] Asa Briggs states that "it was estimated that in 1863 chignon makers were using 100,000 pounds of hair a year and that ten years later one firm was turning out two tons of artificial hair each week" (271). This scale and manner of production continued for most of the century. As late as 1899 Charles Géniaux recorded, with photographic evidence, that "The Human Hair Harvest in Brittany" was still an annual occurrence.

[47] In *The Uses of Animals in Relation to Industry of Man* (1876), Edwin Lankester mentions hair harvests in France and Germany alongside the manufacture of human hair into "a variety of articles of ornament, as bracelets, necklaces, watch-guards, brooches, rings" (332).

[48] Some women collected their own hair combings and trimmings in "hair-receivers" to make "ratts", bundles of hair stuffed into nets and worn to add volume beneath a hairstyle, but the combings were not suitable for more elaborate hairpieces and wigs which had to be sourced from elsewhere (McLeod 63-64, 66).

transformation by labour: the refining, working, and marketing of the hair as a hairpiece or hairwork.[49] The work of her hands is supplanted, then, by the capacity of her hair to be worked—to accrue value. Hair fleetingly becomes for Marty a way out of work, a substitute or trade for her labour, or at least a deferral of labour for the moment. The opposite may be said for the golden-haired subject of Robert Browning's "Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic" (*Dramatis Personae*, 1864), a girl from Brittany unwilling to part with her hair, no matter the price offered. As I argue in Chapter Three, that the girl refuses to part with her hair and uses it, instead, as a means of being buried with her treasure—gold coin—means that she chooses to accumulate rather than trade her hair's monetary value as a part of her hoard.

Not all contributors to the hair trade were given a choice, however. An article on "The Hair", published in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in 1857, looks back to the early modern period as a time in which "poor women were bribed with large gifts to part with their tresses, children were enticed into lonely places and robbed of theirs, and even the dead in their graves were despoiled" (326). There is an implied association between the selling of hair and the selling of the body here, as well as the risk of assault on those made vulnerable by poverty, naïvety or death.[50] The idea that hair may have been taken from corpses, "disinterred simply to obtain the hair" and the locks "pulled out of the putrid, decaying flesh of the dead" (Shaw, para. 4.) or, at worst, murdered for the plunder was a gruesome possibility.[51] Though ostensibly a thing of the past, the writer of "The Hair" maintains the caution that ladies should not "inquire too closely" into the source of their bought hair (328).[52] An 1866 article, "The Human Form Divine", also in the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, discusses the hair markets of France and Germany but introduces

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[49] Mr Percomb's offer of two gold sovereigns far exceeds the small sums offered to peasant women in exchange for a full head of hair. Hair merchants frequently offered goods and trinkets instead of money. Henry Vizetelly writes of one woman complaining to a hair merchant on behalf of her granddaughter that "One handkerchief is not enough for such a quantity of hair" (290).

[50] Speight perhaps insinuates prostitution in the statement that "Human hair, like most other things, is too frequently offered up by poverty at the shrine of wealth" (*Lock of Hair* 53).

[51] M. R. James's "The Diary of Mr Poynter" (1919) involves a man murdered and plucked of his luxuriant head of hair in the seventeenth century returning to haunt the present through a decorative pattern inspired by his curling locks.

[52] Kathryn Hughes explains that though *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, which was launched in 1852, initially seemed "more reminiscent of a textbook than a magazine" in its topic pieces—such as "The Hair"—it always placed "the reader's experience of herself at its very heart" (162).

an alarming threat to middle-class women by way of an account of a French hairdresser luring women to his salon and assaulting them, "depriving them by violence of their locks" (49) for use in wigs and chignons.[53]

There were additional anxieties over the risks to the consumers of hair as well as those otherwise caught-up in the hair trade.[54] It was speculated that hair was shorn from the female inmates of prisons, workhouses, and hospitals and sold on to merchants, forgoing the consent and remuneration of these women while cultivating concern over the sanitisation of bought hair (Gernsheim 61; Navarro 491; Sherrow 387). In an 1869 U.S. patent for her "Improvement in Imitation Hair for Ladies' Head-Dress", Louise F. Shaw gives her reasons for the necessity of her invention to "public health and morals" (para. 3), writing that, in some cases, "the hair is cut off the heads of the most loathsome and degraded women […] is cured and worked up into 'curls', 'switches', 'braids', and other head-ornaments for the most wealthy and refined" (para. 4). As well as commenting on the morals of women shorn of their hair for use in wigs and hairpieces, Shaw notes the "vermin and eggs of the same" which remain on the hair, and the diseases of hair plucked from corpses which might pass to the follicles of the living heads that wear them (para. 4). Hair could be sourced second-hand from old hairpieces or institutional waste, though this did not answer for its cleanliness. In his 1782 guide to hairdressing, *Plocacosmos*, James Stewart writes that "The methods usually taken to cheapen hair, are not only the using [of] the hair in its rough stinking state, but this is mixed up with old hair, which perhaps have been upon twenty different people's heads" (303). The practice of disassembling hairpieces to be reworked continued into the nineteenth century, and there also arose the role of the "ragpicker" who collected hair from dust heaps and cleaned and sold these sweepings to hair merchants (Gernsheim 61; Sheumaker, *Love Entwined* 155).[55] These modes of accumulation and reuse did little to assuage concerns over the anonymous and

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[53] Although an extreme case, this account is not unlike some of the cases recorded by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). Hair-despoiler fetishists, albeit driven by sexual desire rather than monetary gain, stalk women and cut locks of their hair by stealth or force. In Case 78, a hair-despoiler is said to have kept sixty-five switches or tresses of hair in packets in his home (163).

[54] An 1882 article in *The Lancet* notes one further "Danger of the Trade in False Hair" for those dying black hair imported from Asia Minor, India, China, and Japan: "Severe coughs, bronchitis, and other accidents were the natural results of the nitrous vapours escaping from the cauldrons used for boiling the hair" (1091).

[55] Krook, a rag and bottle merchant in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53), has a sack of ladies' hair downstairs in his shop.

often untraceable origins of hair used by the trade. Hairwork manuals, particularly those published later in the century, advised that even the most carefully kept hair required a thorough washing before its working to be "absolutely free from all impurities" for "in its natural state, the hair is not so" (Speight, *Lock of Hair* 86).[56] In the physical sense, a bundle of hair could be cleansed in preparation for hairwork by boiling it for a few minutes in water with a small amount of soda or borax, as *Elegant Arts for Ladies* suggests (4). Nonetheless, in terms of metaphoric purity and moral contagion, the possibility that hair might be taken from fallen women or criminals remained a troubling possibility for consumers of both hairpieces and professionally-made hairwork.

It was not just the fact that imported or unsanitary hair was potentially making its way into hairwork that was unsettling. The trade itself could be dark and exploitative. Some hairworkers outsourced work to other jewellers and in doing so risked the loss or swapping of their clients' hair while complicating their costs. As with any business, disputes over pay could prove difficult and even dangerous. In January 1863 *The Stirling Observer* reported a "Shocking Murder in Edinburgh". James Paterson, a casual-basis employee or "outworker" of Alexander Milne, artist in hair jewellery, came to Milne's shop one evening demanding the payment of wages due to him. After a heated argument, Paterson was fatally stabbed by Milne with a dagger which, *The Times* later reported, "he had bought only that morning" ("Conviction for a Murder at Edinburgh" 5). It seems that Milne had taken to drinking heavily and had paranoid delusions that Paterson was planning to steal his wares, murder him and his family, and take over the business. Despite a plea of insanity, Milne was found guilty and sentenced to death. Though an extreme example of an argument over hairwork and money, Milne's case does not stand alone. *The Islington Gazette* in February 1867 reported that artist in hair Martha Brookes brought an action against the secretary of the late Working Classes Industrial Exhibition for losing five pounds and twelve shillings worth of hair jewellery of her own manufacture ("Loss of Jewellery at the Late Industrial Exhibition"). It is unclear whether the hairwork was misplaced, stolen or accidentally sold during

[56] *Cassell's Household Guide*, also written in the 1870s, concurs that "All hair in its natural state will be found to be more or less greasy and dirty, and should therefore in every instance undergo a thorough purifying before being made use of" (337). Earlier hairworkers seem to have been less concerned with cleanliness. F. L. S., for instance, writes in 1856 that "On the contrary, hair, as it is cut from a person's head, provided it be not very greasy, is in a fit state to work with at once" (3).

the exhibition.[57] A “Five Pounds Reward” was offered by another hairworker, Mrs Dewdney, who placed an advert in *Bell’s Life and London and Sporting Chronicle* in February 1861 after she lost several articles, including a hair device brooch and three hair bracelets, on a train between Paddington and Maidenhead (2).[58]

Whether through substitution, theft or misplacement, the threat of losing hair and hairwork was, for the client entrusting their beloved’s hair to a hairworker, more than a matter of money. It presented the possibility of being deprived of a prized and potentially irreplaceable bodily relic. Margaret Hunter cites a letter to a jeweller dated 31 August 1812 which requests that the enclosed hair be mounted in a breast pin and that “If any hair remains please return it”, on which Hunter comments: “One wonders if the request for the return of any unused hair was for purely sentimental reasons, or was it to prevent his sister’s hair being used as a fill-in because of a shortage in some other client’s order?” (13). While the length of hair necessary to create a sizeable piece of table work meant that clients were concerned that their loved one’s hair might be supplemented or swapped with longer, thicker, more lustrous hair sourced from elsewhere, the small quantity of hair required for palette work pieces does not invite the addition of other hairs but instead threatens to displace a surplus into other hands.

### Negotiation: Hairworkers and their Strategies

Despite concerns around hairwork and the hair trade, professionally-made hairwork was popular throughout the 1850s and 60s. Hairwork manuals, catalogues, and advertisements played a key role in negotiating the tensions between the personal, sentimental basis for hairwork, its fashionable status and

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[57] Though this was a peculiar incident, hairwork was the target of theft in other contexts, such as when taken along with other jewellery. In March 1842 *The Age* reported a “Robbery of Trinkets” from a house which, along with several items set with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, noted the loss of “two hair bracelets, snake clasps” (2). In July 1858 *John Bull and Britannia* reported the arrest of a woman found in possession of two hair bracelets, among other jewels, and suspected of breaking into the premises of a Chelmsford jeweller (“Police.—Yesterday” 480). Hairworker Benjamin Lee had up to six-hundred pounds worth of hairwork and jewellery stolen from his premises in 1869 according to a police report in *The Times* (“Police” 11).

[58] The wider hair trade was also affected by theft. In December 1882, The *Edinburgh Evening News* reported the arrest of a hairdresser for receiving a large quantity of hair on credit from Ernest Lotze, who was at that time serving a prison sentence for the theft of 87lb of human hair worth £400 (M. Hunter 21).

commercialisation in the mid-century, and the suspicion surrounding hairworkers. Hairworkers used these texts to explicitly acknowledge the anxieties over the substitution of hair that threatened to damage the trade. In so doing, I argue, hairworkers found a way to promote their particular services by emphasising their transparency and trustworthiness while casting doubt on their competitors. The proliferation of widely available instructional material in these decades may also appear to go against the motives of hairworkers who stood to make far more profit from working hair than in printing guides for the amateur to work hair for themselves. Yet the publication of a manual was a chance for hairworkers to demonstrate the scope of their skills, taste, variety of designs, to profess their mastery over the art, and to differentiate themselves from their competitors further.

The concentration of hairworkers' premises around Soho and Oxford Street, along with smaller clusters of hairworkers in other areas of London such as Clerkenwell, meant that hairworkers needed not only to advertise their services but to draw potential clients away from neighbouring businesses. One way to do this, as the many insinuating comments in hairwork manuals suggest, was to cast doubt over the scrupulousness of other hairwork businesses. In this way, the writers of manuals found a means by which to capitalise on the anxieties and suspicions surrounding their trade. Alexanna Speight, whose premises were in Soho Bazaar close to several other hairworkers, mentions "trade jugglery" on the very first page of his manual *The Lock of Hair* (1871) and picks up the topic again ahead of giving his own instructions and patterns:

> [T]he hair may either be too short or not of sufficient quantity for the purpose intended—the tradesman knowing this, does not as he ought to do, suggest another design, but dishonestly matches the hair with other hair perhaps already worked up, and the unhappy dupe lives on in the delusion that he possesses the hair of a friend whose memory he cherishes, whilst he in fact has that of some person whom he has never either seen or heard of. To such an extent is this practice carried on that it is not unusual for artists in hair to have many parts of the usual devices ready made, of various colours and sizes, to answer any demand that may be made upon them. (84)

In elaborating on the practices of dishonest hairworkers as an insider of the trade, Speight positions himself on the side of the client. He is at once a representative and defender of the trade and an arbiter willing to call-out the malpractice of his peers. William Martin begins his 1852 manual in similar

terms. He first notes the complaints of his clients who, having entrusted to the hands of *other* hairworkers their "symbols of affection" had on their pretended return detected "shades of another hue" (iii), prompting the exclamation from one reviewer, "Oh *Artistes en cheveux!* Here is a heavy blow and sore discouragement from your brother!" (Dodd and Wills 63). Martin frames this allegation, and his ensuing instructions, as being offered "with a view of enabling those ladies who desire to preserve some memento of a departed friend in an agreeable form, to work the designs themselves, instead of allowing the cherished relic, from fear of having such impositions practised, to remain for years in the cabinet" (iii).[59] In this way, hairwork manuals were more than an opportunity to declare the personal trustworthiness and expertise of the writer. They were a chance for hairworkers to direct potential clients away from the services of others and to promote their business alone.

Hairworkers, accused of malpractice by the writers of manuals, were understandably keen to reassure clients of their attention to detail, professionalism, and trustworthiness, and did so in catalogues and advertisements.[60] In his *Album of Ornamental Hair-Work for 1850*, Christian Olifiers vows that he can "return any hair entrusted to him, for it never leaves his possession until worked into the ornament required" and even goes so far as to offer that, "[a]s there is no secrecy of working at his Establishment, Ladies and Gentlemen may see their own hair made into any Souvenir they may require" (7).[61] George Dewdney, also offering an open door to his clients in his *Pattern Book of Souvenirs in Hair* (1851), urges that they may "thus receive the most unquestionable proof of preserving the much-prized lock of Hair" ("Remarks"). There were, however, clear tensions between a hairworker's promise of care and their commitment to expediency. Olifiers opens his

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[59] Even *Elegant Arts for Ladies*, a general handicraft manual without the need to advertise a particular hairworker's services, raises the issue: "Why should we confide to others the precious lock or tress we prize, risking its being lost, and the hair of some other person being substituted for it, when, with a little attention, we may ourselves weave it into the ornament we desire?" (3-4).

[60] Reading between the lines in a comment on an 1873 advert for J. G. Mackay in the *Edinburgh Evening News* which reads "Careful attention paid to the manufacture of hair jewellery", Margaret Hunter wonders if there was "any special significance in the use of the word 'careful' in the light of what was happening to the mourning hair in some instances?" (19).

[61] Olifiers maintains this promise in his adverts for "The Registered Album of Ornamental Hairwork" placed in *The Lady's Newspaper* from February 1850, stating that his is "The only Establishment where every description of Hair Ornaments and Mountings are made on the premises at trade prices" and that ladies may even be "attended at their residences" to "see their own hair worked" (182).

catalogue of designs with the hope, “by punctuality in the execution of orders entrusted to him, combined with moderate charges, to merit a continuance of patronage so liberally bestowed upon him for the last Seven Years. His connexion with Foreign Artists will give him the opportunity of having a larger and better selected Stock than any other Establishment in London” (i). While Olifiers is most likely referring here to his own expertise gained abroad, and the wide range of patterns and designs available rather than a pre-made “stock” of hair, this phrasing seems a little off. At the opening of his catalogue (circa 1858), Henry Rushton, for the further reason of competency, “feels justified in advising Ladies and Gentlemen to be cautious to whom they entrust their commands, as many persons who style themselves Artists in Hair are totally ignorant of the Manufacturing Department” (2). Rushton suggests that his premises and services are all the more transparent, open, and expedient for his “hair plaiting machines”—that he has “succeeded in inventing and bringing the most elaborate machinery to such perfection as to surpass all kind of Hair Work hitherto produced”—and notes, like Olifiers, that his clients may see their hair made up at his manufactory (1).

Rushton’s hairwork machinery suggests another means by which hairworkers sought to gain clients in an increasingly crowded trade: innovation in designs and technologies for hairwork. Certain designs for hair jewellery emerged and came into vogue in the mid-century for relatively short periods, such as snake hair bracelets in the middle years of the 1850s, though the range of available designs became more diverse. Rushton’s catalogue lists the familiar hair brooches, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings, alongside hair cufflinks and watch chains, and also offers “Great Novelties in Hair-Work” such as hair pen covers and pencil cases, and even two designs of hair handled riding crops (22). Table work was itself an invention of nineteenth-century hairwork as a development of technology (the table frame) and technique (circular weaving around moulds), and within table work came further innovation. From 1847 Benjamin Lee advertised his elastic hair bracelets, doing away with the need for a functional clasp and so “preventing the possibility of them being lost off the arm” (“Souvenirs in Hair” 254). In suggesting this possibility and further cause for anxiety, Lee adopts the tactics of other hairworkers who emphasised or

invented problems in order to differentiate their services.[62]

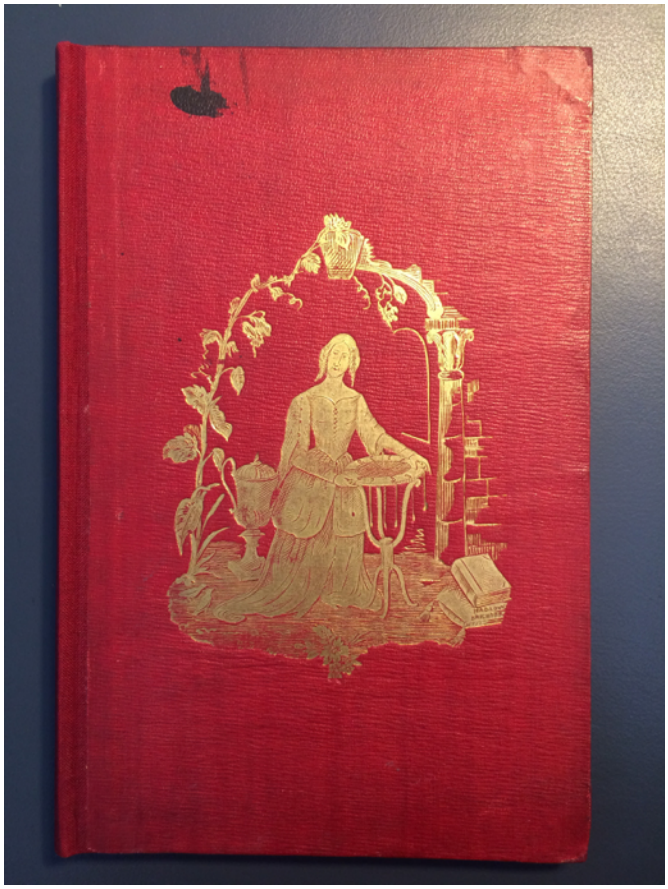

Fig. 1.ix — Front cover. William Martin. *The Hair Worker's Manual, Being a Treatise on Hair Working, Containing Directions and Instructions to Enable Ladies to Prepare and Work Their Own Materials*. Brighton: Hadlow, Sc., 1852.

Hairwork manuals were distinct from other kinds of advertisement in that they ostensibly catered to the amateur who might be more invested in the personal and affective dimensions of hairwork than its fashions or novelties. Their diction is careful to distance the idea of a commercial relationship based on demand and manufacture, though these manuals did serve to attract clients to a hairworker's business.[63] The decorated covers of hairwork manuals displayed the writer's refined taste and eye for design. The lavish bindings of

[62] On the same page as Lee's advert, George Dewdney insinuates that other businesses may outsource their hairwork (and thereby be more liable to lose or swap the given hair), stating that "In consequence of the objection made by Ladies to entrust Jewellers or persons not artists, DEWDNEY begs to state that he is a WORKING ARTIST, and that Hair entrusted so to him does not leave his possession until made and returned in the form desired" ("Souvenirs in Hair" 254).

[63] Some catalogues and advertisements are also careful with their diction in this way. Olifiers, in his catalogue of designs, is humbled by the honour of "patronage so liberally bestowed" (i) and frames the relationship between hairworker and client as one of artistic commission. Sheumaker notes that this was the case for hairworkers in America, too, with the language of advertisements emphasising patronage, honour, and artistic commission (*Love Entwined* 7).

some manuals give an air of prestige and are beautifully crafted objects themselves. William Martin's red cloth-bound *Hair Worker's Manual* is so sumptuous as to warrant mention by a reviewer: "We have lately seen a treasure—a beautiful crimson-bound book, with golden embossments and golden-edged leaves" (Dodd and Wills 63). The book features on the front cover a lady in medieval dress stood at a hairwork table, a manual on one side and an urn on the other, framed by a pillar and arching foliage (see fig. 1.ix). The gorgeous decoration of the book, along with its romanticising of the craft in the cover image, frames the whole process of hairwork, from instruction to tools to product, as beautiful as well as beautifying. F. L. S's *The Art of Ornamental Hair Work* is bound in dark blue with gold lettering and an embossed floral frame, less ornate than Martin's book, but (in the copy held by the National Art Library in the V&A) with the added touch of a handwritten inscription: "With the Author's Compliments", on the title page. This sense of close contact between the client and hairworker, a cultivation of a personal relationship even if conducting business via mail order, added a draw for the client to return to the devoted and invested professional.

With this proliferation of instructional material came a spike not only in the number of adverts for hairwork but also in the number of hairworkers advertising their services. Evidently, disclosing to clients methods and patterns for working hair at home and throwing suspicion on the trade did not in itself diminish the profits of hairwork businesses. Given how complicated the chosen forms of hairwork are in many guides, how vague their instructions, and the number of tools required to begin with, it is possible that the writers of hairwork manuals sought to deter their readers from attempting hairwork at home, persuading them through frustration or bemusement to pay for their services. Shu-chuan Yan argues, accordingly, that "manuals serve as mediators of craft practice by offering a *partial* account to a particular audience and readers" (125, my emphasis). Without full, detailed, straightforward instructions, mastering the art of hairwork remained unattainable for many amateurs. A reviewer of G. P. S.'s *Ornamental Hair-work* (1856) admits defeat, praising "the patience of those Ladies who are able to surmount the difficulty of understanding this book" as they work their way through its "labyrinth of figures and letters" ("Young Ladies'

Books", 488).[64] In this way, hairwork is aligned with mental work as a craft whose difficulties lie not only in the dexterity required for the fiddly processes but also in the puzzling through of hazy descriptions and complicated tables and figures. In an article looking back on hairwork as "A Bygone Occupation" (1897), even a former hairworker bemoans that "Designers used to draw the most elaborate patterns for the hair workers to copy", and links the difficulty in recreating these patterns to the occasional need to supplement the hair given by the client with other strands, "woven in to complete the design" (386). Three sets of instructions for "Hair-work" published in *The Lady's Newspaper* between September and October 1850 are labelled as "lessons", presenting hairwork as something to be learned and practised. Still, between lesson one, an Albert chain, and lesson five, a Jenny Lind chain, there is no real sense of there being a progressive level of difficulty to the work: only difficulty from beginning to end.[65]

Hairwork was consistently presented as a skill to be mastered, rather than simply as a pleasant pastime, though not all instructions for hairwork were purposefully obfuscatory. Alexanna Speight wrote three short articles on "The Art of Working in Hair" for *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine,* which appeared between May and August 1872, the year following the publication of *The Lock of Hair* (1871). Each article introduces a new form of hairwork, progressing from easier palette work designs to more difficult braiding techniques and sepia. The serialisation of these techniques emphasises the advice that Speight gives to the reader in the first instalment, that "each of our little processes should be carefully mastered before the next in succession is attempted" (285). Speight places great importance on the practice of hairwork as a whole division of crafts, rather than a one-off attempt to make a memento. The amateur must progress through various techniques and designs to master the fundamentals of hairwork, rather than necessarily to produce an array of

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[64] I have not been able to locate a hairwork manual by "G. P. S." and believe the reviewer to mean *The Art of Ornamental Hair Work* by F. L. S. (whose name is printed in a difficult-to-read typeface on the title page), published by Bosworth and Harrison in 1856 as the review indicates.

[65] Bharti Parmar, whose thesis, *A Grammar of Sentiment* (2008), includes reflections on the practice of making Victorian hairwork, comments that "I find the archaic language of the instructions, combined with the circular diagrams, mystifying. I steadily work through the instructions using thread, with unsatisfactory results, repeating them several times" (178). Parmar notes errors in the instructions of Mark Campbell and F. L. S. and observes "that one false manoeuvre can lead to [the] formation of a completely different shape from that prescribed" (180).

ornamental objects. There is a tension in that Speight, like other writers of hairwork manuals, shows the craft to be characterised by linear progression and conformity, with familiar designs and techniques progressed through in a certain order, while suggesting there may be room for self-expression and creativity in hairwork.[66] Speight's final article proposes the lady-turned-artist may "elaborate" on the given designs, "that she may produce combinations of the various patterns, or, led by ambition into untrodden paths, she may, guided by her own good taste, produce designs entirely new" (125). Copybook learning gives way to experiment as Speight encourages readers to go beyond the template. While Speight inevitably advertises his services as a hairworker and promotes the sale of his book and tools for hairwork through these articles, they close with the offer of "a series of private lessons in this new and beautiful art" (125), materialising the teacher-pupil dynamic of the instructional material and elevating the craft from a drawing-room leisure activity to a practised art requiring attention, devotion, and expert guidance. Beyond the difficulty of hairwork, then, Speight plays on the necessary investment of time that hairwork requires—perhaps another strategy for turning the amateur into a client. Accordingly, F. L. S. believes that "by making the subject more generally known, he shall benefit the professional hairworkers, by increasing the demand for articles among those who have neither the time nor the inclination to make them for themselves" (iv).

In addition to the necessary artistic accomplishments and leisure time, the tools required for making palette work—a marble slab, goldbeater's skin, scissors, a palette knife, gum—on top of materials such as ivory, crystal, and gold, for the base or mountings of the jewellery, meant that this form of hairwork could be prohibitively expensive to make at home, as well as difficult to execute. Of course, this presented an additional or substitutive source of income for hairwork businesses. If amateurs were to be working hair at home by their designs, rather than employing their services, professional hairworkers might still sell the specific tools that they prescribe as essential. An advert placed at the end of *The Hair Worker's Manual* for J. Bickford, a Brighton jeweller, first lists the service of mounting made-up hairwork, noting that he "supplies every requisite for Hair Working; and also "Martin's Hair Worker's Manual". Speight

[66] This is a point I pick up in Chapter Five as I contrast Mrs Tozer's hair brooch, an object of social conformity, with Kirsteen's impulsive, even subversive, hair embroidery.

capitalises on the apparent necessity for hairwork tools in offering instruments in half-guinea, guinea, two guinea, and five guinea sets (*Lock of Hair* 123). The contents of the cheaper sets are basic while the more expensive sets include knives with ivory handles, gilt scissors, extra palettes and gold beater's skin, and a greater array of inks. Like the ornate covers of hairwork manuals, these luxurious tools serve to romanticise and elevate the craft as a beautiful and beautifying process. There is, however, one exception to this drive to sell tools in place of hairwork. Directly challenging the need for "a long list of expensive machinery and tools", F. L. S.'s *Art of Ornamental Hair Work* states simply that, to make hairwork, "nothing is wanted which is not already in every one's possession" (2). Makeshift tools such as knitting needles, scissors, pencils, pennies and half-pennies, and some little bags "which can be made out of any old pieces of stuff" are, along with a tress of hair, "sufficient to do almost any kind of hair-work" (2). A frame for table work may be fashioned out of a hat or band-box, or a decanter used for smaller articles (9). In this way, F. L. S. resists the commercialisation of amateur hairwork set up by the writers of other manuals in promoting the craft but not necessarily its trappings.

One final tension in hairwork manuals lies in their contribution to the gendering of the craft. While hairwork as a domestic handicraft was elaborately feminised in print culture, professional hairwork was framed as the product of masculine creativity and prowess. Hairworkers such as Antoni Forrer, Hansen and de Konig, and Benjamin Lee exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and were taken seriously as artists and manufacturers. A comment on Forrer's exhibit praises his "skill, taste, design, and variety" in what has been "a class of manufacture of mediocre perfection hitherto", recommending that such hairwork "may well claim to rank higher in artistic manufactures" (Ellis 690). Although many hairworkers were female—independent craftswomen and those employed by larger businesses such as Forrer's—prestige belonged to male hairworkers and jewellers. There was gender division even on the production line with, for the most part, women at braiding tables and men setting the worked hair in jewellery mountings (Sheumaker, *Love Entwined* 88). The promotion of amateur hairwork by manuals as a genteel feminine pastime informed and perpetuated this divide. An 1856 review of several "Young Ladies' Books" in *The Athenaeum* announces its "Occupations of Ladies! Yes, here are books on hair-work and crochet, patties and jellies, dancing and deportment" (488), each activity as

much a frivolity as an accomplishment.

Underlying this diminution of women's hairwork was a sense of the threat that (mostly female) amateurs posed to (mostly male) professional hairworkers and business owners. George Dewdney advises a would-be amateur hairworker, in a reply "To Correspondents" of *The Ladies' Cabinet* in 1853, that "There is no work published containing patterns [for hairwork], as the object has been to keep the art in as few hands as possible" (112). Though he writes he may be persuaded to teach or sell a pattern "for a consideration", Dewdney expresses his anxiety over the loss of income to hairworkers such as himself and concludes that "these are kept as secrets for the most part, because they betray 'the tricks of the trade' too palpably" (112). It is clear that amateur hairworkers were, as Schaffer notes of women crafters in general, "supposed to stay on the margins of the marketplace" (*Novel Craft* 153). Their too keen desire for instruction, too skilled work, or too prolific output could be seen "to threaten men's legitimate business" (153), and to subvert the proper economy of the artisanal craft.[67] Yet women could and did turn to hairwork as an independent source of income, as an 1863 article on "Ladies' Remunerative Work" in *The Ladies Treasury* details, but this came with the financial risk of outlay in tools and materials, sometimes alongside an investment in lessons which, though advertised with the promise of subsequent commissions, might come to nothing. The writer of the article, as she shows her perfectly executed hairwork to one highly complimentary jeweller, marks the man's swift change in tone when he realises she offers her services rather than seeking his: "These things are of no use to us; we only deal with the trade" (212). Ultimately, and despite ostensibly offering women the opportunity to work hair for themselves, the writers of manuals sought to keep the craft from amateurs by devaluing the labour and skill of women in order to capitalise fully on the commercial potential of hairwork.[68]

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[67] There are some exceptions to this attitude. F. L. S. acknowledges that hairwork may be more than "an elegant and amusing occupation to many who are getting tired of Bead-work and Potichomanie" because it may prove a source of income to those "who may be glad to avail themselves of its remunerative capabilities" (iv). As with F. L. S.'s apparent lack of a drive to sell tools, this perspective is atypical among hairwork manual writers.

[68] Frances Lichten makes this latter point, stating that "business took [hairwork] over from the lady amateurs and capitalized fully on 'sentimental treasures of the heart'" (192).

**The 1870s and the Decline of Hairwork**

After the rapid expansion of the trade in the 1850s and 60s, hairwork's popularity began to wane in the 1870s. Though professional hairwork was still advertised, it became very much a side business for more stable and frequented services. In 1875, J. Olver advertised "Artistic Hairwork, Rings, Brooches, Bracelets, Guards" all "made to order", but what follows is a catalogue of every other service on offer: hair dying, depilation, hair extensions, plaits and twists, false hair restoration, and ladies' own combings made up (329). Even George Dewdney's abundant stream of advertising dwindled, and what is likely his last notice in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in 1872 is only in brief response to a reader: "EILEEN. For hair work in the best styles and finish apply to Dewdney and Co., 72, Fenchurch-street, City, E.C." ("The Englishwoman's Conversazione" 126). Though some hairwork guides were published in the 1870s—such as Speight's *The Lock of Hair* in 1871 and the fourth volume of *Cassell's Household Guide* (circa 1874) which included instructions for palette work—they acknowledged "its being so rarely practiced" (Cassell 337) by this time that locks of hair were more likely to be found "neglected and forgotten from some tiny drawer of an escritoire" (Speight 83-4). Certain forms of hairwork, namely gimp work, only came to the fore in the 1870s, though not with any great impact on the professional trade.

An 1885 article on "Hair-Device Workers" published in *Cornhill Magazine* reflects on the heyday of hairwork and how "fashion changed as fashion will" (Frith 63):

> For consider if there was not once a time when your companion at dinner, your partner in the waltz, your *vis-à-vis* in the railway carriage, your neighbour at the *table-d'hôte*, were all hung with chains, were all decked with bracelets, with brooches, even with earrings formed of the hair of departed relatives and friends, finely woven memorials of almost every one they had lost. Did not their mothers and fathers hang round their necks and on their bosoms, their uncles and aunts twine round their wrists, their dearest school friends, their favourite brothers and sisters, silently guard their double eye-glasses and solemn ticking watches? Above all, did not from their ears often depend chestnut-hair acorns tipped with gold, whispering perhaps the very tales the boyish owner of the locks had whispered as he pressed the tissue-papered cutting into his mistress's hand? And where are they now, those snakes and crosses and delicate globes of hair? Where are the mourning rings, the Albert chains, without which no gentleman was once complete? (63)

As this passage suggests, humorously mocking the past generation through its own flamboyant excess, the decline of hairwork was partly the result of oversaturation in the preceding decades. The fashion for hairwork, aided by adverts, manuals, and periodical reports, gave it the quality of a passing fad. The popularity of particular forms and designs of hairwork was even more at odds with its purpose as a commemorative, individual and affective token of a relationship, bringing uncertainty and modishness to what was meant to be an authentic and timeless form. Though some kinds of hairwork had been made at various points since the early modern period, they became firmly associated with a dated cultural moment, a part of its milieu that faded with other fashions. Hair bracelets, the height of style only a decade earlier, are a part of young Cecelia's stagnant, drab domestic surroundings in Anne Thackeray Ritchie's "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" (1868): "On the toilet-table an old-fashioned jasper serpent-necklace and a set of amethysts were displayed for her to choose from, also mittens and a couple of hair-bracelets" (13).[69] Even for those who continued to make and wear hairwork beyond its heyday it became, in Shu-chuan Yan's terms, "an exercise in nostalgia, an indulgence in the past" (137) in matter and form. To answer the writer's question more directly—"where are they now"—in one sense, precious metals and gemstones were an incentive to dismantle hairwork and sell these materials. Many rings and lockets and bracelets of the period had their parts repurposed or melted down. But in another, the sentimental value of hairwork became a hindrance to properly disposing of it.[70] Some pieces may have been consigned to the attic, "long thrown aside in the lumber-room" as Speight feared they would be (*Lock of Hair* 84). Or, as James Laver reasons more optimistically, it may be the Victorian taste for inexpensive materials in costume jewellery that has meant many examples have survived (139).

The mourning industry had likewise been at its height in the mid-century as the "woven memorials of almost everyone they had lost" (63) in Walter Frith's article suggests. It likewise fell into decline as funerary and mourning customs

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[69] I explore the decline of hairwork and why it became distasteful to the next generation in more detail in Chapter Five in relation to Margaret Oliphant's *Phoebe, Junior* (1876).

[70] In Anthony Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), Adolphus Crosbie loses his wife and control of his finances, but manages to hold on to his hairwork: "all that he received to console him for what he had lost was a mourning ring with his wife's hair,—for which, with sundry other mourning rings, he had to pay" (434-35).

relaxed. Though not all hair jewellery was mourning jewellery, by the 1880s and 90s many who had given their hair to be worked in the mid-century were reaching old age or deceased. Hairwork, once made as a token of affection or in anticipation of distance but not necessarily death, became the stuff of death in outliving its originators. The perceived link between hairwork and an increasingly outdated mourning culture meant that it came to be seen as not only obsolete but archaic and distasteful. By 1887, Queen Victoria agreed to wear silver jewellery on some special occasions following her State Jubilee; the trade in Whitby jet had dwindled; and hair jewellery was regarded "as being in the worst possible taste" (Luthi 29).

The tension between the expensive and inexpensive components of hairwork was another factor in its decline. Mass production methods for brooches and lockets along with imitation materials meant that certain kinds of jewellery became available and affordable to more consumers. This led, however, to a degree of conventionality even in the kinds of jewellery intended to be personalised. Jewellery featuring standardised lettering reading "In Memory Of" served to cheapen the sentiment as well as the fashion for these pieces (Luthi 18), just as the conformity of hairwork designs—serpent bracelets and acorn earrings—diminished its individuality. Picking up on the implications of class in hairwork, Frith comments on the relative costliness of the hairwork itself: "Upstairs you see they will have none of it now, and downstairs it is too dear; to what class, then, can the puzzled and hungry hair-worker appeal?" (68).

With hairwork still too expensive a service for the working classes, and coming to be seen as too crude by the middle and upper classes, there was no new clientele seeking to employ the services of professional hairworkers. A few surviving hairworkers were said to remain "toiling in the obscurity of Soho and the purlieus of Clerkenwell" (Frith 64) in the 1880s, the former centres of the trade with notable premises such as Alexanna Speight's (Soho Bazaar) and William Halford and James Young's (Clerkenwell). These once affluent businesses had, by this time, shut down, leaving former employees to gain commissions where they could. Frith reports visiting one such hairworker who was once employed full-time by a famous hairworker of Regent Street (65), possibly Antoni Forrer who employed a team of fifty staff (Amnéus 68). The poverty and desperation of the woman who greets him is tragic: "She carries

specimens of her skill in a crumpled paper bag, and in the front sitting-room pours them trembling out on the table", trying to raise enough money to buy tea dust for her sick child (64-65). Frith predicts that, in taking no new apprentices, in twenty years the trade will have disappeared completely (64).

Some businesses continued to offer repairs or mountings for hairwork until the late 1890s, though by this point the meaning of the word had changed, "ornamental hairwork" coming to refer instead to elaborate hairstyling. Still, the trade in hairwork did not cease entirely. Edwin Creer's *Lessons in Hairdressing* (1886) features several adverts at the back of the book. One for Creer himself, who established his business in 1846 and so worked through the height of hairwork, states: "Manufacturer of all kinds of Hair Jewellery, Rings, Brooches, Bracelets, Watch Guards, &c., and Device work of every description for the Trade". Creer does not, however, offer a catalogue of prices or the prospect of ready-made pieces available to view. His is a bespoke service for hairwork made to order rather than by advertised designs. Another, for J. Horton and Son, Manufacturing Jewellers and Artists in Hair, encouragingly offers a "New Sheet of Patterns of Hair Designs" sent free by post, as well as "Every Description of Gold Mounts supplied to those who work the Hair at home", a sign that jewellers were still gaining some business from amateur hairworkers. Finally, J. Jowett & Co., Hair Merchants, though trading mainly in hair extensions, advertise "Patterns matched and returned by next post. Any kind of Hairwork done to Instructions", further evidence that hairwork was, by this point, mostly reproduced from old designs and patterns: a service offered to those seeking the replication of an old craft and bygone fashion.[71] By the end of the decade, hairwork was no longer made by professional jewellers except by the very occasional commission of a retired, out-of-work or impoverished former hairworker. By the turn of the century, hairworkers had all but vanished from high streets. No longer desired to be worn or displayed, hairwork was at best kept out of sight, stored away in cupboards and attics within the home, and at

[71] Alfred M. Sutton's *Boardwork* (1903), a revised and rewritten version of Edwin Creer's *Board-Work* (1887; hence Sutton's work being published and prefaced as the "second edition"), features an appendix on "The Art of Working in Hair—Flowers and Devices in Hair" which is a reprinting of some of Alexanna Speight's designs from *The Lock of Hair* (1871). It is given for the purpose that "the young boardworker may elect to spend some spare moments in this pleasing and attractive work, which cannot fail to extend his knowledge and render him a more deft and careful workman" (198).

worst, disassembled or discarded.[72]

[72] There are some examples of twentieth-century hair jewellery in museums, such as a brooch enclosing hair dated 1904 in the National Museum of Scotland (NMS: A.1980.29), but they are scarce and generally in the form of lockets and brooches enclosing hidden, unworked hair.

## Chapter Two: "I twisted the two, and enclosed them together": Touch, Death, Connection and the Hairwork of the Brontës

> "The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her!" (*Wuthering Heights* 288)

In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), it seems that death, rather than life, animates objects. A deathliness hangs over the possessions of the deceased and suffuses them with vitality. Objects left behind sentimentally or quasi-spiritually become something more—more present, persistent, and alive—by virtue of their possessor's absence. Touched by "a glowing patina of memory", in Deborah Lutz's terms, they seem to hold "little histories of intimacy" (*Relics of Death* 53), as though invisibly animated by a once-animate body. My concern in this chapter, however, is not with the idea of an incorporeal presence behind or within the material world, but with the physical imprints left on matter: the dents, knots, kinks, frayed edges, and scratched surfaces. Just as the "writing scratched on the paint" (*Wuthering Heights* 15) of Catherine's windowsill rouses Lockwood*,* leading him to open and consider the mildewed books on its ledge, visibly marked objects guide my entry into texts in this chapter. What can be found throughout Emily's novel, and among her family's possessions collected in the Brontë Parsonage Museum (hereafter BPM), are objects with tangible signs of use and wear. It is more than an imagined engagement, the *idea* that these things were touched by living bodies, that lends them a vitality. The visible tears and repairs on articles of well-worn homeware attest to the touch, movements, and mishaps, of the people that owned them.

The BPM catalogue describes a red tablecloth as "poor, torn, patched, stained, faded", featuring "[t]ears, holes, burn mark in centre, stains" (HAOBP: D162). The asyndetic listing of these terms of deterioration inadvertently imitates the accumulation of marks that conjure the back story of this piece of Brontë memorabilia. Each stain marks a point in time—a drop of ink or gravy, the fallout of a private moment or social occasion, a spillage at work or play—as the faded colours of the cloth chart the passing of time since its first use. The cloth captures the literal collisions of daily life, food, and thought, bleached by sunlight and burned by candlelight as the family sat around the table to eat and entertain, to work and write. It is this kind of marked materiality that hairwork so vividly evokes.

Hairwork produces a uniquely tactile token of the body. It is hair made to bear the marks of exchange and possession. While locks of hair may be cut and kept as mementos of family, friends, or lovers, hairwork codifies the dynamics of these relationships in a way that unworked hair does not. The way hair is carefully plaited or coiled and tied becomes a metaphoric anchor for complex and sometimes contrary meanings and ideas, identities and alliances. Hairwork makes manifest touch, labour, creativity and the desire to beautify and preserve in anticipation of distance or death. Additionally, hairwork is a product not only of the body from which it was taken but also of the body that works and wears it. Each time hair passes between hands, to be cut and exchanged, to be worked and worn, it is impressed to some degree by its contact with the body. Sometimes barely touched and sometimes transformed, it is continuously crafted from the point at which it is cut.

Many articles of hairwork in the BPM collection were made in the early to mid-nineteenth century, some elaborately plaited and some utilising the new method of table work to produce open work jewellery.[1] This is a technique that, as explained in the previous chapter, preserves hair without the aid of a glass barrier or metal compartment. In table work, hair forms the chains and bands of jewellery rather than its enclosed centre. The woven bands of this form of hairwork give shape to the idea that hair can readily connect one to the absent or departed body from which it came. The table work pieces in the BPM exemplify the idea of perpetual working and wearing, with many being visibly worn and splintered by the family and, perhaps, their subsequent owners. There is an obvious difference between these two kinds of crafting: the deliberate working of an object into an ornament and the unintentional wearing of the object over time and by accident. But, while distinct, both attest to the body's interaction with hairwork, to its being touched. This is one factor that distinguishes hairwork from unworked hair (a distinction I will discuss further in Chapter Three). Hairwork necessitates the hair being gripped between the fingers to be smoothed down, divided into strands, pulled taut, twisted, plaited, woven, or in some other way manipulated with dexterity and purpose. Therefore, hairwork codifies touch in a way that unworked hair does not. As Heather Tilley explains, to craft is to "self-reflexively judge the correct 'force of

[1] "Open work" is a generic term for hair worked around a mould which is then removed, producing a lace or net-like effect (Sheumaker, *Love Entwined* 37).

the hand' […] Touch is the force which masters, as well as in turn requires mastering" (20). While hair may be touched without being crafted as such, unworked locks do not manifest that touch visibly as purposefully crafted curls, plaits, chains, and tubes, which have in turn been frayed, bent, and broken by another "force of the hand".

Touch offers, then, a way to understand hairwork as an intrinsically haptic form of memento. Lutz considers a still intact Brontë bracelet, made of Anne's and Emily's hair and owned by Charlotte (HAOBP: J14), imagining how "she probably wore it, carrying on her body a physical link to her sisters, continuing to touch them wherever they were" ("Death Made Material" para. 1). I take from Lutz this intriguing possibility of the desire for and experience of "continuing touch" facilitated by hairwork, and a cue to think further on the interactions that might shape its meaning. My aim here is not to interweave the hairwork of the Brontës with their lives to infer its biographical consequence, as Lutz has done.[2] Nor do I wish to use their hairwork as a springboard for an exploration of its place in mourning culture or use as a literary trope.[3] Rather, I wish to delve deeper into the complexities and contrarieties of touch suggested by hairwork in its worn or broken state. Through touch, hairwork offers physical and figurative connection as well as a means of memorialising a person and relationship. There is an inherent textile-tactility in the idea of "connection" since it derives from the Latin "connexionem", "a binding or joining together", which itself comes from "conectere", composed of "com" meaning "together" and "nectere", "to bind or tie" ("connection (n.)", *Online Etymology Dictionary*). Hairwork makes sense of connection as a material manifestation of bodies joined together, whether through the binding together of several people's hair into one piece or the tying of one's hair on or around another's body as jewellery. When its hairs are broken or pulled apart by an excess of touch, there arises, I argue, the anxiety that this token of connection might actually evoke or effect disconnection.

One hair bracelet in the BPM collection composed of six plaits of light brown hair is unattributed, but its shade is most like that in Anne's named pieces (see fig. 2.i). Although the plaits at first appear complicated, as though each strand is a different design, on closer inspection there are only two kinds of plait alternating across the join. The bracelet plays upon myopic sight with its

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[2] See Deborah Lutz, *The Brontë Cabinet: Three Lives in Nine Objects* (2015).

[3] This is more clearly the purpose of the excerpt published as "Death Made Material" by Lutz.

repeated patterns, only to be perceived by the intimate contact of the wearer or handler. The dusky gold tinge of the hair complements the darkened gold of the flat links of the clasp as though intended to fade and tarnish together.


Fig. 2.i — Hair bracelet, early to mid-nineteenth century (date unknown). HAOBP: J30-SB:2704.

Still, we must, as Sandra H. Dudley urges, move beyond visual appearances to fully consider the materiality of "real *stuff* and its three-dimensionality, weight, texture, surface temperature, smell, taste and spatio-temporal presence" (6, original emphasis). If we are to uncover and understand the more intimate and tactile aspects of hairwork, sight must work alongside touch. While the tight and coiled braids of other bracelets mean that they would stand away somewhat from the body, this set of light plaits would brush against the wrist when worn. The fine splinters along the length of each plait are barely visible but can be felt, and were perhaps created by the bracelet rubbing up against a sleeve.[4] Indeed, unlike many of the other bracelets in the collection, this one has a functional clasp and safety chain for extra security which, along with the one broken plait, reinforces the idea that this piece was made to be worn, not only for display. If hair is preserved as hairwork not only to retain a visual reminder of those absent but also to form a touchable point of connection

[4] Patricia Campbell Warner makes the point that though hairwork was lightweight, it was "prickly —'scratchy'—to wear against the skin; therefore, most contemporary representations display [hairwork] against highnecked gowns" (58). I do not think this diminishes the idea of touch, however, since an item might still be handled by the wearer when worn over clothing.

for the wearer, then this bracelet best facilitates that desire. The bracelet effects in its roughened texture a reciprocal touch, as the owner wears their own touch into the hair with use and time. There is, however, one broken plait that stands away from the rest, partially undone with its loosened strands splaying out. These frizzy hairs freed from the clasp maintain in their crimped state an impression, a trace, of the hand that worked them.

Who made and who wore this bracelet are, unfortunately, matters of conjecture. While there are plentiful records of the sisters' other handicraft activities—embroidery samplers stitched with names and dates and letters mentioning the exchange of small home-made gifts between Charlotte and Ellen Nussey—there is no clear evidence that they made the hair jewellery in their possession.[5] It is possible, however, that one of the family worked the hair before taking or posting it to a jeweller to be finished, especially as this bracelet is plaited and therefore worked without a hairwork table or frame. The minuteness and neatness of some of the unmounted plaits of hair in the collection, one being a circlet of Anne's hair tied with a cream ribbon (HAOBP: J57:2-SB:23), would seem to suggest that at least one member of the family had some proficiency in braiding. Charlotte was apparently skilled in using some of the fiddliest of materials, Elizabeth Gaskell writes, and her "delicate long fingers had a peculiar fineness of sensation, which was one reason why all her handiwork, of whatever kind—writing, sewing, knitting—was so clear in its minuteness" (*The Life of Charlotte Brontë* 100). A tea caddy decorated by Charlotte with quilling (tiny rolls of paper arranged into a design) is one example of this, its thin slices of paper tightly curled and firmly pressed into place (HAOBP: H34). Was it, then, Charlotte who finely plaited the hair of her sister for use in this bracelet? Did she plait this hair while Anne was living, affectionately working her sister's locks into an ornament? Or were they worked after Anne's death, creating a wearable memento, a means of continued contact with a lost sister? When purchased by the museum along with "A pair of black sateen evening pumps with fur insole" and "a pair of cream kid gloves", this hair bracelet was stated as certainly belonging to Charlotte ("Gifts and Other Additions" 177). Did these three items come as a lot because they were always kept as a trio? Was this hair bracelet part of Charlotte's evening attire, worn to

[5] For an overview of the Brontës' needlework, see Sally Hesketh, "Needlework in the Lives and Novels of the Brontë Sisters" (1997).

embellish, not only a memento of a family member but also a fashionable accessory like fancy shoes or gloves? The textural and synonymic resonances between these items of fur, leather and hair, respectively, align them. Soft, warm, pliant. Pelt, skin, hair. They wrap the extremities in borrowed coverings. Perhaps Charlotte's tiny hands and feet animated, moved within, these trappings of the dead, feeling the presence of a departed sister through her preserved hair. Or, just as likely, a fan, desiring to try on something that had actually been "touched" by a Brontë, was taken in by the aura of this hair bracelet due, in large part, to its affective charge as a token of sisterhood and, in trying it on, broke the strand.

With these points of uncertainty and modes of conjecture in mind, and deliberately treating the sisters at times interchangeably, I aim to demonstrate the fruitful connections that may be made by reading between Victorian texts and objects and across authorial divides. The Brontë sisters, as related writers with entangled but separate lives, are remarkably similar in some respects and markedly different in others. Because of the family connection, resemblances and differences in something as incidental as their hair colour and as considered as their representation of the afterlife are not inconsequential. Looking at the family's hairwork is one way of bringing the sisters together and realising their connectedness, seeing affinities between their writings and their things. But working across objects and texts also gives rise to points of disconnect. When reading Charlotte's *The Search After Hapiness* [sic] (1829) and *Villette* (1853), and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and "Long neglect hath worn away" (1837, published 1902), patterns emerge which serve to separate the sisters, such as Charlotte's insistence on the magical affective charge of hair versus Emily's underscoring of the stark materiality of the body as an object. The main sections of this chapter are, consequently, relatively contained and discrete readings of Charlotte and Emily's work. Hairwork made with Anne's hair far outnumbers instances of hairwork represented in her fiction.[6] For this reason I have not attempted a separate treatment of her writings. Branwell's locks, in his fiction and in the BPM, are so scarce as to effectively set him apart by contrast with the abundance of his sisters' writings and clippings of hair. Anne's actual golden hair is, however, a thread running

[6] Helen keeps a watch-fob made of her estranged husband's hair in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) and the speaker of "Severed and Gone" (1847) wishes they had one tress of the hair of the dead, but I have found no further references to the crafting of hair in Anne's writings.

through this chapter, providing links between her sisters' representations of hairwork and the real articles they kept and, possibly, crafted.

The wealth of surviving Brontë personal effects provides an opportunity not only to illuminate Victorian literature using objects and their cultural histories as a point of departure, as Suzanne Daly, Elaine Freedgood, Deborah Lutz, and others have done, but to evaluate Victorian objects through a parallel study of their literary representation.[7] This raises an important issue for my study of hairwork associated with a family of authors—how do we read an author's possessions in relation to their writing? In studying the Brontës' hairwork, my aim is not, as Hermione Lee warns against, to conjure "a whole figure out of body parts" or to speculate on their lives (8). Instead, hairwork acts in this chapter as a peculiarly suggestive body-object that helps to illuminate the relationship between experienced and represented materialities. Reading texts against objects raises a different set of questions from that posed by dealing with texts alone, not least because it involves a degree of lateral thinking. But in thinking across mediums, hairwork can be found tucked away in the most unlikely places. In Charlotte Brontë's *Villette,* Lucy Snowe visits a bookshop on Paternoster Row near St Paul's Cathedral, a place that was "the heartland of the London booktrade" (Pickering 113), but also location of Garnett Terry, engraver and seller of books and jeweller of devices in hair (BM: Banks, 59.195). A sketched plan of the neighbourhood of Paternoster Row was found among the contents of Charlotte's writing desk when it was acquired by the Brontë Parsonage Museum in 1944. In the same compartment of the desk was found a plaited lock of Anne's hair, folded in paper and dated in Patrick's handwriting (Hopewell 180). The closer one looks, the more hair appears intertwined in the lives and writings of the Brontës.

### Hairwork and its Hindrances: Look, Don't Touch

The capacity for the Brontës' hairwork to be read must first be considered in the context of the embodied experience of viewing these objects in the Brontë Parsonage Museum. Unlike any other examined in this thesis, this collection is

[7] See, for example, Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015); Jean Arnold, *Victorian Jewelry, Identity and the Novel: Prisms of Culture* (2011); Suzanne Daly, *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels* (2011); Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2011); Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006).

unique in being housed in its donors' and possessors' place of origin: the home of the Brontës. There is a rootedness, a spatial connectedness, to these articles that other hairwork, viewed in a museum or library, cannot possess.[8] Although many of these articles at one time left the Parsonage, given by the family to friends or sold off at auction, they have returned to Patrick's library. There is a further sense of circularity at play in the archival packaging that (incidentally) imitates the packaging of the hairwork it encloses. The clear plastic envelopes recall the glass cases, frames and locket compartments surrounding the curled and placed locks, and acid-free tissue paper does not look out of place alongside crinkly old envelopes holding loose hair. Like the bottom drawer of a desk kept for odds and ends, seemingly unrelated articles (hair bracelet, ivory calling card case, jet links) are collected together in archive boxes, suggesting a narrative or at least a logic behind their clustering there. Within, the objects are individually enclosed in their clear envelopes and layered up to the brim of the box. Beneath the pile of plastic windows, at the bottom of each box are tucked a few tissue paper packages, contrastingly opaque. Unlike sifting through a stack of papers, the varying material properties of these objects—size, weight, fragility, angularity—rather than the logic behind their cataloguing, determines the order in which they are encountered.

As I lift each item from the box, the plastic envelopes prevent me from directly touching the objects. It would seem that even in the BPM library, artefacts are to be seen—and only seen—through a glassy barrier. As I take each piece out of its envelope with gloved hands, the fine texture of the hair bracelets and the cold, smooth metal and glass of the brooches is observed rather than felt.[9] I can see the itchiness of the broken hairs along braided chains and flat woven braids. Small tubular bands appear springy, but I cannot put this springiness to the test. As I turn over each plastic packet, the reflective surface distorts the contents. A bracelet is visually suspended, allowing me to rotate it like a virtual scan, before the light glances on the shiny surface and partially obscures the object with each new angle. Laying these packets down to take a photo, to record, reflect and zoom in, the plastic again mars my vision. Spots of

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[8] For a discussion of the personal effects of Victorian writers held in their houses-turned-museums, see Aislinn Paige Hunter, *Evocative Objects: A Reading of Resonant Things and Material Encounters in Victorian Writers' Houses/Museums* (2015).

[9] Helen Saunderson discusses limitations such as this in "'Do not touch': A discussion on the problems of a limited sensory experience with objects in a gallery or museum context" (2012).

light and curved shadows overlay and distort the image and at times overlay and distort my image as image-taker. The viewer gets caught up in the process of viewing as the lens looks back and, handling hairwork specifically, appears as another body enmeshed in the object. Some objects folded in tissue can be held up to the light to glean the shadow of their contents: wisps of dark hair (HAOBP: J71:3-SB:1609). Other locks tucked inside thick envelopes deny sight as well as touch. In this way, these articles of hair and their coverings constantly remind the viewer of their own materiality as a body capable of touching too much, without due care, and of inflicting damage on the objects.

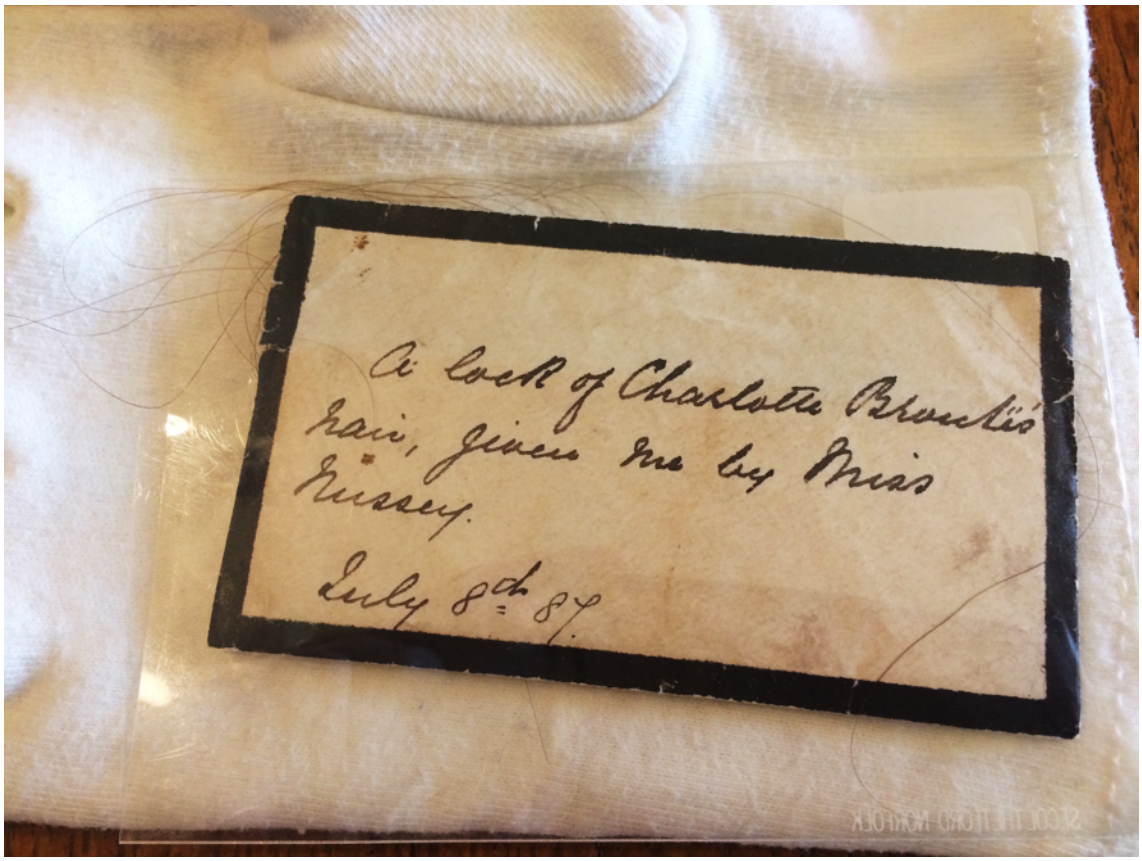


Fig. 2.ii — Lock of Charlotte Brontë's hair in envelope marked July 8th 1887. HAOBP: E.2007.9.3.

The reciprocity of touch is also evident here: *the objects* are equally not allowed to touch *you*.[10] As hair and as fine, unruly stuff, stray strands have a tendency to escape from their paper and plastic confines. A lock of Charlotte's hair, tucked inside a tiny black-bordered mourning envelope labelled by Ellen Nussey, spills out from the top of the paper (see fig. 2.ii). The envelope is no larger than four

[10] On the reciprocity of touch, see Ann M. C. Gagne, *Touching Bodies/Bodies Touching: The Ethics of Touch in Victorian Literature (1860-1900)* (2011).

by two inches wide, as tiny as the books the siblings made as children.[11] As a result of being pushed into the plastic envelope, these stray hairs point in the direction of the opening with four or five of them poking out. Touching and being touched by these hairs is almost unavoidable. They appear to have, according to Jane Bennett's theory of such matter, "material agency" (*Vibrant Matter* ix) as they are charged with a vitality that seeks to resist enclosure, to reach out, to want to be touched.[12] This enveloped lock transgresses its textual binding, the paper packet, and exceeds the sum of its text, the words of Ellen Nussey written on its front. It resists the confines of the museum, too, in transgressing, if only by a few strands of hair, the boundaries put in place to protect and preserve. Like Graham's sealed and buried letters in *Villette*, which Lucy Snowe imagines as a corpse with "hair, still golden, and living", this envelope holds the same sense of being a "tomb unquiet" (371). Charlotte's hair pushes out from the papers of the past, from her friend's attempt to "bury a grief" (*Villette* 304) by physically containing it, as though it too has "obtruded through coffin chinks" (371). For Lucy, letters stand in for an absent body, the imagined growth of hair in the ground suggesting a suppressed exchange between her and Graham, words unspoken and affections unnamed.[13] This token of hair, tucked inside an envelope, recalls the years of correspondence between Ellen and Charlotte. They at one point discussed exchanging locks of hair via post. In a letter to Ellen marked 21st July 1832, Charlotte writes that she is "very much dissappointed [sic] by your {not} sending the hair. You may be sure my {dear}est Ellen that I would 'not' grudge double postage to obtain it but I must offer the same excuse for not sending you any" (*Letters of Charlotte Brontë* 115). With this idea, that Charlotte so desired an enveloped exchange of locks, her packet

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[11] Lutz notes that these tiny books recall Charlotte's other paper crafts, in particular the aforementioned paper quilled tea caddy she made for Ellen (*Brontë Cabinet* 180).

[12] Bennett argues that we should take matter and its capacity to communicate and have tendencies of its own more seriously, "as more than a figure of speech, more than a projection of voice onto some inanimate stuff, more than an instance of the pathetic fallacy" ("Powers of the Hoard" 240). Thinking of locks of hair and hairwork as communicators and as having some kind of force, then, is not simply metaphoric, anthropomorphic or a kind of prosopopoeia, but acknowledges that these objects interact with the viewer or handler: they are not entirely passive. I explore the idea of vital materialism further in Chapter Three.

[13] Letters and handwriting can also be "read" as visual signs that tell something of their originator's character or body. Also in *Villette*, Paulina picks up on this graphological mode of reading, as she notes "Graham's hand is like himself, Lucy, and so is his seal—all clear, firm, and rounded […] a clean, mellow, pleasant manuscript, that soothes you as you read. It is like his face—just like the chiselling of his features" (384). An article titled "Handwriting and Character" in the 1850 *The Family Economist,* owned by Tabitha Brown (one of the family's servants), discusses the practice but dismisses its findings as "utterly deceptive" (31).

of hair takes on an aspect of regret, fulfilling in death one side of a bargain sought in life. It tells of unfinished business.

One of the heavy tissue-wrapped items at the bottom of the archive box appears to be a translucent brown pillbox. Unsure if this also contains hair, I pull the halves apart. Thick coiled strands start to unfurl. It is too precarious to pause on this ringlet, even to note down the catalogue number sitting within the spiral. The lock is tucked inside and the lid quickly snapped back into place. It is fitting, considering the loose hair of the living that sticks to garments and clusters as fluff in the corners of the home, that this lively material should become a memento of the departed body.[14] It lingers with the living as an (in)animate matter that unfurls and unfolds before the viewer with, at times, surprising readiness.

### Locks that Defy Death in Charlotte Brontë's *The Search After Hapiness* (1829)

Lying among the many pieces of mourning jewellery and dark locks in black-bordered envelopes in the archive boxes of the BPM are a few brighter locks of hair taken from the Brontë siblings in childhood. In one frame nearly all of the Brontës' locks are presented together (Elizabeth's is missing) with a handwritten label for each (HAOBP: J81). The children's hair was cut in 1824 when Charlotte, Emily and Anne would have been around eight, six and four respectively. While there is a deathly aspect to this framed collection, which appears almost like a mausoleum enclosing their remains, there is warmth in its attempt to bring the family together in one piece. It remembers a moment when all the children were alive, with these locks cut a year before the deaths of the two eldest daughters. As mementos from a happier time, these curled locks are not objects of mourning, though they have inevitably become tainted by loss. They are, instead, tokens of familial affiliation and belonging. The locks are laid out from eldest at the top of the frame to youngest at the bottom like a family tree, or as though standing in for portrait miniatures, supposing some likeness may be perceived in hairs as well as faces. But, unlike portraits, these are touchable relics, pieces of the actual bodies of the family, and the frame is

[14] There are instances of hair remaining stuck to objects in the BPM's collections, such as a brass collar that belonged to Emily's dog, Keeper, that has dog hair trapped in the metal joins (HAOBP: 2000/2.1).

thereby a crafted congregation of relations.[15] Patrick's hair has been added much later, cut in 1860 after the deaths of all of his children and a year before his own. It is as though he has inserted himself into the frame, anachronistically marking his role as the father of the family with a fragment of his aged body. His almost white hair alongside the bright blondes and reddish browns of the children's locks emphasise his paternal place. The golden curls of the siblings' youth juxtapose the matte straight wisps of the elderly. Sadly, this contrast tells of children taken too early and a father left to age alone. Hair is, however, used in this frame predominantly as a means of connection between living family members, rather than between the living and dead, and with Patrick's hair it becomes a defiant assertion of family connection despite death. Again, the sense of connection as not only a feeling of togetherness but a tangible binding or tying together comes to the fore. The family are connected visually and symbolically here, their hair bound to one frame and thereby to one another.

Aside from this frame of childhood locks, the only other young adult hair to be found elsewhere in the collection is Anne's, with several plaits of her blonde hair cut and saved, presumably by her father. One is still in its envelope and annotated: "Anne Brontë / May 22 1833 / Aged 13 / years" (HAOBP: BS171.C). Cut in springtime, worked into two thin plaits and tied together with blue ribbon, this double lock of youthful blonde hair recalls those depicted in one of Charlotte's early fictions, *The Search After Hapiness,* written when she was thirteen. The tale follows Henry O'Donell who, having quarrelled with another nobleman, resolves to leave the city and his few close friends, the king and two young princes, for a distant land. Before O'Donell departs, the princes give him locks of their hair. The two curled locks are the only material things (excepting some biscuits) that O'Donell carries with him on his travels to the "land of the grave" (31) and act as the prompt that leads him back to his home and the friends he left behind. Charlotte, having lost two sisters at the time of writing this story, may have been concerned with ways of remembering the dead and invested in mourning practices that sought to maintain a material connection to the departed. I argue, however, that *The Search After Hapiness* subverts the living-remembering-the-dead function often assumed of hair mementos by

[15] The Moulton-Barrett family curated a similar collection of the locks of hair of the family (Private Collection: *BC*, H0507). The locks are cut from seven of the children of Edward and Mary Moulton-Barrett, plus their niece, Louisa Butler, and each envelope records when the lock was cut with dates ranging across 1822, 1823, and 1827.

presenting instead the dead remembering the living and using hair as a memento vivere, a reminder of life. Locks of hair in this story symbolise and effect the continued presence of friends rather than their absence, and the endurance of friendship across distance rather than its severance.

Although unworked in the physical sense, the locks of hair in the story are crafted in other ways, rhetorically framed and held on to, much like the frame of Brontë family locks, as a display of kinship, belonging and connection:

> "Take this then that you may sometimes rember [sic] us when you dwell with only the wild beast of the desert or the great eagle of the mountain" said they as they each gave him a curling lock of their hair. "Yes I will take it my princes and I shall rember [sic] you and the mighty warrior King your father even when the angel of Death has stretched forth his bony arm against me and I am within the confines of his dreary Kingdom in the cold damp grave" replied O Donell (16).[16]

This exchange reworks the parting of O'Donell and the princes as the establishment of a connection made possible by the locks of hair. Given with the performative utterance "Take this", and accepted with the affirmation, "I will take it my princes", the presentation of these locks is a symbolic union of O'Donell and the princes, working against their impending separation. Though the princes are giving away their hair, in doing so they are essentially accepting O'Donell in friendship as an established member of their circle. The exchange of hair represents "a stage of intimacy" in their friendship (Gere and Rudoe 165), a gift that is taken and given from their bodies with pure sentimental, rather than economic, value. The princes also offer their locks as a form of companionship when O'Donell is alone on his travels, supposing their bodies to be somehow consubstantial with their hair. But more than this, these two locks are described in terms of keeping O'Donell connected to humanity. They are a reminder of the human versus the animal, positioned against the fur of the "wild beast" and feather of the "great eagle", and of the living versus the dead, set against the "bony arm" of death. It is as though the keeping of the locks will keep O'Donell's mind present with the princes in the city and will thereby prevent him from becoming something other than himself, a talismanic barrier to beastly or deathly contagion. They come to signify O'Donell's belonging in the city, in the princes' society and, because O'Donell's journey imagines distance *as* death,

[16] "O Donell" has no apostrophe in the facsimile edition, but I will refer to "O'Donell" when not directly citing the text.

among the living.[17] O'Donell's response, that he will remember them and their father even when "in the cold damp grave", renders the locks a form of inverted mourning token. They celebrate present connection in spite of coming death rather than bemoaning loss. Hair is presented as having the potential to reanimate the dead, aid them in remembering their friends, and remind them of their ties to the living.[18] In this way, the dead are not forgotten but neither are they allowed to forget. They do not break their links with the living but maintain an enduring connection by keeping enduring matter close at hand.

Accordingly, the story refigures the afterlife as a matter of separation from the known world across space and time, imagining O'Donell's entry into the "dreary Kingdom" of death as a literal journey. O'Donell leaves the city, climbs over the mountains, and soon meets another man, Alexander DeLancy. Together they enter an underground path where a stone is pushed across the entrance trapping them inside. After following the path for two days, they come out upon a strange land, a huge stormy landscape in which "a silence like the silence of the grave reigned over all the face of nature" (*Search After Hapiness* 25). The men settle here as their "place of rest" and become "quite silent and their thoughts were occupied by those that were afar off and whom it was their fate most likely never more to behold" (27-28). Years pass in the desolate land, an old man appears and tells his story before leaving, and then one day DeLancy goes out for food and disappears, leaving O'Donell alone. In his isolation, O'Donell turns to the locks of hair the princes gave him:

> In one of these dreadful intervals he took up a small parcel and opening it he saw lying before him two locks of soft curly hair shining like burnished gold. He gazed on them for a little and thought of the words of those who gave them to him—"Take this then that you may sometimes rember [sic]

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[17] The "dreary Kingdom" referred to in this passage may be a biblical allusion involving the images of "the wild beast of the desert" and "the great eagle of the mountain". Jeremiah 50:39 and Isaiah 34:14 refer to "the wild beasts of the desert" as well as owls (not eagles) and describe uninhabitable lands. Both passages concern the destruction of nations that are enemies to God or, in other words, the destruction of cities surrounding Israel, which will be left so desolate in God's fury that only wild animals will be able to live there. The story could, then, be read as an allegory of O'Donell's turning from and returning to God, dramatised as a journey to a land of divinely ordained desolation.

[18] Burying bodies with locks of hair in order that they might remain connected somehow to the living (or to other dead bodies) was not uncommon. As recalled in the diaries of John Horsley, Mrs Elvira Horsley was buried in 1852 with a little velvet bag containing the locks of hair of her husband and children which she had cut off a month earlier while she lay dying (Lutz, "Death Made Material" para. 15; Jalland 214). Queen Victoria was allegedly buried holding a photo and the hair of John Brown in her hand, though her doctor, Sir James Reid, covered it with tissue paper (Gere and Rudoe 78).

> us when you dwell with only the wild beast of the desert or the great eagle of the mountain" (42-44).

Like the neat little mourning envelopes of hair in the BPM collections, with tissue paper added for their preservation, this "small parcel" of hair has been kept as something precious, a gift that has been preserved and packaged. Just as with envelopes of hair, mobility is implicit in O'Donell's parcel of hair, especially given his great distance from its donors. O'Donell is messenger to his own mail, the locks carried to another land where they act as a call to return home. As the locks are carried by O'Donell on his travels, they also function in a way similar to hair jewellery when worn, holding "the lock of hair's bodily warmth [which] points to daily intimacies" (Lutz, *Relics of Death* 143). They do not have the marked materiality of, for instance, the broken hair bracelet discussed at the beginning of this chapter, but their closeness to O'Donell's body has charged them with a real warmth that evokes the metaphoric warmth of friendship. Though not mounted in a locket or brooch, the locks are contained within the parcel which opens to expose its contents to the viewer. O'Donell is said to gaze on rather than to handle the locks, yet touch is implied in their tactile description. They shine "like burnished gold" as though polished, smoothed down by hand, and appear "soft", appealing to be touched. In this way, the princes' locks of hair gesture towards the affective possibilities opened up by the work of affectionate, careful touch—an idea that becomes more tangible in *Villette*, which I will come to shortly.

Gazing on the locks of hair reminds O'Donell of the words said over the hair by the princes, a verbatim remembrance that invokes nostalgia and a desire to return to the princes' company. Their distance is at once confounded and endorsed by locks of hair which, being cut off at a point and place in the past, suppose both distance in space and distance in time while appearing as they were all those miles and years ago (Pointon, *Brilliant Effects* 293). Locks of children's hair facilitate and communicate this perfectly as "Hair is the part of the body most epochal, susceptible to dating discrete periods of one's existence" (Lutz, *Relics of Death* 134). They betoken a desire to remain connected to the donors of the hair while preserving a fragment of their bodies as they were in youth because hair no longer ages from the moment it is cut. A similar desire can be seen in Anne's aforementioned double plait of young teenage hair which has been annotated with the date it was taken, recording the

moment in time (HAOBP: BS171.C). Though O'Donell's parcel of hair does not contain a written note of when he received the princes' hair, his precise recall of the words said over the hair evoke a similar sense of a crystallised past, a reverie brought on by contemplating the locks. The *memento vivere* function of these locks comes to the fore, with O'Donell seemingly trapped in an afterlife or grave-like land, resting alone in a cave as he opens this parcel. These relics from the past bring O'Donell back to the present, to the land of the living, and even signal his future.[19] As O'Donell gazes on the locks of hair and remembers the words of his distant friends, a Genii appears and grants his wish to return home. Rather than the living pondering on the hair of the dead and imagining their reanimation, here the dead are physically brought back to life with the hair of the living.

The story wraps up rather quickly after this scene. O'Donell accepts the Genii's terms and instantly finds himself outside the land of the grave. He makes his way back over the mountains overlooking the city, descends, finds the princes, bumps into DeLancy again and all ends well. In so short a story, the space and detail given to the locks of hair is striking. The quarrel that determines O'Donell to leave the city is more or less glazed over, coming quickly to the presentation of the princes' hair, and so too is the ending rather rushed after O'Donell gazes on the locks of hair. The princes' locks effectively bookend the narrative, marking the points of departure and return and in doing so effect the recurrence of meeting, the congregation of friends, and fulfil their purpose as connective strands. The locks of hair carry O'Donell safely on his journey and, eventually, bring him to remember the words that summon the Genii. There is, then, an amuletic quality to hair played upon here (Warner 57). The princes' locks hold an affective charge (generated in part by the ceremony when they were given) which gives them the magical power to reunite friends and, in order to do so, raise the dead, a trope Charlotte came back to in her other early stories set in Verdopolis.[20] In "The Foundling" (1833), for instance,

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[19] Robert Keefe inadvertently evokes the gift-led resolution of *The Search After Hapiness* when he writes that Patrick, in giving his children twelve toy soldiers as a gift on the one year anniversary of Elizabeth's death in June 1826, was attempting "to lead his children back along the first tentative steps to the land of the living" (45).

[20] Some of Charlotte's stories were set in "Verreopolis" to mean "Glass-Land", and also "Verdopolis" to suggest a green pastoral landscape. "Villette" translates roughly as "Little Town", but in earlier drafts it was "Choseville" meaning "Thing Town" (Badowska 1509), and so in Charlotte's later work place names are still used to suggest the material and metaphoric qualities of locations.

Edward Sydney performs a ritual to protect himself from an evil god, Danasch, and regain his birthright which involves cutting a lock of hair from a corpse and throwing it into a fire to be mystically reformed into a locket. These scenes raise the question as to whether it is hair that makes the ritual powerful or the ritual that makes hair powerful. E. R. Leach, writing from an anthropological perspective, argues for the latter, that "ritually powerful human hair is full of magical potency not because it is hair but because of the ritual context of its source, e.g. murder, incest, mourning" (159). The words the princes say over their locks as they present them to O'Donell in *The Search After Hapiness* are certainly redolent of ceremony, imbuing this token with power by their speech rather than by virtue of its being hair.

Unlike the mysteries of industrial production, commodities made "as if by magic" by another hand in another location, hairwork places the magical potential of hair in the process of using a familiar material for a transformative purpose.[21] If the process of hairwork is a kind of ritual, a process of methodically appropriating matter for a symbolic, but hopefully magical, purpose, then the material qualities of hair become important once again. As something that may be readily sourced and worked, the potential for hair to take on magical powers is as much owing to its tactility and pliability as to its bodily connection to its donors.

### Crafting Connection in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853)

In Charlotte's novel *Villette*, the magical power of hair to forge alliances and keep bad forces at bay (whether death, Danasch, or enmity) is still at work. Paulina Home tries to bring her father and fiancé to accord by overseeing a handshake. This proves ineffective as a conciliatory gesture owing to Count de Bassompierre's upset over his daughter's engagement: "Graham, stretch out your right hand. Papa, put out yours. Now, let them touch. Papa, don't be stiff; close your fingers; be pliant—there! But that is not a clasp—it is a grasp!" (446). Touch plays a crucial part in crafting the connection between the two men, but without pliability, a physical and symbolic willingness to "give", the exchange

[21] For a discussion of magic and commodity fetishism in relation to Charlotte and the Great Exhibition, see Eva Badowska, "Choseville: Brontë's *Villette* and the Art of Bourgeois Interiority" (2005).

only generates further hostility.[22] Paulina turns to hairwork to unite her father and Graham, plaiting their locks of hair and placing them in a locket to keep them friends forever.

> [W]ith the tiny pair of scissors, glittering in her lap, she had severed spoils from each manly head beside her, and was now occupied in plaiting together the grey lock and the golden wave. The plait woven—no silk thread being at hand to bind it—a tress of her own hair was made to serve that purpose; she tied it like a knot, prisoned it in a locket, and laid it on her heart.
>
> "Now," said she, "there is an amulet made, which has virtue to keep you two always friends. You can never quarrel so long as I wear this."
>
> An amulet was indeed made, a spell framed which rendered enmity impossible. She was become a bond to both, an influence over each, a mutual concord. (447)

Paulina binds the plait of her father and fiancé in a show of readiness to take on the role of "mutual concord" and bringer of domestic harmony. In using her hair for this purpose, she deliberately and skilfully works her body into her craft in a literal rendering of the "exclusively female power to weave the family web, to create the fabric of peaceful family and social existence" (Gitter 936). Paulina not only reconciles two men, the "jealous father relinquish[ing] his prize and bonds with the son-to-be", as Elizabeth Langland has noted ("Patriarchal Ideology" 391). Her tying of *three* locks of hair together also suggests Paulina reconciles her different roles in relation to them. That she works her and Graham's hair together suggests their growing intimacy, the meeting of their bodies in marriage. As Paulina's hair is also bound around her father's, the plait is a family piece, worn over her heart with familial affection. Indeed, Paulina makes Graham a part of her family by binding his hair with her father's. Her hairwork is as much as about establishing and maintaining family (or family-replicating) connections as it is about affection or romance. The anxiety of geographic separation and emotional distancing from her father, which taking Graham as her husband poses, also informs Paulina's desire to keep a part of him proximally present and close, too, by way of his hair. In this way, Paulina's plait crafts two ties into a unified whole. She is, in one sense, severing her ties with her father in gaining a husband, but through hairwork she demonstrates

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[22] Kimberly Cox discusses communication through the quality, pressure, duration, and circumstance of touching hands in "A Touch of the Hand: Manual Intercourse in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" (2017). "Manual intercourse" plays out as a silent fight rather than a flirtation in this scene from *Villette*.

her intention to maintain a connection, to remain affectionately attached to both men, resolving her conflicting loyalties as daughter and wife.

There is a child-like naïvety in Paulina's making an "amulet" to effect the friendship of her father and fiancé that echoes the young princes' simple but significant gift of locks of hair in *The Search After Hapiness.* Paulina's hairwork is, however, far more adult, more womanly, than may first appear. Paulina's impulse and ability to craft using locks of hair, and her inventiveness in using a strand of her own to tie the piece, is in part owing to her practice of other handicrafts, such as needlework, throughout her life. Paulina's "tiny pair of scissors" used here recall her tiny size and Lucy's first impression of her as resembling "a good-sized doll" (*Villette* 12). While this petiteness makes Paulina appear child-like, it enhances her femininity and, for the purposes of handicraft, her dexterity. Graham's attraction to Paulina is demonstrated earlier in the novel as he watches her at her embroidery, following "with his eye the gilded glance of Paulina's thimble" (299). The thimble, like the tiny scissors, is positioned as a correlative to Paulina's body: small, beautiful, eye-catching (with the "glance" of the golden thimble and the "glittering" of the scissors), but equally useful and crafty. As Jane Toller argues, making handicrafts in a social space, such as a parlour, presented the chance for women to display and draw attention to their hands, and to appear correspondingly elegant while engaged in delicate, ornamental work (91). As Paulina sits at her work in both scenes in the presence of Graham, her crafting becomes as much an opportunity to display her body, to draw attention to her fine hands, as a chance to show off her skills.

There is an additional tactility and intimacy to Paulina's work with hair, versus her earlier needlework, since she works without a needle or thimble, touching the strands of hair directly and even bringing her own hair into the design.[23] This is not the only instance in which traces of Paulina's body are caught up in her craftwork. Very early in the novel she takes her needles from her "toy workbox" to practise her sewing and sits hemming a "shred of a handkerchief" (*Villette* 12). Although she sits and works "silent, diligent, absorbed, womanly", she continually stabs herself with the needle, "marking the cambric with a track of minute red dots" (12), her fingers as yet unskilled and unhardened. There is a tension in this scene between Paulina's girl-like

[23] One of Charlotte's earlier stories, *Passing Events* (1836), brings these two forms of fancywork together as it features a handkerchief embroidered with a coronet in black hair and a locket containing hair.

appearance and the grown-up and womanly activities which she performs, in Eva Badowska's terms, in a "strangely mechanical and unreflective" manner (1517). Paulina endures the difficulties and even pain of needlework as though sewing were part of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. As Paulina's blood marks the rag in an image redolent of menstrual blood, the practice of embroidery becomes simultaneously a development of feminine skills in handicraft and a development of the female body. Her use of her hair in the locket means she is at once the crafter and the crafted, maker and material in a transformative process. Equally, Paulina's body is not only *in* her hairwork, but invested in it as a means by which to practice and perform a middle-class feminine identity.

Finally, bodily contact with the maker affirms the affections visualised by the locket: Paulina wears it. The declaration that she will continue to wear the locket ever after means that her body will keep warm, and keep alive, the loving sentiments it celebrates. Her hairwork is forward-looking and collective, a token of hope and promise for the future for not one but three donors. As with the princes' locks in *The Search After Hapiness,* the locket of plaited hair is therefore a token of continued presence rather than absence and a defiant assertion of unity despite conflict. It is narrated as having magical potency that derives from the love and care of its worker, an "amulet" which forms "a spell" to affect and protect a connection across distance and time. The nature of the locket's magic is both contagious and sympathetic.[24] It is contagious because the locket uses the actual body parts of the people under the spell, and sympathetic because, in Paulina's construction of the plait, like is intended to produce like. The cohesion of the men's hair in one plait is meant to bring about family cohesion, concord in the object producing concord in its subjects. Neither Paulina's plait nor the young princes' locks given to O'Donell, however, deal fully with the separation of death, since O'Donell's journey into the land of the grave ends with his return to the land of the living. They instead negotiate the tension between spatial and temporal distance and remembrance, whether of the living or the dead, by codifying points in time and relationships with a concern for beginnings, rather than endings, just as with the plaited lock of

[24] Susan Stewart notes that portrait miniatures carry these two forms of magic: "When the miniature exists simply as a representation, it functions as a sympathetic magic; when it is enclosed with a lock of hair, a piece of ribbon, or some other object that is 'part' of the other, it functions as a contagious magic" (126).

Anne's hair cut in youth (HAOBP: BS171.C). To end this section with another instance of Anne's plaited hair, we see a different kind of crafted connection emerging from the Brontës' hairwork when we consider what is likely the hair of the dead.

Fig. 2.iii — Necklace and bracelets made of Anne Brontë's hair, early to mid-nineteenth century (date unknown). HAOBP: J8.

Two hair bracelets and a necklace made of Anne's hair were given to Ellen Nussey by Charlotte (see fig. 2.iii). If any of the hairwork in the BPM was worked at home by Charlotte, this appears the most likely by virtue of its simplicity, size, and fixtures. A substantial amount of hair has gone into these pieces. Joins along the necklace mean that this alone was made of three lengths of hair, possibly, though not necessarily, a sign that it was cut in death rather than in life. The metal joins suppose crafted connection even within the design of the necklace. The four or five-stranded plaits that they connect look like links themselves, chains of hair, a visual metaphor of connection between sisters, whether living or dead. Curiously, the golden sockets of the push-in clasps don't all match up with their pins. They may have been replaced and mismatched at some point, yet there are very few other signs of wear. Perhaps this set was not intended to be worn. The ferrules have sealed the ends of the plaits, and that may have been all they were intended to achieve. The plaits in this set are thicker than in any of the other pieces of hairwork in the collection, redolent of Anne's blonde locks cut off in childhood, tidily plaited and tied with thread and ribbon (HAOBP: J57:2-SB:23). The dark blonde shade, however, has turned almost completely to grey. If intended for mourning it is fitting that

these pieces resemble the plaits of Anne's youth and, at the same time, her decline in their now greyed state. These details—the joined lengths of several pieces of hair, mismatched links, apparent lack of wear, and the faded blonde—cumulatively undermine the practical and symbolic purposes of the jewellery. Though intended to memorialise and connect the viewer with Anne as she was in life, death is euphemistically encoded, much as it is in the land of the grave in *The Search After Hapiness*, but without the possibility of return.

Touch is also present in the idea that this piece may have been worked by Charlotte, handling the hair of her family members much like Paulina in *Villette*. However, the anxiety of disconnection that this piece of hairwork suggests, with its mismatched fastenings and loosely joined plaits, is a subject that Emily Brontë deals with far more explicitly in her writings than Charlotte. While there are moments of threatened disconnection brought about by worked hair in Charlotte's fiction—*Villette*'s Madame Beck pulls the grey plait of Miss Marchmont's hair from Lucy's memorandum book, and *Shirley*'s Caroline feverishly clings to Robert's black curl in a locket in her illness, fearful he will ask for it back—her work deals predominantly with the preserving of ties, with hairwork a manifestation of connections and affections that defy absence, antagonism, and death. In Emily's writing, by contrast, fear of disconnection and loss is the primary motive behind the crafting of hair. Locks are twined together or trapped within frames in a futile attempt to fend off death, discord, and the loss of contact between bodies.[25] Unlike in Charlotte's work, there is no magical or affective connectivity to be derived from hairwork, only the balked desire for it. Hairwork mocks its maker (and donor) by entertaining the possibility of enduring matter, of connections made material and thereby imperishable, but ultimately failing to affect permanence in any meaningful way for the bodies and relationships it represents.

## Twisted Strands: Violent Touch in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

[25] In an attempt to fend off death and decay, in "Long neglect has worn away" (1837), a twined "lock of silky hair" sits beneath a portrait that "mould and damp" have corrupted (lines 4-5). And, failing to achieve accord, in "Why ask to know the date—the clime?" (1846), "rival curls of silken hair, / Sable and brown" enclosed together in a locket suggest "A tale of doubtful constancy" (lines 146-48).

Among the many locks of Charlotte and Anne's hair in the BPM, there is one long plait named as Emily's dark hair (see fig. 2.iv). The plait was designed to form one loop (though it's so long that it takes a while to follow the chain round to the beginning). One of the ends has come loose and has been tied in a knot around the opposite end of the plait, while the other end sits tentatively in its fastening, no longer snug. Along its length, the plait is speckled with tiny broken strands and appears ever so slightly bent and uneven in places, signs that it was worn and perhaps not so carefully stored at one point. The loose strands near the base splay out toward the ferrule, to which are attached the other ferrule and one charm not identified by the catalogue. The charm is a link of two circles that at one end connects the two ferrules and at the other hangs down, empty. This is unlikely to have been a complete necklace since the charm looks more like the connective links of a chatelaine, key chain or watch fob.


Fig. 2.iv — Hair necklace made of Emily Brontë's hair, mid-nineteenth century (date unknown). HAOBP: J51-SB:1550 {1}.

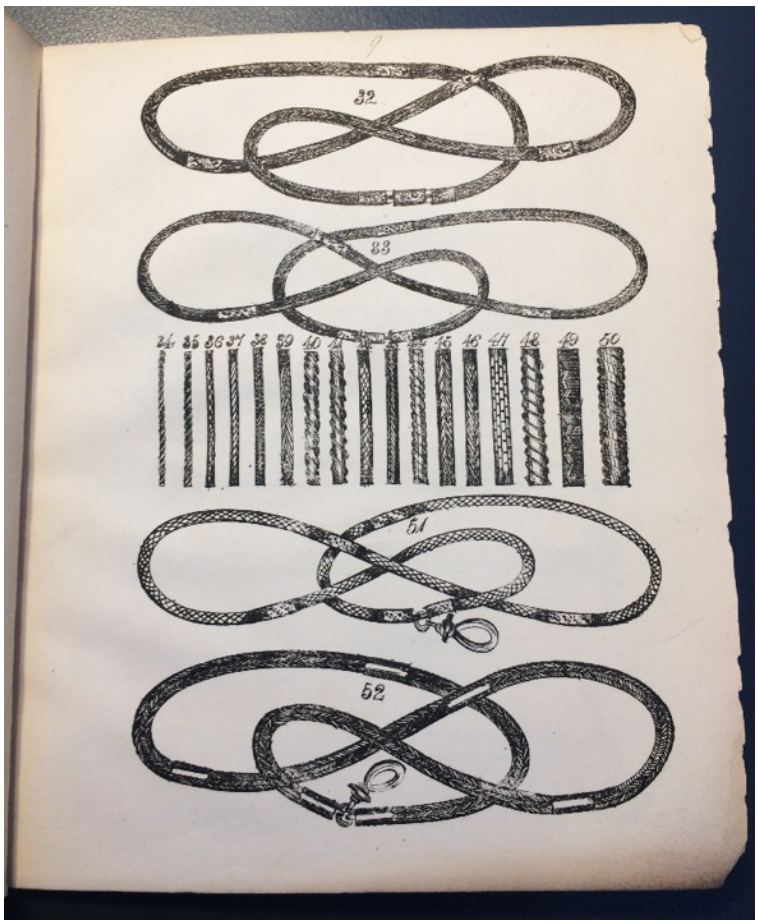


Fig. 2.v — Designs for hair chains. William Halford and Charles Young. *The Jewellers' Book of Patterns in Hair Work.* London: William Halford & Charles Young, Manufacturing Jewellers, 1864. 9.

A page in William Halford and Charles Young's *The Jewellers' Book of Patterns in Hair Work* (1864) shows very similar designs for fine chains with circular charms at the centre (see fig. 2.v; designs 51 and 52). The type of jewellery is not named, but the following page of the book shows designs for crosses and other hanging pendants with connective rings at the top for attaching to a chain, which would suggest that Emily's plait was indeed intended to hold an ornament. This would make sense of the simplicity of the plait. It is not, like most of the other hairwork in the collection, highly ornamental or fragile, but looks well-used, chain-like, its empty link and broken connection demonstrating that it has been tugged, weighed upon, touched too much. If this is the same "[n]ecklace made from Emily Brontë's hair" that was given to the BPM in 1951, then it came along with a "needle case" and "paper knives", another object of craft, perhaps another domestic tool ("Recent Gifts" 54). There would be something fitting in this token of Emily being relied upon for domestic work, busy and dutiful as she was in life, even refusing to see a doctor and

insisting on completing her share of the housework until the day before she died (Keefe 34). Metonymic with her body, this plait was worked and worn up to the day that it was finally broken.

While Emily's plait is not necessarily mourning jewellery, Marcia Pointon's argument for the lock of hair as a double defence against death is pertinent here. The lock of hair is both a disavowal of the death and decay of its donor and a talisman against the death and decay of its keeper. The lock functions as a sacred object, with the pure and incorruptible hair derived from an impure and corruptible body ("Materializing Mourning" 52). The meaning of the hair has even greater resonance, argues Pointon, when worked into jewellery, especially when coiled into circular forms such as necklaces and rings that demonstrate the "repetitious remembrances of mourning" and suggest the "perpetuity" of the relationship between the donor and wearer of the piece ("Materializing Mourning" 56). This is not precisely the case with Emily's plait. It may certainly be an *attempt* to create a lasting connection between the living and the dead: the donor, wearer, and, if a third person, the worker of the plait. But, because its hairs have been pulled out of place before being crudely retied, the necklace begins and reifies a process of material disintegration and immaterial disconnection despite being designed to keep death and loss at bay.

The anxiety of disconnection that the making of hairwork expresses is a subject that Emily deals with in *Wuthering Heights*. Disconnection is apparent in broken or disturbed hairwork, as can be seen in Catherine Linton's locket and the violent touch it encodes. When Catherine dies shortly after giving birth to her daughter, she is buried wearing a locket enclosing the hair of Heathcliff and Edgar Linton, but this is not the locket's original form. Nelly Dean, on finding that Heathcliff has replaced Edgar's lock of hair with his own, collects and twists the hair of the two men together and places them back inside Catherine's locket. This act has been interpreted by some critics as ambiguous, "reconciliatory or interfering, depending on one's viewpoint" (West 158).[26] In the context of hairwork, I argue this hair is reworked simply and spontaneously, without a considered design or great skill, by a peripheral member of the household who,

[26] Pointon argues that this is an interference in order to bring about resolution, that "Nelly's restitution of the husband's hair is corrective, while her willingness to leave Heathcliffe's hair also in the locket which is to be buried with its owner resolves at the symbolic level what could not be resolved juridically" ("Materializing Mourning" 76). T. K. Meier argues that Nelly's mingling of Heathcliff's and Edgar's hair in the locket is, conversely, one of the many ways in which she shows her uneasy loyalty to Heathcliff and willingness to betray Edgar (310).

in doing so, disturbs the personal connection enacted by these men in placing their locks singly in Catherine's locket. As with Emily's pendantless plait, the locket is pervaded by an underlying sense of loss, of something missing or broken, because of the displacement and rearrangement of its hair by another's hand. Several critics have also considered the violence of *Wuthering Heights* against issues of gender and sexual desire, yet few have framed its violence in relation to an excess of touch or noted the significance of Catherine's locket as an encapsulation of the anxieties and tensions surrounding her body and her death.[27] I argue that, if carefully designed and crafted hairwork tells of the attentive affection of a loving touch, Nelly's twisting of hair codifies the forceful grasp of a violent hand. Emily's real and represented hair demonstrates the susceptibility of hairwork to literal and metaphoric breakage, with Nelly's twisting of locks to rejoin them a process that counteracts connection and affection rather than realising them.

> I shouldn't have discovered that [Heathcliff] had been there, except for the disarrangement of the drapery about the corpse's face, and for observing on the floor a curl of light hair, fastened with a silver thread; which, on examination, I ascertained to have been taken from a locket hung round Catherine's neck. Heathcliff had opened the trinket and cast out its contents, replacing them by a black lock of his own. I twisted the two, and enclosed them together. (*Wuthering Heights* 148)

Nelly is the crafter of her household in more ways than one, narrating this scene, acting in it, and spinning the yarn of the larger story as she sits by Lockwood with her physical "basket of work" (30). If Nelly, as housekeeper turned narrator, "at her domestic work is given the agency to frame, reshape, and knit together the life plots of those around her" (Lutz, *The Brontë Cabinet* 42), then this moment of crafting with the hair of the two families amplifies her agency. Indeed, Nelly demonstrates her potential to "frame, reshape and knit" in a single object as she works Heathcliff's and Edgar's hair together, twisting them into a new shape before placing them in the locket. She imposes her sense of order upon their actual bodily material as well as their narratives, reworking the locket's material and meaning. In bringing together Heathcliff's

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[27] Such critics include Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman and the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979); Patricia Yaeger, "Violence in the Sitting Room: *Wuthering Heights* and the Woman's Novel" (1988); and Jamie S. Crouse, "'This Shattered Prison': Confinement, Control and Gender in *Wuthering Heights*" (2008).

and Edgar's hair at Catherine's deathbed, Nelly tries to forge a whole from fragments and bring the family together through a mutually painful bereavement. Her working together of the hair of the heads of two families to place them upon the body that joined them in marriage aligns her act with the making of a memorial hair wreath. These compositions brought together the hair of several family members, sometimes across several generations, "contextualizing an individual's personal loss within the larger structure of an evolving kinship" (Geerken 377). Nelly reworks the contents of the locket to serve the dual purpose of burying the warring affections of two rivals and memorialising their family connection through Catherine. Each body, whole or metonymic, seems to be literally and figuratively laid to rest in the locket. Yet there is something more sinister to Nelly's taking hair and twisting it into the locket than appears at first glance.

It may seem that Nelly's work to combine the hair of brother and husband in Catherine's locket is akin to Paulina's work of reconciliation in *Villette*, the "amulet" in which she places the "grey lock and the golden wave" (447) of her father and fiancé plaited and tied with her own hair. Paulina turns to hairwork to unite her father and Graham and keep them friends. The plait is tied "like a knot" and "prisoned" in a locket which seems to inadvertently recall the painful grasp of the pair Paulina wishes to conciliate. Yet the hairs in her locket are doubly worked, plaited before they are knotted, and thereby retain a sense of purpose, care, and aesthetic consideration. Moreover, Paulina is in a position to "become a bond to both, an influence over each, a mutual concord" (447) because she is the cause and centre of the conflict. Nelly's simple twisting of hair and peripheral position mean that her symbolic attempt to reconcile the two antagonists lacks the deliberate design, careful crafting, and intimate, affectionate relationship with the donors of the hair that makes Paulina's plait a positive and effective means of connection. It is perfunctory by comparison. Nelly's twisting of hair is equally not, strictly speaking, a recognised form of hairwork and does not perform the same work of aesthetic and sentimental preservation. Her twisting of hair lacks the care and intentionality of hairwork proper and the affection that these strands should be charged with is not hers to

bestow.[28] There is no sense of ceremony or reciprocity as there is with the mutual exchange or presentation of locks, which the princes of *Search After Hapiness* invoke, or the invested skill inherent in braiding. Nelly spontaneously and quickly works the locks of hair for the locket, but in doing so, her "twisted" and "enclosed" strands carry a tinge of animosity towards the donors.[29] Again, Paulina's forward-looking hairwork carries a sense of hope for its donors and their mutual affections and relationships. Nelly's work with hair is more concerned with consigning fraught relationships to the past, and though its purpose may be to bring an end to long-standing antagonism, her "twist[ing] the two, and enclos[ing] them together" resolves only the fact that resolution cannot be found by those involved. Nelly presides over a more literal and forceful disconnection later in the novel when she cuts off all correspondence between Cathy and Linton, asking the former to "promise faithfully, neither to send nor receive a letter again, nor a book—for I perceive you have sent him books—nor locks of hair, nor rings, nor playthings?" (*Wuthering Heights* 200). That Nelly intervenes in this relationship, built upon a correspondence that is as bodily as material and textual, reiterates her role as the crafter and yet unraveller of alliances and romances within the family.

Ingrid Hanson figures touch as a spectrum along which careful handling gives way to acute pressure: "Violence is a form of touch. It takes the intimacy of touch beyond the tentative or exploratory into the forceful and transformative" (7). Too much touch—a forceful blow, a confining grasp, or a crushing squeeze—may physically hurt the body and potentially, even deliberately, alter it. If twisting is one such form of touch taken to prolonged and painful excess, then Nelly's twisting and enclosing of the hair of these men is evocative of Catherine's tactile but violent expressions of affection toward them.[30] Twisted hair is particularly redolent of Catherine's unyielding grasp of Heathcliff during their final altercation. They meet for the last time at her deathbed where

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[28] F. L. S. states in *The Art of Ornamental Hair Work* (1856) that "Patience, neatness, and a systematic method of proceeding, are indispensable. Hair-plaiting is easy, but cannot be done without care and attention" (18). Alexanna Speight's instructions in *The Lock of Hair* (1871) also urge careful handling, for instance: "As soon as the plait is finished *carefully* raise it up, so as to cover the paper under it with gum. As soon as the gum has been placed upon the paper, *carefully* put the plait back" (105, my emphasis).

[29] Elaine Scarry notes the violence inflicted upon mental or dream images in *Wuthering Heights*, noting the "folding, stretching, and shaking" which, even when imagined, "seem as though they are carried out on live persons" (139).

[30] In *Mind and Body: The Theories of their Relation* (1873), Alexander Bain links painful touch to a violence or excess of stimulation (70-72).

Catherine grabs Heathcliff by the hair, afterwards retaining "in her closed fingers, a portion of the locks she had been grasping" (*Wuthering Heights* 140). Although she has no part in crafting these strands, Catherine's pulling of Heathcliff's hair, and the words she says as she does it—"I wish I could hold you […] till we were both dead!" (140)—prefigure the trapping of Heathcliff's lock in the confines of the locket. Edgar's twisted hair also echoes Catherine "tighten[ing] her embrace to a squeeze" when he is subject to her excessively affectionate "strangle" on hearing of Heathcliff's return (84). As well as figuring a link between the living and the dead, then, the twisted hair of the locket suggests the tangled web of affiliations and rivalries between Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar, which sometimes finds animosity in an excess of affection. Nelly twists the hair of feuding husband and adopted brother together, the fair against the dark, in what is at once an embrace and a stranglehold. A similar shadow of containment, and of a painful grasp, can be seen in Paulina's locket in *Villette.* The plait is tied "like a knot" and "prisoned" in the locket (447) which recalls her father's painful grasp of Graham's hand before Paulina asks for their hair. Catherine's locket, on the other hand, is loving strangulation turned back on itself, her throat encircled with a necklace of twisted curls.

Several critics have noted the prevalence of boundaries, enclosures and barriers in the novel, arguing for locked doors and windows, room confinement, and closet-beds as metaphors for emotional and psychological entrapment.[31] Moments in which barriers and boundaries are broken or transgressed in the novel are, accordingly, all the more suggestive. In an opening scene that foreshadows Heathcliff and Catherine's violent grasping of one another, Lockwood's arm is held tight across a barrier by Catherine's hand as she calls through the broken window at night. His frightened response—"finding it useless to shake the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down" (*Wuthering Heights* 20-21)—first brings blood to the surface and places Catherine's body as the locus of the violent grasp. Catherine is subject to violence throughout her life, the most traumatic instance being the prolonged bite she receives from Skulker, the Lintons' guard dog. Urged to "keep fast", the dog will not let go of Catherine even when Heathcliff

[31] See Marjorie Burns, "'This Shattered Prison': Versions of Eden in *Wuthering Heights*" (1986), Jamie S. Crouse, "'This Shattered Prison': Confinement, Control and Gender in *Wuthering Heights*" (2008) and Elizabeth Napier, "The Problem of Boundaries in *Wuthering Heights*" (1984).

thrusts a stone between its jaws, and when eventually "throttled off", his lips are "streaming with bloody slaver" (42-43). Catherine is taken in to Thrushcross Grange and, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar emphasise following the fast grasp of the dog, held there for five weeks (271). During this time, a "plan of reform" is implemented to raise Catherine into a respectable young lady in the company of the genteel Lintons (*Wuthering Heights* 46). Just like Paulina in *Villette,* who must once or twice prick her finger as a child in the pursuit of a womanly skill, Catherine's coming to resemble a lady starts with a bloody injury as a girl. Yet this image is not purely menstrual.[32] Mary Douglas's argument in *Purity and Danger* (1966), that "Matter issuing from [bodily orifices] is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind" (150), alongside Elizabeth A. Grosz's formulation in *Volatile Bodies* (1994) that "women's corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage" (203), is pertinent here.[33] Blood, oil, dirt, tears, and hair are all part of that which, once discharged, must be appropriated and reformed into proper, regulated femininity. Hence, Catherine's wound is cleaned and covered with slippers while her hair is "dried and combed" (*Wuthering Heights* 44).

Nelly's twisting the hair in Catherine's locket in her room at the Grange is another attempt to reform Catherine through her accoutrements, reappropriating that which has been discharged from her body (here, Edgar's hair which has been "cast out" by Heathcliff). Thrushcross Grange thus remains the site of Catherine's transformation and the locus of her bodily confinement, in contrast to Wuthering Heights where Frances Earnshaw warns Catherine, who is dressed in her new clean clothes before a dirty and unbrushed Heathcliff, "you will disarrange your curls" (46). Alternatively, given the homosocial implications of the entwined hair, it can be seen that Catherine's body as the contested site gives way to her body as the site of contest.[34] Heathcliff's casting out of Edgar's

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[32] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that Catherine's being bitten on her foot is symbolic of castration, as with Oedipus and Achilles, as well as suggestive of menstruation and burgeoning sexuality (272).

[33] Douglas continues that "Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat", and notes that imagined danger surrounds the traversing of bodily boundaries, such as may be observed in taboos around menstruation in some cultures (150). Catherine's transformation at Thrushcross Grange is thus one which (re)establishes bodily and behavioural boundaries.

[34] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's argument in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) may be pertinent here if Edgar, Catherine, and Heathcliff are seen as an erotic triangle, with the tension between the male rivals as powerful a bond as between each man and Catherine (21). With regards to the locket, however, Nelly's act of entwining the locks brings the men together more suggestively and erotically than their own actions.

lock is, in this sense, a phallic displacement which counteracts Edgar's claim as Catherine's mate. While I disagree with the direct line of Pointon's argument, that "Heathcliffe's [sic] profoundly transgressive act is analogous to illegal sexual intercourse (that is, rape, or incest)" ("Wearing Memory" 76), it is a suggestively intrusive act on Heathcliff's part.[35] The "disarrangement of the drapery about the corpse's face" (*Wuthering Heights* 148) after Heathcliff has been in the room signals that he has been touching Catherine's corpse as well as the contents of her locket. Even in death, Catherine's body and its accoutrements are touched by others in a way that speaks to their desire to control her.

However, if Heathcliff places his lock of hair in Catherine's lock to manifest an enduring reciprocity of touch between them, it serves only to separate her body from his in keeping them close. The locket offers distant touch by enclosing, not exposing, its hairs and not the body-to-body contact that Heathcliff seeks. His desire for Catherine is prolonged but not fulfilled through the lock as it ensures that their matter will remain tantalisingly close in her grave as they await a full bodily union. Heathcliff's exhuming of Catherine's corpse apprehends a renewed material, touchable, connection with Catherine as he breaks one side of the coffin away so that his dead body may be slid in to touch hers such that "by the time Linton gets to us, he'll not know which is which!" (*Wuthering Heights* 255). While this attempt to prevent Edgar's corpse from being placed beside Catherine's mirrors the casting out of his hair from the locket, Heathcliff's lock of hair carries desires and anxieties that go beyond his antagonism with Edgar. The purpose is not only the displacement of a rival but the seizure of another means of cleaving to Catherine and "Of dissolving with her" (255). Heathcliff imagines a corporeal merging—"my cheek frozen against hers" (255)—which subsumes Catherine into (or least binds her against) his body. Ingrid Geerken links this and several earlier scenes of Heathcliff's sense of physical separation from Catherine to "clutching", that is, "the desire to counteract the threat of loss through physical attachment" which he experiences most keenly (378). Or, following Kate Brown's related concept, the corpse becomes a "beloved object" that memorialises the departed at the same time as

[35] The phallic rendering of men's hair can be seen at work elsewhere in Victorian material culture. An Irish man commissioned an ivory dildo to be carved for his wife which held a receptacle for a lock of his hair (see P. Collins). The original owner travelled to India in the 1840s where he shot an elephant, and had the tusk carved in China between 1899 and 1901.

disavowing their loss (398). In this way, Heathcliff's joining of his and Catherine's bodies, through the locket and grave, not only denies the separation of death but attempts to transform it into a means of connection.

"Clutching" also plays into Heathcliff's obsession with physical relics of Catherine. Although he complains that "The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her" (*Wuthering Heights* 288), this loss is at once denied by the continued presence of objects associated with or used by Catherine. If her corpse can be taken as one such object, then Heathcliff's exhuming of Catherine is an attempt to counteract loss in possessing it. Finding her body as "hers yet" (255), without noticeable signs of decomposition, Catherine becomes in Heathcliff's mind as though in a state of suspended animation. The gain of matter negates a loss of form, hence Heathcliff's insistence on first becoming physically attached to Catherine's corpse, that decay "should not commence till I share it" (256). The lock of hair, then, that he attaches to her fresh corpse may be seen to feed into this imaginative imperishability.[36] The longevity of the lock of hair, a part of the body that does not easily decompose, becomes a talismanic guard against the corruption of the body and fuels belief in the continued connection between its donor and possessor.[37] Catherine's locket functions as a reliquary for Heathcliff's hair that presides over her body and preserves it, not as a relic of the past but as a promise of future material reconnection. Heathcliff's lock of hair is thus in symbolic terms a promise, or promissory note, that he will meet Catherine again. It is also, through contagious magic, a thread that will draw him towards and eventually bind him with Catherine in the grave or, perhaps, in another life.

Still, Catherine's locket does more than register Heathcliff's (and Edgar's) desires and delimitations. It demonstrates a material and tactile, if aggressive, means of affectionate expression and connection. Touch is never one-sided. Ann M. C. Gagne writes that since "touch is reciprocal, we need to be aware that when one touches, one is also touched back" (17). This reciprocity is

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[36] Catherine's seemingly fresh corpse also links her to the devotional relic culture of the Catholic tradition. In the Catholic belief of incorruptibility, the body of a saint may resist normal decomposition as a sign of holiness. But while incorruptibility is one sign of being saintly, it does not alone confirm a saint.

[37] As explained in Chapter One, this idea goes back at least to the early modern period and is present in John Donne's "The Funeral" (1633), where the speaker's "subtle wreath of hair, which crowns my arm" is buried with his corpse to "keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution" (lines 3 and 8).

evident in the physical marking of the body in prolonged and excessive touch, such as when Heathcliff's tight embrace of Catherine, fragile in the late stages of pregnancy, results in "four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin" (*Wuthering Heights* 140). Grasping, and particularly the grasping of hair, is in equal parts aggressive and affectionate for Catherine and something that continues to be associated with her after her death. When Heathcliff grabs Cathy, with "his hand in her hair" (285), he lets go as he remembers the earlier episode when he was subject to such treatment by Catherine. A painful remembrance surrounds the pulling of hair because it is physically painful and carries a pang of lost affection. Helen Graham in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) demonstrates a similar relationship with hair and the pain of remembrance when she reaches for a watch fob made of her husband's hair upon Gilbert's "unjust and cruel" outburst over their impending separation (339-40). That Helen's "lips quivered, and her fingers trembled with agitation, as she nervously entwined them in the hair-chain" show her simultaneously clinging to and flinching from a partner (whether Arthur or Gilbert) whose affections may so suddenly turn to violence (339). Like Catherine's psychological hold on Heathcliff, Arthur retains his hold on Helen's body, as her husband and a violent threat, in the form of the "entwined" hair-chain that marks her as bound to him long after their separation. Cutaneous contact, or physical touch, gives way to an affective and metaphoric "deep" touch (Paterson 6). The hair in Catherine's locket, twisted in the transitional stages between her final hours and her burial, anticipates how she may remain connected with her husband and adopted brother in this life and, perhaps, the next.

Catherine and Heathcliff tear at each other in their heated exchanges as the harming of one another's body becomes, conversely, a means of connection. Although Heathcliff and Catherine physically hurt each other, their doing so leaves visible marks and thereby gives material expression to reciprocated touch. They not only imagine their bodily matter being sympathetic to their desires, but compel their bodies to sympathetic expression, to visualise their hold on one another, through the violence of their touch. No point of contact is lost, every instance recorded on their skin as a bruise or ripped out hair follicle. As Livia Arndal Woods writes, Catherine's impressible pregnant body is at the centre of this exchange as she is "both violent (ripping Heathcliff's hair from his head) and the recipient of violence. Her body, damaged by the

bruises of Heathcliff's passion, will soon be irredeemably 'impress[ed]' by the violence of childbirth" (43) and, I would add, affectively impressed upon by the twisted hair, recalling the locks torn out by her hand.

There is a sense, then, in which Nelly brings locks of hair together in an expression befitting Catherine's violent, often physically twisted, expressions of affection and her indecision as to where her allegiance lies. But even with this notion, Nelly's intervention in reworking the hair of Catherine's locket does not reconnect its "cast out" contents but disturbs the locket's singular and separate connections, producing further tension where they might have been some symbolic unity. Nelly may not cast out or break the hair in the locket, but she twists it into a contrived and perverse whole. If violent touch may be "as prolonged as the grabbing and twisting of limbs or features" (Hanson 7), then Nelly's enclosure of Heathcliff and Edgar's hair is violent touch in perpetuity. The joining of the fair and dark locks becomes a doubly coiled structure. Curls have been twisted together, form echoing texture, as their contention for the pride of place in Catherine's locket is made material in their coiling round one another. They can never truly be made one: their visual and material difference remains regardless of their composite form. These locks of hairs are not complementary but contrary, worked into everlasting opposition, either lock figuratively contesting the other's right to a connection with Catherine.

How the locket, once reworked and buried, affects Heathcliff's sense of connection with Catherine and his desired afterlife with her is unclear. Lutz argues that "the afterlife, as it is formulated in this novel, has a materiality to it", and that body parts like hair serve as "the tenuous filament connecting this life with the next" (*Relics of Death* 68). These terms chime with material vitalism, the idea that matter may serve as a vessel for a spirit or be animated, psychically charged, by an other energy or presence. Yet, rather than seeing a material afterlife in death, perhaps the vitality in Catherine's possessions that draws Heathcliff towards the grave is more akin to seeing continued life in death, only it in its reverse aspect: animation in being inanimate. The afterlife is not in Heaven, nor is it in a metaphysical imaginary of the moors, as it is for Cathy and Linton.[38] There is no alternative world that Heathcliff seeks as he

[38] Cathy tells Nelly of how she and Linton quarrel over the "most perfect idea of heaven's happiness", Cathy imagining "music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance" and Linton wishing for a quiet and sunny "bank of heath in the middle of the moors" (*Wuthering Heights* 218).

desires only the one he is in: the one in which Catherine lies immobilised while he is yet mobile. He does not, like Nelly, await a reunion with Catherine in an afterlife, but desires to fuse with her in this reality, in Lutz's term a "postlife" (*Relics of Death* 60), as a material form. Though Lutz notes in relation to the ghost sightings of the novel that both Heathcliff and Catherine "plan to stay animated in this world after they die" (*Relics of Death* 62), it must be urged that this animation is not of the immaterial spirit but something more bodily, more akin to a vital materialism.[39] Bennett defines "vitality" in this context as "the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (*Vibrant Matter* viii). After her voice is heard outside, calling to be let in, Catherine's hand is pulled through the window and bleeds as Lockwood rubs her wrist across the broken glass (*Wuthering Heights* 20-21). The country folk swear that Heathcliff, rather menacingly, "*walks*" (299, original emphasis). A shepherd boy cannot guide his sheep at night because the dead lovers block the road (299). These are startlingly material renderings of the afterlife movements of the pair. Rather than airily appearing before witnesses, they break and block the matter with which they come into contact. The propensities of these phantoms (or, rather, dead bodies) appear more or less continuous with their living selves: they are a force characterised by being forceful. The bodies of *Wuthering Heights*, whether in the form of corpses or locks of hair, maintain a presence that is felt as lingering, violent touch. Nelly's twisted hairwork brings this to the fore, demonstrating the vitality, the sense of life and force, that can arise from working bodily matter into a state of tension.

### "Long Neglect" and a Lack of Touch

I will move towards the conclusion by returning to the idea of marked materiality and the apparent vitality of hair in Emily's writing. Her poem "Long neglect has worn away" (1837, published 1902) further complicates ideas of death, touch, and connection.

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[39] Lutz states that "Catherine certainly believes that death leads to vitality" (*Relics of Death* 66), but goes on to discuss this in terms of Evangelical, spiritual vitalism (from Nelly's perspective) and the touch or presence-infused vitalism of secular relics (66-67).

Long neglect has worn away
Half the sweet enchanting smile;
Time has turned the bloom to grey;
Mould and damp the face defile.

But that lock of silky hair,
Still beneath the picture twined,
Tells what once those features were,
Paints their image on the mind.

Fair the hand that traced that line,
"Dearest, ever deem me true";
Swiftly flew the fingers fine
When the pen that motto drew.

The "mould and damp" affecting the image with its "worn away" smile establishes a metonymic link between the portrait and the body it represents, the latter mouldering in the coffin just as this image is in its frame. The unchanging catalectic trochaic tetrameter of the poem frames the absence of the subject: each line misses a beat at the end.[40] This form contains loss even as it evokes it because it is both a process of mourning for the speaker and representation of the departed subject, each line depleted and its beat (end-)stopped. Each stanza treats each component of the frame separately: portrait, hair, and writing. In the further separation of remembered parts—smile, face, hair, hand and fingers—the speaker performs a kind of dissection as though looking for signs of life in each fragment. While these parts collectively form a likeness of the subject, the painted portrait is shown to be, in isolation, an insufficient representation of the subject as they were, instead conjuring their present condition, their "bloom" correspondingly turned "to grey". Its material vitality lies in the living mould that "defiles", and not in its paper matter or absent subject. The lock of hair, rather than the portrait, "paints" the subject in the mind of the speaker. Hairwork may be seen here as an imaginative process, a means of representation that springs from the material of hair and the work of the mind upon it (an idea I will explore in the next chapter on the poetic hairwork of the Brownings). Still, the lock of hair that represents the body is a simultaneous evocation and contradiction of death. It shows the features as they "were", not touched by time and decay. The portrait is another kind of frozen moment, an

[40] Incidentally, the lines spoken by the witches in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623) and by Titania's fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600) are written mostly in this meter. It is fitting, if associated with incantations and witchcraft, that the speaker is conjuring or reanimating the subject of the portrait with this meter.

image of the body as it was, yet the medium of paper spoils far more easily and quickly than the medium of hair. The lock of hair thereby presents an unchanging and defiant representation of the body: as silky in death as in life.

In representing the corpse, however, the twined hair of the portrait performs a kind of puppetry. Hair, and its representation in the poem, reanimates the dead by aiding memory, but can never bring the dead back to life. We come back to the idea that hair is always a dead material. It is living only insofar as it preserves some physical trace or association of the body of its donor or those that have worked and worn it. Indeed, it is the line written by the subject of the poem that most tangibly conjures the body in the act of writing, the swiftness of the fingers remembered, the fair hand gesturing towards a desire to touch. Writing on feminine craftwork in the nineteenth century, Constance Classen argues that because ladies' fancywork was "customarily tessellated, or mosaic-like in its construction", it was thereby "like the sense of touch, which apprehends objects bit by bit rather than as a seamless whole" (235-36). Emily's poem imitates this piece by piece appreciation of the object, but in doing so draws attention to a central lack. The lock of hair is trapped within the frame, perhaps even hidden from view (it is unclear whether "beneath the picture" refers to its being on the underside of the portrait or positioned below it). The framed lock ultimately denies touch, confounding the desire for tactile contact with the remembered body.

Though not as violently suggestive as the twisted hair of *Wuthering Heights,* the "twined" hair of this poem carries a similar sense of confinement, of being firmly arranged in the frame, if more carefully and deliberately crafted. Hair is likewise confined in *Villette,* in Paulina's plaited hair imprisoned in a locket and in Lucy Snowe's sealed jar of letters, imagined as buried hair. Commenting on these letters, Kathryn Crowther argues that "Lucy's desire to preserve and memorialize them, register[s] a sense of anxiety regarding the loss of the connection between the material and the body" (132). This anxiety over connection, paradoxically, brings about disconnection between the body and the precious relics, whether letters or locks of hair. In enclosing hair in lockets and frames, the remembered body is preserved, but at the expense of touch. In each of these images of hair twined inside an enclosed space, then, there is tension between the presence of the hair and the absence of the body that gave it, and with this an anxiety that what can't be physically felt ceases to

be, whether a friendship, romantic partnership or family connection. The hair enclosed within the locket draws attention to a central lack given its purpose: the lack of touch. In enclosing hair in a locket, the remembered body is preserved but at the expense of touch, confounding the desire for tactile contact with the departed. Relationships are memorialised through hairwork because without material expression they lose the kind of durability of memory that becoming an object affords. But, in this desire to materialise, it emerges that it is the remains that can be felt, that can be touched and their affective meanings revivified, that are true tokens of enduring connection.

## Conclusion

Fig. 2.vi — Hair bracelet, early to mid-nineteenth century (date unknown). HAOBP: J44-1.5.25.

To end this chapter with one further consideration of the Brontës' hairwork, I return to the idea that the Brontë sisters may be meaningfully connected not only through their shared lives and the resonances between their writings, but also through the visual intertwining that their hairwork suggests. The most elaborate piece of hairwork in the collection is a bracelet formed of four table work tubular chains plaited around one another and joined with a gold clasp (see fig. 2.vi). The clasp is a striking design of two tubular loops tied in a lover's

knot, a symbol of connection.[41] Its rippling wave visually echoes the soft wave of the chains it joins, which are loosely plaited so as not to crush the tubes of hair. The detail on the clasp reflects the larger design, the gold embossed with a fine floral pattern of coiling leaves. These subtle motifs suggest it may have been mourning jewellery. On closer inspection it seems that the two parts of the clasp cannot be separated, each one wrapped around the other, holding on firmly to either end of the chain. The inseparability of the links reifies an everlasting affection, an unbreakable bond between family members or, perhaps, someone unwilling or unable to let go. A few hairs have broken and poke out along the length of the chains, perhaps from rubbing the collar or skin of the wearer or from handling, turning over the chain in remembrance.

There is no indication in the catalogue of the source of the hair, nor its owner, though the gifts and acquisitions articles printed in *Brontë Studies* over the years almost exclusively refer to articles of hair belonging to Charlotte.[42] The shade is not quite as dark as some pieces named as Emily's, but a comment on another acquisition notes that one envelope of hair "appears to have remained unopened, which makes it a fascinating example to compare with other hair samples in the collection, which may have faded due to exposure to light over many years" ("Major Acquisitions" 107). This bracelet, then, is somewhat tricky to place. The shade appears more like Charlotte's brunette locks than Emily's, but the amount of hair that has gone into its making, the sense that this is a mourning bracelet, and the pattern of the other named pieces of hairwork in the collection point to its being Emily's, perhaps commissioned by Charlotte or Anne shortly after her death. Its donor could, however, be another of the sisters—Maria or Elizabeth—or even Mrs Brontë or Aunt Branwell. While this guesswork can be frustrating or appear futile, it is constructive to think how this bracelet might signify a close relationship between family members by virtue of its anonymity. The indeterminacy of the hair's origin means that as time has passed—with the bracelet passing hands several times as well as visually fading—the sisters have become more difficult to distinguish from one another in these articles of hairwork. The bracelet's original purpose,

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[41] Almost the exact same design for a hair bracelet appears as No. 35, "lover's knot", in *C. Olifiers' Album of Ornamental Hair-Work for 1850*.

[42] That Charlotte, as the last surviving sister, is named as the possessor of these items is unsurprising, and though Patrick is less frequently named as the possessor of hairwork and other relics this may be answered simply by Charlotte's celebrity. Her currency of ownership, rather than Patrick's or Arthur Bell Nicholls's, was traded on in sales and gifts.

one can safely assume, was to preserve the memory of a relation by weaving their familiar hair into a circlet of eternity. The bracelet now preserves the memory of several relations in weaving these uncertainties.

In my treatment of the hairwork and writings of the Brontës, I have enacted the same crux supposed by all hairwork: the paradoxical connection and disconnection of bodies through the exchange and working of hair. What can be traced through the Brontës' hairwork, whether real or representational, is the idea that without material engagement, without touch or even with too much of it, connections break down and relations may be lost. Hair is cut and collected for hairwork in anticipation of bodies parting and is crafted to preserve that which may be lost, whether to distance, age or death. The making of hairwork is thus an attempt to forge and maintain connections: to manifest family ties, to promise romantic fidelity, and to demonstrate the bonds of friendship. In this attempt there are, however, points of disconnect, a pervasive series of absences, distances, and broken and mismatched links. Hairwork serves to craft connection while simultaneously endorsing the anxiety of separation.

## Chapter Three: Poetic Working and the Gift of Hair in the Poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning

On 23 November 1845, a little over ten months since his first letter to Elizabeth Barrett Moulton-Barrett, Robert Browning wrote: "Give me, dearest beyond expression, what I have always dared to think I would ask you for […] give me so much of you—all precious that you are—as may be given in a lock of your hair" (*Courtship Correspondence* 159; hereafter RB and EBB in this chapter).[1] To his request, EBB responded: "I never gave away what you ask me to *give you*, to a human being, except my nearest relatives & once or twice or thrice to female friends, .. never, though reproached for it!" (24 November 1845; *Courtship Correspondence* 159, original emphasis). EBB's parrying about the number of locks she has already given away expresses her reluctance, though not unwillingness, to make this exception and grant RB a lock of her hair. Her emphasis on *giving him* the lock is indicative of the anxiety surrounding hairwork as a romantic token as opposed to a familial or friendly memento. RB's request is, according to Elisabeth Gitter, "next to a request for sexual surrender" (943), though the erotic implications of the lock of hair do not appear to be the main reason for EBB's hesitation. The same evening EBB wrote: "To make a promise is one thing, & to keep it, quite another […] I *never can* nor *will give you this thing*;—only that I will, if you please, exchange it for another thing […] It shall be pure merchandise or nothing at all" (*Courtship Correspondence* 160, original emphasis). This "*thing*", the lock of hair, becomes in EBB's oblique response more than a symbol or materialisation of an affective relationship: it is imaginatively worked, its possible implications teased out and articulated, before it is even cut.

EBB first describes the (at this point, theoretical) lock of hair as a form of promise, intimating that its anticipated exchange brings expectation: the hair, even before it changes hands, begins to forge a bond between donor and recipient. In her turn to bartering, EBB brings out the promissory economic implications that a lock of her hair might hold as a gift. She foresees the unspoken obligation on the recipient that comes with giving of this nature, that such a gift involves and at the same time refuses notions of credit, and that

[1] RB and EBB's exchange of 574 letters began on 10 January 1845 with a letter addressed to "dear Miss Barrett" from RB. See Daniel Karlin's introduction to *Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett: The Courtship Correspondence, 1845-1846* (2006).

there exists an uneasy paradox in this transaction that at once rejects and demands reciprocity. To deny the request, politely as an expression of modesty, is the only way to resolve any explicit or implicit assumption of debt. The lock of hair is here identified as a form of proxy currency or goods, "merchandise" to be traded against its value though, as a sentimental item, this value is highly subjective. To give such a gift might, then, if reciprocated, shift the burden back to the initial giver and initiate a chain of giving and receiving that perpetuates and escalates to an even greater economic burden.[2] Finally, because to give a gift is to form a personal alliance, and the gift of hair may suggest a more intimate and sensual relationship, there is a clear romantic dimension to the exchange. The lock of hair given to a suitor constitutes an amatory investment and commitment: it is a statement of intention that implicates EBB's body as well as her mind. The lock is inalienable from her by virtue of being the gift as much as by being her hair.[3] Thus, EBB becomes the gift as the gift becomes her. Claude Lévi-Strauss's argument in *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949) that women are used to fulfil men's reciprocal obligations to one another through marriage (as a form of gift exchange) in order to establish kinship is not what I mean here. It is crucial that EBB is the agent of this exchange, whether agreeing to part with a lock of her hair or agreeing to an engagement. In defining the terms on which the lock is exchanged as "pure merchandise or nothing at all", EBB attempts to displace the personal and marital implications of the lock with fiscal matter. As "merchandise", a bargain may be agreed, fulfilled, and no more. It is because in giving the lock she gives herself over to the perpetuating cycle of gift exchange that EBB is, understandably, wary of becoming both credit and creditor in this exchange.

In this chapter, I consider the gift of hair in the Brownings' poetry alongside their engagement with hairwork in their letters and personal effects. Hair is a central subject in RB's "Porphyria's Lover" (*Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842), "The Flight of the Duchess" (*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, 1845), and "Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic" (*Dramatis Personae*, 1864), and in EBB's "I never gave a lock

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[2] In her foreword to Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (2002), Mary Douglas explains: "The system is quite simple; just the rule that every gift has to be returned in some specified way sets up a perpetual cycle of exchanges within and between generations. In some cases the specified return is of equal value, producing a stable system of statuses; in others it must exceed the value of the earlier gift, producing an escalating contest for honour" (xi).

[3] Theories of the paradox of the gift as a sacred or inalienable possession support this reading. See Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (1992) and Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (1999).

of hair away", "The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise" (both *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, 1850), and "Only a Curl" (*Last Poems*, 1862).[4] In these poems, hair holds personal worth and materialises affection in its exchange but carries uncomfortable associations with other kinds of value. Each of these poems represents hair as troubling the boundaries between the body and sexual promise, and gold and economic exchange, while their poetic forms anticipate the way these issues are negotiated and how hair is imaginatively "worked". RB's dramatic monologues and legend frame hair within narratives in which characters' desires and anxieties are realised through its material and manipulation. There remains an unease that hair, and especially golden hair, may be deployed for its apparent worth, used as a form of artifice, a counterfeit token worked (or put to work) by the donor for their own ends. Hair is worked into a fetish object and disavowal of death in the course of each narrative, according to the desires and contrary logic of his speakers and subjects. EBB's sonnets and lyric about love and loss, in contrast, treat the gift of hair as a deeply personal matter, working introspectively through its intimate significations and the anxieties surrounding its exchange. Locks of hair are used to mediate and realise romantic and affectionate attachments and are thus poetically worked to this end through the formal structures of EBB's poems.

While I am again interested in the intersections and distinctions between the works of a pair of writers, here romantic partners as opposed to siblings, there is a more complex trajectory and set of associations that come through in the poetry of the Brownings. Accordingly, this chapter follows a thread of ideas which develop, though not strictly chronologically or consistently, across various genres of poem, in correspondence, and through different forms of hairwork. As in my previous chapter, which treated the writings of Charlotte and Emily Brontë as related but productively dissimilar works, I consider the Brownings as a pair to establish the tensions between their styles and subjects and their points of congruence. The Brownings are worth examining together as poets who owned and exchanged hairwork while representing it in their work, but, as with the Brontës, discrete readings of their poems help to chart the key differences in

[4] "Gold Hair" can also be found printed as "Gold Hair: A Story of Pornic".

their representations.[5] It is not that EBB and RB represent differences in what hairwork achieves. Their portrayals do not suppose its power of connection versus its inevitable disconnection as I have identified as a divide between Charlotte and Emily Brontë. Instead, in representing hair in different forms and contexts, they emphasise different anxieties surrounding hairwork. The desire to forge lasting connections through hairwork was the common thread in reading the Brontës together. Yet, there was an uncomfortable tinge of erotic attachment in some of the hairwork represented (for even in *Villette* the hair worked with Paulina's fiancé's lock is her father's, and in *Wuthering Heights* Heathcliff remains the adopted brother of Catherine). The hairwork of the Brownings is similarly connective and affective and, though without incestuous undertones, holds a recurrent and uncomfortable association with material wealth, trade, and contract, and with gold and its baser connotations. Though some of the hairwork considered in this chapter is simpler than the pieces owned and represented by the Brontës—locks of hair are more prevalent than hair bracelets here—I argue that the way locks of hair are represented in poetry, or else discussed and exchanged in letters, poetically and verbally works them.

### "Take it": EBB's Poetics of Giving

In looking more closely at the metaphors and structures of EBB's poetry, in particular, the criticism that Tricia Lootens makes, that EBB's sonnets have become "relics of a great love" which have consequently "ceased to read as poems" (146), may be avoided and abated. More importantly, the way poetic form recalls the formal processes and structures of hairwork becomes apparent. It is because, as Lootens implies, EBB's poems are poems, and not letters or objects, that their work of poetic representation should be understood as such, and so too with RB's poems. Both address locks of hair in their poetry and in doing so transform them. Their locks are subject to imaginative and verbal crafting and design akin to the physical processes of hairwork. If literary representation elevates, aestheticises, and frames the lock of hair, it is performing a kind of hairwork. And, conversely, if hairwork gives shape and form

[5] The Brownings' hair is numerous—there are forty-five locks of hair (nine in lockets, two in brooches), three hair bracelets, and one hair ring listed across The Browning Collections Catalogue, The Altham Archive, and The Joseph Milsand Archive, the majority of it RB's and EBB's hair.

to the immaterial affects and meanings of hair, then this is what poetry representing articles of hair might seek to allude to or imitate.

EBB's "I never gave a lock of hair away", published as Sonnet XVIII in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), works through several of the tensions surrounding the gift of a lock of hair. Though there is a difference between presenting someone with a lock of hair and the representation of presenting someone with a lock of hair, the giving of this gift in both EBB's letters and her poem is an elocutionary act: the terms of this exchange warrant careful articulation and framing.

> I never gave a lock of hair away
> To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
> Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully,
> I ring out to the full brown length and say
> "Take it." […] (lines 1-5)

The gender dynamics around giving a lock of hair "To a man", as the speaker notes, have a significant impact on the tone of this transaction and must be considered alongside the gendered implications of women giving away their hair. In Victorian Britain, a lock of hair given by an unmarried woman to a man was (if he was not a relative) taken as an explicit affirmation of their betrothal (Gere 247; Margulis 23; O'Day 36). Accordingly, three weeks before RB's request, EBB wrote to Richard Hengist Horne to refuse a euphemistically termed "memento" of her hair, stating her reason: "because I am a prude, & *would* not do such a thing except to my female friends or my brothers or claimants of a like force" (3 November 1845; *The Brownings' Correspondence* [hereafter *BC*] 11, 149-50, original emphasis). EBB's prudishness recognises the complications of acknowledging or agreeing to this request's possible romantic nature. It was also improper for a woman to accept a lock of hair from a man unless they were betrothed (Bury, *Sentimental Jewellery* 44). In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, EBB discussed the "tacit sort of engagement" between Henry Mitford and Ann Henrietta Boyd marked by the exchange of locks of hair (20 February 1840; *BC* 4, 238-42). In an act definitively deemed "CRUELTY" by EBB, Ann's lock of hair was returned to her wrapped in newspaper a few days later with no note of explanation from Henry—just the implied breaking off of

their engagement.[6]

There is far more, then, at stake in the speaker's "Take it" (line 5) in "I never gave a lock of hair away" than the relinquishing of some hair. The small action of the lock being offered in the poem belies its metaphoric and affective weight and the risks that go with it.[7] John Plotz's framing of Victorian jewellery as having contrary functions and values is apposite at this point: "For jewelry to be laden with affect is suitably Victorian; but it is equally true to the times for such jewelry to offer quick access to the world of fungibility, where esteem can be translated readily into property" (*Portable Property* 32). Though a lock of hair does not hold the precise same kinds of value as jewellery, the apparent simplicity of its exchange is nonetheless complicated by the linking of romantic and fiscal exchange in its form and material. In economic terms, the lock of hair is a transferable object but will always "belong" in different senses to at least two people—the donor and recipient—which makes it an unusual commodity. It operates in gift exchange as an inalienable possession: it is transferable but maintains an exclusive identity with its original owner/giver or in this case, because it is hair, its donor (Weiner 33). The speaker offers that which cannot meaningfully be separated from them. Secondly, in specifically romantic terms, the giving of the lock of hair reifies a transferal of affect from the speaker to the addressee because it is itself a portable repository of affect (Plotz, *Portable Property* 32). The "kiss my mother left here when she died" ("I never gave" line 14) that is to be found "pure, from all those years" (line 13) at the close of the poem captures this sense that the lock is not only a symbolically affective material because of its association with its donor, but that it may take on and preserve the affections of another's touch. Placing the lock as a repository of affect in conversation with its function in gift exchange, it may be that this maternal affect marks the lock as a special kind of matrilineal possession, whereby its gifting, in Weiner's terms, becomes "a prominent way of temporarily

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[6] An 1846 article on "Hair-Love" in *Fraser's Magazine* describes this predicament as an all too common occurrence: "A young girl sits alone, with a pale cheek and flashing eyes, holding in her trembling hands a tress of black, shining hair—*her own!* but which she never thought to have received again thus. […] How well does she recollect when he half begged, half stole it from her, with many a fond caressing word and earnest vow! And how she would have staked her very life at that moment upon his fidelity, as she had already done her happiness!" (643, original emphasis).

[7] In the correspondence, RB sent a lock of his hair to EBB before she sent hers to him. In the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, however, the speaker offers her lock of hair first before receiving one back from the addressee in "The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise".

making kin of non-kin" (26). Alternatively, the relinquishing of a lock explicitly associated with the mother may be seen as the displacement of her love by another's. In either context, the lock as an implied engagement is more clearly a preliminary step towards permanently making the recipient kin in marriage. The addressee is offered a possession only to be identified with the speaker and so becomes already identified, one, with them.

This deeply personal gift is, furthermore, a means of denying or repressing the economic motives and consequences that such an exchange entails. The giving of a lock of hair anticipates and implies the betrothal of the couple and with this the union of their finances and material situations. Negating this dimension of self-interest in the exchange, the gift of hair "provides an effective remedial check on the impersonal nature of commodities themselves" and, as Helen Sheumaker argues, it may be transformed further by the process of its being given ("This Lock You See" 433). While the context and conceit of the poem mean that the exchange of this lock of hair is already a significant event fraught with anxiety and unarticulated motivations and inhibitions, the language of the poem works the lock into an even more elaborate and suggestive object. The representation of its being given transforms it as in the act itself. Because the apparent giving over of the hair in the poem is represented with the verbal prompt to "Take it" ("I never gave" line 5), the exchange of the lock incorporates a manner of speech-act or performative utterance, not only saying but doing, effecting a new state of affairs (Austin 25). A vow is spoken upon and through the lock of hair which provides a material correlative to an immaterial process. The lock stands in as something to be exchanged between the lovers whose promise to each other would be, in the absence of such a token, evanescent speech (even if words alone might, in J. L. Austin's view, be performative). It is an utterance made material. It gives form to a promise and in so doing enables the speaker to linger upon it. The preceding fourth line of the poem, being entirely monosyllabic with stresses falling on "ring", "full", and "length", correspondingly draws the lock of hair out, elongating and accentuating the expanding material as it is teased out of its deceptively compact curl.

Still, as an act of betrothal, there is apprehension leading up to the exchange of the lock despite the speaker's apparent resolve. The inversion of feet in the second line places clear and halting emphasis on the "man" addressed but, as a consequence, produces less certain stress within the

subclause “Dearest”. Whether “Dearest” scans unstressed or trochaic (in either case split across two feet), emphatically “Dear” or not, the pause it creates betrays a doubtfulness as well as deference towards the addressee. So too in the completion of the line, since the assonant “ea/ee” shared between “**Dear**est” and “thee” is shadowed by the open “e” of “Dear**est**” and “exc**ept**”, reinforcing the sense that the speaker’s portentousness is coupled with uncertainty. In this, not only is the lock of hair given the exception but the addressee too as the gift collapses the distinction between giver and recipient. In the *Courtship Correspondence*, it is conversely RB who writes “Take it, dearest” (28 November 1845; 161), presumably sending a lock of his hair with the letter. The speaker’s “Dearest… Take it” (“I never gave” lines 2, 5) might, with this possibility in mind, be formulated as an echo of or response to the addressee and a reciprocated gesture: they have first given so that they may now take. Yet though the instruction to “Take it” appears assertive, the speaker crucially does not say “I give it”. The gift is given up but not given over, lingering on the hesitation. Rhian Williams traces the articulation of reserve throughout the sonnet sequence, arguing that “Although littered with apparently unfettered exclamations of the newly loved and newly loving […] the *rhetorical mode* of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* also feels reticent, provisional, even transient” (85, original emphasis). Isobel Armstrong writes similarly of the “hesitating affirmations of these poems” and “the struggle of the feminine subject to take up a new position which is free of dependency” (*Victorian Poetry* 356).[8] This is understood by each of these critics in terms of “the sequence’s careful anticipation of marriage” (Williams 86). I maintain, however, that in this poem it is the exchange of the hair itself, the anxiety inherent in gift-giving, that supposes the fraught dependency of the speaker. To give a gift is to become dependent on an amicable reception and return. Here, it remains for the addressee to acknowledge the gift as well as to reciprocate.[9]

Reading poetically represented locks of hair as a figurative form of hairwork aids an understanding of the imaginative work they achieve, and underscores how hairwork is a means of representation in itself as well as a

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[8] Amy Billone argues that the sonnet form was integral to framing the anxiety over women’s often precarious position, writing that women poets favoured the sonnet because “it offered them a ready-made metaphor for the difficulties of articulation” (156).

[9] This is in contrast with the explicitly received gift of locks of hair in *The Search After Hapiness*: the princes’ presentation of their hair with “Take this” is met by O’Donell’s affirmation, “Yes I will take it my princes” (16).

subject of representation in literature. The lock of hair, like hairwork, is synecdochic of a person and a relationship. Yet it is difficult for a viewer to access these simple significations of the lock without some other form of representation—a label, inscription, or accompanying letter or poem, as we shall see in Chapter Three. The lock of hair, equally, has an amorphous quality. It holds the potential to be worked, to take on more complex associations, but this is as yet unrealised. The lock of hair is thus more anxiety-inducing an object for its recipient or viewer than hairwork proper, which articulates meaning through its matter, the way it has been crafted and, most clearly, its form. In pondering the lock, however, a kind of form is lent to its matter. The lock of hair is worked *through* mentally to contemplate, ascertain or else imagine and craft its significations. When taken as the subject of a poem, this process is all the more tangible. Words take the place of working; literary form supplies the lack of physical form. Though locks of hair are not hairwork to the same extent as elaborately woven jewellery or carefully designed embroidery, their literary representation transforms them to similar ends. Like all forms of hairwork, the representation of locks locates and articulates, here literally rather than figuratively, the latent associations and contradictions of hair and the identities of and relationships between its donors and recipients. The desires and anxieties surrounding its exchange are brought to the fore, aesthetically reconfigured and represented in the medium of poetry or composed in a letter in a way that I argue is analogous with the physical crafting of hair as it gives form to its material.

### Hairwork and its Hindrances: Matter and Form

The locks of hair and hairwork that have been collected by museums, documented and commented upon in the correspondence, and represented in their poems provide a rich source of material on EBB and RB. Still, EBB and RB cannot be considered hairworkers or its avid collectors in a straightforward way. Much of the research for this chapter was undertaken at the Armstrong Browning Library (hereafter ABL) in Waco, Texas, which holds the world's largest collection of material related to the lives and works of the Brownings. Of the articles of the Brownings' hair in the ABL's collections, eleven of the forty-five locks of hair are in lockets and brooches, with only three table work hair

bracelets. As a point of comparison, the collection of the Brontës' hair in the BPM features quantitatively more elaborately worked articles of hairwork: over twenty locks of hair, with a few in frames and one in a locket, but at least ten table work hair bracelets and necklaces. Many more of the Brownings' articles of hair are kept as unworked locks but, equally, more of this hair is composed and framed, either tied and looped in envelopes or plaited and coiled in brooches and lockets. If the numerous examples of table work belonging to the Brontës speak to a desire to touch and to remain in physical contact with the hair of beloved family members, perhaps the tendency towards lockets and other kinds of enclosure that seems apparent in the Brownings' articles of hair suggests less of a desire to *feel* a relationship than to *frame* it. Locks are formally preserved and presented in a way that corresponds with the purposes of hairwork, but not its core practices.

What, then, is hairwork? This is not only a necessary question to set the parameters of my research but also to determine what working achieves for hair and its significations. What is and is not hairwork is important because it relates to how the process of working might be transformative and how the latent ideas in the material of hair are given form. I have already answered in terms of the use of the word in the nineteenth century—hairwork is hair worked into a piece of jewellery or decorative ornament, either braided or using the techniques of sepia, palette, gimp or table work. The unworked locks of hair of the Brownings, however, problematise this definition. The idea that they are "unworked" supposes a lack of investment: that these articles are, indeed, no more than locks of hair. Working backwards from what I argue hairwork achieves—that it manifests design, touch, labour, creativity, and the desire to beautify and preserve, and thereby codifies affects, identities, and relationships—it appears that several of the Brownings' locks of hair realise these factors, too. The hairs are more simply worked, and many are only tied and tucked into envelopes, but many of these locks appear deliberately composed: arranged and framed. They express a desire to create an aesthetic object out of the affective material of hair, to bring out and structure its sentiments in a pleasing form. These locks suggest a more imaginative, loose, tentative engagement with hairwork, but constitute an aestheticisation of affect nonetheless. The question becomes not *what* is hairwork, but *how* is hair worked?

Daniel Karlin notes that the atmosphere of muted light, glass-fronted

cases, authors' portraits, and the overall "passion of scholarly respect" in the Special Collections room in the Library of Wellesley College, Massachusetts, cramps the passion of the Brownings' courtship correspondence that it houses (*Courtship Correspondence* xi). If the quiet and studious environment of the library affects the reception of the Brownings' letters in this way, then it certainly affects the viewing of their hair and hairwork in the ABL. Several of the locks of the Brownings' hair are on permanent (or at least long-standing) display in the Hankamer Treasure Room and John Leddy-Jones Research Hall of the ABL. These locks, all of which are within lockets or brooches, are protected behind glass compartments and glass-fronted display cases. The double barriers that enforce the "look but don't touch" etiquette deny tactile engagement even while drawing attention to it, much like the BPM's clear plastic envelopes discussed in the previous chapter. The hairs of the poets and their families are tantalisingly close and yet closed-off. Indeed, these private romantic and family tokens are simultaneously shown to be revered in their elaborate casements and positioned as objects of unease, simultaneously protected and kept at a hygienic distance, the hair of the dead confined to a sealed chamber. A brooch containing the hair of RB's grandfather surrounded by seed pearls demonstrates this most clearly (ABL: H0500). The tiny brooch sits on a gold and red velvet mounting, sinking into the dip in the fabric in a way that makes the brooch appear all the more coffin-like. It is inscribed on the back: "Robert Browning Esqr. / Obt. Decr. 11th 1833. At. 84.". Though its blonde-grey hairs appear almost child-like in shade and sheen, the flat, pasted palette work accentuates its lifelessness. These pieces are at once auratic relics, actual fragments of the poets that present rather than represent the poets and their lives, and inaccessible, inanimate trinkets, their sense of vitality and affective import rendered the more distant for the two layers of glass.[10]

Still, an encasement of glass is not always a hindrance to understanding the more subtle significations of hairwork. To reverse Armstrong's formulation, glass is both barrier and medium (*Victorian Glassworlds* 7). It not only forms a

[10] The idea that locks of hair present rather than represent their donors may be considered against the auto-icon of Jeremy Bentham. In his will he ordered that his skeleton be preserved, padded out with hay, and dressed in his clothes. Though he intended for his head to be mummified and incorporated into the auto-icon, the process was not entirely successful as it inadvertently tightened and darkened the skin. The auto-icon, owned by University College London, instead bears a wax head fitted with some of Bentham's hair. For further discussion of Bentham's auto-icon, see Sarah Amato, *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture* (2015; 184-90).

window onto the lock of hair enclosed, but may be considered a part of hairwork as a process and a product. A lock of EBB's hair given by RB to Mrs Thomas FitzGerald is enclosed in a large glass locket encircled with gold (see fig. 3.i). Glass in this instance is not the protective barrier of archival packaging or the display case, but the original medium for presenting the hair. The lock, which is actually three discrete locks, two looped and one plaited, is of a warm light brown, closer to blonde on one side. The gold edge of the locket catches the light and picks out the golden shades in the locks and the yellow thread used to tie them. The bevelled edge of the glass ripples out from the three loops of hair and emphasises the circularity of the composition. It is by no means the most ornately worked or richly decorated of the Brownings' hairwork, nor is it the most simple. The piece was not expertly made by an experienced hand or a jeweller, nor left in a "natural" state. It has been purposefully worked and framed in a fitting enclosure. The glass locket, corresponding with and structuring the hair enclosed, becomes a part of the hairwork. It enacts, even more clearly on the two looped locks than the already plaited hair, a kind of hairwork in itself. As well as protecting the hair, the locket shapes it, holding it in place, preserving matter and form. Taking enclosure as a means of hairwork suggests that the framing of hair may be considered a form of hairwork, and that the significations of hairwork may equally reside in its composition.

Fig. 3.i — Locket of EBB's hair given by RB to Mrs Thomas FitzGerald, date unknown. ABL: H0479.

Taking this one step further, I argue that hair can also be worked poetically: by words in place of hands. Poetry representing hair, especially locks of hair, simultaneously constructs with and fashions its material, as with physical hairwork. Though different in the manner and, perhaps, the degree of working, EBB and RB's poems give shape and expression to the same desires and anxieties as physical hairwork. They deal with the same tensions between the seeming ephemerality and eternality of hair; its corporeality and disembodiment; vitality and object matter; and sentimental and economic value. EBB and RB may not be hairworkers in any conventional sense, but their poems on hair constitute aesthetic and affective renderings of the material nonetheless.

### "her yellow hair displaced": The (hair)Work of Fetishism

That RB "in [the] description of female beauty […] relies to a very uncommon extent upon references to the hair", as Harry T. Baker notes, is clear (263). Baker cites passages from *Sordello* (1840), *Pippa Passes* (1841), "The Statue and the Bust", "By the Fire-Side", and "A Toccata of Galuppi's" (*Men and Women*, 1855). To Baker's list, I would add "Porphyria's Lover" (*Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842) and "The Flight of the Duchess" (*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, 1845). What is striking in these examples is not simply the linking of female beauty to luxuriant hair, but the way fair hair enchants RB's speakers. Golden hair becomes more than a mark of beauty or sign of moral goodness: these women's locks are precious treasures to be earned or else taken by force. I will turn first to "Porphyria's Lover", a poem of fetishistic attachment centring on a fair-haired woman and her corpse. What I wish to examine, without denying the extraordinary violence of the narrative, is the way Porphyria's hair works (and is worked) as a fetish object, an ambivalent source of protection and threat, and how her hair functions in relation to gift exchange.[11] Hairwork and locks of hair are absent from the poem, yet its depiction of Porphyria's long yellow hair is intensely trichophilic. It is at once the most familiar aspect of Porphyria and the

[11] The speaker of the poem is commonly assumed to be male and the poem consequently read in the context of male violence against a female subject. Melissa Valiska Gregory, for instance, argues that "Porphyria's lover is just one voice among a crowd of male speakers" who describe "literal or imagined violence toward the women they believe have failed them" (496). Because the poem does not at any point detail any particular characteristics of the speaker, male or otherwise, I will be keeping my terms gender-neutral, especially as I think there is a case to be made for a queer or even single-subject (Porphyria's lover as Porphyria) reading of the poem.

most alien, shifting from protective to threatening. It functions as a disembodied figure, an object separate from Porphyria, from the beginning: it is one of her damp outer garments (line 13), a blanket (line 20), a string (line 39), and a garrotte (line 41).

> […] and all her hair
> In one long yellow string I wound
> Three times her little throat around
> And strangled her. No pain felt she—
> I am quite sure she felt no pain. (lines 38-42)

The winding of Porphyria's hair around her neck chimes with Nelly's twisting of Heathcliff and Edgar's hairs into the locket around the neck of Catherine's corpse in *Wuthering Heights*. Both acts are seemingly performed out of love (the former far more tenuously) and seek to bind partners together in death. Both also encode violence and sexual entitlement (in Heathcliff's part, in particular) and constitute perverse, fetishistic attempts to maintain a connection to the desired woman.

As Emily Apter explains, commenting on the equally morbid sexualisation of hair in Guy de Maupassant's fiction, fetishism involves the Freudian structures of *verleugnung* and *verneinung*, or, disavowal and negation: "that is, the fetishist's attempt to refute absence by fabricating an image that he knows to be false but which he believes in nonetheless" (133).[12] By this logic, Porphyria's hair as a fetish is an imaginatively crafted token of what her lover desires but cannot possess: it stands in for an anxiety that is apprehended by turning loss into fulfilment.[13] If Porphyria's lover desires to possess her wholly, such that she cannot love another or love them less, then killing her and losing her entirely at this moment of heightened love and trust (and, perhaps, surrender) has a perverse logic to it. Her dead body takes the place of the fetish object, wrought with the fetishistic potential which already resides in her hair. It is tactile, intimate, and able to remain in contact with the fetishist in a way that

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[12] There are several instances of fetishised hair and hairwork in Maupassant's fiction. "La Chevelure" (1884) recounts the story of a man who becomes obsessed with a thick tress of blond hair found in the drawer of an antique desk; "Une Veuve" (1882) opens with a niece asking her maiden aunt why she wears a ring made of blond hair; and in *Bel-Ami* (1885) Madame Walter winds her hair around the buttons of Georges's waistcoat and imagines this to form an invisible bond between them, making him dream of and love her.

[13] There is a comparable perversity in *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69) in Guido's fantasy of strangling Pompilia and cutting off her hair while he waits to be executed for her murder (XI. lines 1345-1380).

the person, or the body so desired, cannot. It outlasts the body while at the same time recording a particular moment in time, in life. RB notes in response to Mrs FitzGerald sending him a photograph of a coil of hair found under York Railway Station in 1875, “Byron remarked long ago on the fact that teeth and hair were the first portions of the human frame to decay before—and the last after—death” (31 May 1879, cited in Darling 73). Accordingly, Porphyria’s hair is the locus of her ability to change as well as her capacity to become changeless in death. Though it is not severed from the body and kept as a lock, Porphyria’s hair is the literal and figurative tool that disavows her potential to reject her lover, to be absent, and even to die.[14]

The sense of circularity in the poem is equally bound up in Porphyria’s hair. If the speaker’s act of winding Porphyria’s hair three times around her throat is at the poem’s centre, then around this coiled hair there are a series of replications and reversals which bind Porphyria to her lover in likeness and in body.

> She put my arm about her waist,
> And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
> And all her yellow hair displaced,
> And, stooping, made my cheek lie there
> And spread o’er all her yellow hair,
> Murmuring how she loved me […] (“Porphyria’s Lover” lines 16-21)

Carol T. Christ argues that this passage sets up a structural mirroring between Porphyria’s actions and her lover’s—moving from the lover’s inactive body and their cheek placed on Porphyria’s shoulder, to Porphyria’s lifeless body and her cheek placed on her lover’s shoulder—that renders the murder “a way to share a single life between the two of them” (249). The anaphoric repetition of “And” across lines 17 to 20 frames her actions as on a kind of loop, foreshadowing the looping of her hair around her neck as here around the body of the speaker. Indeed, the looping of both her actions and her hair evokes the repetitive processes and curled forms of much hairwork (the coils of gimp work or the flat ringlets of palette work), as though through Porphyria’s hair the two lives are worked together. If the speaker is taken to subsume Porphyria into their body or

[14] Galia Ofek makes this point in relation to the keeping of locks of hair, writing that “Hair was contained at two levels: physically, in the act of enclosing hair within a piece of jewellery, and psychologically, as an attempt to capture and contain diverse emotional or sexual experiences. The holders or wearers of such hair tokens could make believe that they possessed their loved ones, thus warding off and assuaging suspicions to the contrary” (51-52).

their will in murdering her, then her prior act of spreading “o’er all her yellow hair” (“Porphyria’s Lover” line 20) is also a subsuming of the speaker, pulling them closer to her and within the bounds of her body beneath her hair. Though the speaker will turn Porphyria’s hair against her, many other poetic representations of women’s hair wrapped around their lover’s bodies anticipate danger for the lover. The “one strangling golden hair” of Lady Lilith (line 14) in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s “Body’s Beauty”, along with Lilith’s locks in “Eden Bower” (both *Poems*, 1870) are notable examples: “Wreathe thy neck with my hair’s bright tether, / And wear my gold and thy gold together!” (lines 139-40). Porphyria’s act of spreading out her yellow hair while murmuring her love becomes more ominous when placed alongside these depictions of a seductive and cruel Lilith wielding her golden hair as a weapon. It may be the speaker who has internalised the Lilith stereotype, viewing Porphyria winding her hair around their body as a dark mirror for their course of action. Still, it is Porphyria who inherits the suspicious tactics of Lilith through her hair (and the many other forms of demonic women who might lure victims with their beautiful hair: sirens, mermaids, witches), drawing her lover close with the trap itself.[15] Porphyria’s hair supposes not an anxiety of separation, but attachment: a fear of being enmeshed, subsumed, and overcome.

Algernon Charles Swinburne’s renderings of women’s winding hair are equally unsettling. In “Notes on Some Pictures of 1868” (*Essays and Studies*, 1875), commenting on Rossetti’s painting of “Body’s Beauty”, he reiterates the sense of threat underlying the lady combing and spreading out her hair, as Porphyria does: “And when she winds them round a young man’s neck / She will not ever set him free again.” (lines 3-4). In his “Rondel” (*Poems and Ballads*, 1866), however, Swinburne portrays a more Porphyria-like scene of hair wound around the woman’s own body:

> Kissing her hair I sat against her feet,
> Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet;
> Made fast therewith her hands, […]
> With her own tresses bound and found her fair,
> Kissing her hair (lines 1-6)

[15] Tennyson’s “The Mermaid” (*Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, 1830) features a golden-haired mermaid combing her curls before lovesick mermen. In a re-humanisation of the trope, in Matthew Arnold’s “The Forsaken Merman” (*The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, 1849) the golden-haired woman forsakes the merman.

Weaving and unweaving, working and unworking, the speaker fetishes their lover's hair while turning it against them in much the same way as Porphyria's lover. The repetition of "Kissing her hair" (lines 1 and 6) which frames each stanza similarly evokes and enacts the woman's imprisonment, though the binding constriction is of the hands and not the neck. Touch, and the reciprocity of touch discussed in the previous chapter, comes into play in relation to hair here. In binding the woman's hands with her hair, the speaker denies her touch, her agency, testing and realising her "fairness" by immobilising her. But what returns to haunt the speaker at the close of the poem, and seemingly not Porphyria's lover, is the idea that hair touches back: "Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me there, / Kissing her hair?" (lines 11-12). Even in attempting to circumvent the murderous potential of winding hair in turning it against its originator, death emanates from it. Porphyria's hair is, accordingly, ambivalent. It is her bower and a protective blanket to wrap around the bodies of others in a loving embrace, and it is a noose and a snare in which she too might be caught: it does not offer *either* shelter or strangulation (Gitter 936), but both.

Fig. 3.ii — RB's hair in a replica of a locket worn by EBB, data of replica unknown. ABL: H0493.

A replica of a locket worn by EBB features a golden serpent coiling around a small circular glass vial and holds a lock of RB's hair (see fig. 3.ii).[16] It is displayed in a heart-shaped box with a red velvet cushion. There is an incongruity in this presentation between the soft setting and rather sinister snake. The serpent is not, like the ouroboros, eating its tail but is wrapped around itself, embracing its own neck. The head of the serpent curls round and down to kiss the top of the vial which holds the few short strands of RB's hair. Though in Victorian jewellery the serpent is commonly taken as a symbol of eternity (Dawes and Davidov 19; Mason 262), Kurt Tetzeli Von Rosador argues for a figure of uncertainty in the snake, which may hold more threatening associations in the form of the Edenic serpent or Ancient Egypt's primordial snake: "Serpent jewellery adds the warning that nearly identical descriptions […] do not carry the same thematic burden, may indeed belong to different traditions" (291). The Edenic serpent that brings temptation, banishment, and death is diametrically opposed to the Egyptian chthonic snake that finds rebirth in death, sheds its skin, and supposes the cyclical nature of time. Like Porphyria's hair when wound around her neck (which is boa-like in its multiple, constricting loops), the hairs inside the locket circle round the perimeter, coiled tightly within the vial. The original locket was given to EBB by an uncle "who used to tell me that he loved me better than my own father did, & was jealous when I was not glad" (12 December 1845; *BC* 11, 237-40), underscoring the potential duplicity or tension within affection that seeks jealously to possess even in giving.

The act of strangulation is presented as a gift from and to Porphyria and a realisation of her will: "That moment she was mine,—mine, fair / Perfectly pure and good: I found / A thing to do […]" ("Porphyria's Lover" lines 36-38). Porphyria is apparently unable, if willing, to express her affections for the speaker or, in any case, she does not quite know how. But though she gives her hair as a blanket or bower, the use of her hair in strangulation is not her own. Even if her "one wish" (line 57) is to die, because Porphyria does not strangle herself the giving nature of the gift is undermined. That her hair is taken and manipulated by her lover, Emily Francomano argues, "eliminates her

[16] EBB explained in a letter to RB that the locket in which she placed his hairs was intended for perfume (12 December 1845; *BC* 11, 237-40). In a letter to Arabella and Henrietta Moulton-Barrett (21-24 November 1846; *BC* 14, 48-55), she mentioned leaving the locket in Wimpole Street in her haste to leave. A month later she asked Henrietta to get the locket from her desk and give it to Sarianna Browning to be brought to Italy (7 January 1847; *BC* 14, 93-98).

agency" (70). Her hair and her life are taken and not given freely, compromising the value of the gift: she cannot say no. There are two ways, then, in which Porphyria's hair is imaginatively worked. Helen Sheumaker articulates this when she states that "Fetishism requires artifice, a working of the material to a transformed object; similarly, objects can be transformed through the process of giving" ("This Lock You See" 433). Thus, though Porphyria's hair is worked through or into a fetish, and worked poetically, it is not worked to its fullest symbolic extent if taken and not bestowed.

The same issue of compelled gift-giving can be seen in "The Flight of the Duchess". The servant speaker of the poem watches as the gypsy-enchanted Duchess leaves the castle for the forest. He is granted a lock of her hair as she rides away:

> Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
> With a look that placed a crown on me,
> And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
> And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
> Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse
> Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
> Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
> So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
> Such a reward, […]
> It was a little plait of hair
> Such as friends in a convent make
> To wear, each for the other's sake,— (lines 768-80)

The scene frames the giving of the plait of hair as a bestowal of great esteem, worth more (or worth another kind of value) than mere money. And just so, in terms of gift exchange, the Duchess's plait of hair recognises the service of the speaker as more than monetary employment, as a gift that must be reciprocated: a devotional token in recompense for his devotion. But, as Marcel Mauss explains in *The Gift* (1925), even when a gift is generously given there are the marks of its being "a polite fiction, formalism, and social deceit" since the function of the gift is always to engender "obligation and economic self-interest" (4). This manner of duplicity is present in this scene. The little token of plaited hair is more valuable, more meaningful to the speaker, than a purse of gold or silver, yet its relation to material wealth affirms its significance. The crown placed on the speaker by the Duchess's look (and, following the metaphor, the coronation enacted by the bestowed plait) is both a material

possession and metonymic of position. The speaker's apprehension about being handed money and misunderstood as missing the Duchess's employment more than her presence is equally bound up in hierarchies maintained and expressed through the circulation and pooling of wealth. The plait of hair is condescendingly bestowed, not exchanged between sisters in a convent and worn by each, but dropped from atop a horse as a proud charity. It only seems to present affinity between the servant and Duchess.[17] There is also ambiguity in when the hair was worked. Because the Duchess takes the plaited lock from her bosom, it is unclear whether it is filled with the gypsy's life-giving magic—if it was worked following the enchantment of "Life, that filling her, past redundant / Into her very hair" ("Flight of the Duchess" lines 545-46)—or if it is a token of the Duchess's former, tired, failing body. Likewise, it remains uncertain whether the plait of hair is given as a result of the Duchess's benevolent enchantment or if it is given by her independent of the spell in remembrance of her former alliances. Whatever kind of wealth and magic the plait may encode, it must be bestowed freely and deliberately if it is to be an effective gift.

### Coining "Gold Hair"

"Porphyria's Lover" and "The Flight of the Duchess" represent women's hair as part of a dubious exchange of affection and power and in so doing signal how the gift of hair may intensify anxieties surrounding its donor's sexual and economic agency. Elisabeth G. Gitter explains that "Golden hair, through which wealth and female sexuality are inevitably linked, was the obvious and ideal vehicle for expressing [the Victorians'] notorious—and ambivalent—fascination both with money and with female sexual power" (936). As a consequence, the fair-haired woman who willingly gives away a lock of her hair is viewed with uncertainty, if not suspicion. She is commonly portrayed as sexually and economically fallen in relinquishing a portion of her hair rather than empowered in being able to barter with it. The myriad, more often sexual than strictly economic, interpretations of Laura paying for goblin fruit with a curl of her golden hair in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" (1862) are testament to this

[17] Pierre Bourdieu explains that the generous gift can engender a great deal of moral obligation on the part of the recipient, and consequently power may be obtained through gift-giving in the form of debt, prestige, and personal loyalty (126).

scepticism.[18] Rarely is it allowed that Laura barters with legitimate currency.[19] Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Ringlet" (*Enoch Arden*, 1864) exemplifies this incarnation of the trope, presenting the golden lock as a "golden lie" (line 43). Even in this negative framing of the lock of hair as a deceptively deployed token, gold serves as the tangible material upon which the abstract value of the woman may be determined, facilitated by the fairness of her hair and its exchangeability as a lock. So too in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" (*Poems*, 1870) is golden hair aligned with coin, as the speaker compares Jenny's hair to gold and riches before laying gold coins in it, at once elevating the woman as a muse or idol and signalling her prostitution. The golden lock is not taken as symbolic of gold but something else which is almost always compromised in being given away: innocence, virginity, sexual desire or agency, labour, well-being, faith or salvation.[20]

To borrow Jill Rappoport's formulation in "Economics, the Market, and Victorian Culture" (2016; 393), the intersection of hair and gold in the form of real or imagined coins can be expressed as a concern for how hair *makes* money, how hair is *about* money, and how hair is (or is not) *like* money. RB's "Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic" (*Dramatis Personae*, 1864) provides a case in point for how these aspects come together in golden hair. The legend of an apparently saintly girl who refuses, even in illness, to part with her beautiful golden hair exposes her duplicity when, in disinterring her corpse years after her death, gold coins are found hidden amongst her tresses. In life, her attachment to her hair is accepted by her parents and friends as a foible or vanity, and even taken as a sign of her heavenly disposition, but it is ultimately

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[18] Terrence Holt's reading of Laura giving up of a lock of hair to the goblins is noteworthy. The scene, according to Holt, is not only "sexually problematic" but suggests rape (55). Holt also discusses Laura's loss of the lock as metaphoric castration (56). Victor Roman Mendoza reads Laura's lock in terms of sexual pleasure (923), Mary Wilson Carpenter as an emblem of virginity (427), and Albert D. Pionke as a sign Laura is "fully fallen" (901). Jill Rappoport attends to the economic dimensions of Laura's lock but writes that, like the many other women in literature "whose sexuality is seized through a curl of hair, Laura trades a lock that ultimately surrenders her body" ("The Price of Redemption in 'Goblin Market'" 854).

[19] Clayton Carlyle Tarr provides one exception in arguing that Laura's exchange of hair for fruit is presented as "a perfectly normal marketplace transaction—an exchange that is not charged with sexual transgression, which many have argued, but with symbiosis: Laura's hair is flaxen, valuable enough to the goblins for her to feast, and more valuable than Lizzie's 'silver penny'" (305).

[20] George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861) makes a direct substitution of hair for coin in having golden-haired Eppie take the place of Silas's stolen money. But, because this is coin for hair and not hair for coin, Eppie embodies many of these qualities rather than being seen to give them away.

revealed as a cunning disguise for her avarice. In my reading of the poem, I urge that while her hair is represented as in some ways like gold as an analogous material, her hair is resolutely not synonymous or interchangeable with gold coin. Her hair houses coin, but in this is shown to be distinct from it. The relation of this poem to hairwork lies in the physical use of the girl's hair as a means of hiding her coin—it is worked around the gold—as well as in the imaginative potential her hair holds because she does *not* cut, sell, or work it in an expected way.

Before the girl's coin is revealed and literal and figurative gold separated from hair, the poem presents a proliferation of associations and replications that appear to collapse the distinction between the two. Though consistent in end-rhyme, there are moments of quasi-alliterative verse as though the poem is structured by likeness, the repetition of sound, the correspondence of like ideas, with gold and hair as the focal pairing:

> **Smiles** might be **sparse** on her cheek so **spare**,
> And her **waist want** half a **girdle's girth**,
> But she **had her great gold hair**. (lines 13-15)

Alliterative sets are spread across a line, becoming pairs and pulling closer in the next, before being merged, the "great gold" inserted into the idea of "her […] hair". The following lines continue this growing overabundance of alliteration that evokes the luxuriant expanse of the girl's hair: "Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss, / Freshness and fragrance—floods of it, too! (lines 16-17). These terms of "flix and floss"—"flix" referring to the down of an animal, and "floss" as in rough silk—suggest that her hair is an unworked material, as yet unprocessed and unrefined.

"Gold Hair" concerns how hair makes money because it is, by implication, about an abundant material with a tangible market value that goes unrealised. The fair-haired French girl the poem represents, "a boasted name in Brittany" (line 4), is located at the centre of the human hair trade in the nineteenth century. Brittany is cited by Thomas Adolphus Trollope, Henry Vizetelly, Charles Richard Weld, and Andrew Wynter as the source of some of the most desirable and valuable hair for use in wigs and hair-pieces (T. Trollope 323; Vizetelly 288-90; Weld 219-21; Wynter 252). Belonging to a region in which "custom enforces among the young people the use of the cap" (Sutton 21), the women of Brittany were said to have very fine and abundant hair which was not

so missed because of the cap. Hair merchants paid visits to fairs and marketplaces for the annual "hair harvest" (Rowland, *The Human Hair* 157), which was still a regular occurrence in Brittany at the turn of the twentieth century (Géniaux 430). Indeed, according to Vizetelly, "In Brittany selling the hair is […] as old as the Roman invasion of Gaul, and while I was living there, it used to be remarked that the custom ran in the blood" (291). Golden hair, which according to Wynter was unusual in Brittany where women were famous for their fine, long black hair (252-53), held an even higher monetary value. The girl's refusal to part with her hair, then, goes against the established tradition in Brittany and shirks a routine means of generating income. The monetary worth of the coin the girl is able to hide in her hair far exceeds the pittance routinely offered by hair merchants and thus, in one sense, she avoids an exploitative and unfair market. Yet her erroneous logic is not only that there was, all along, money to be made by selling her hair, but that she hides coins in her coffin that are, presumably, of no use to her in the grave. Both hair and coins remain unrealised sources of credit.

The affective value that might be derived from the girl's hair as a memento is denied, too, as she requests that in her death her family "leave it alone awhile, / So it never was touched at all" ("Gold Hair" lines 59-60).[21] The refusal to let another touch her hair, disallowing them any affective material engagement, renders even greater and more abstract its touched, cut, and worked potential. But that is not to say her hair goes entirely unworked:

> For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
> As it spread—not flowing free,
> But curled around her brow, like a crown,
> And coiled beside her cheek, like a cap,
> And calmed about her neck—ay, down
> To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
> I' the gold, it reached her gown. (lines 39-45)

The girl has purposefully arranged her hair, spreading it out to conceal the coins, and in so doing has created with her hair an aesthetic composition. Although not strictly hairwork (in remaining attached to her head this is

[21] William Watson's "On Reading How the Widow of Wagner Cut Off Her Hair, and Placed it in Her Husband's Coffin with His Corpse" (*Epigrams of Art, Life and Nature*, 1884) explores an alternative affective potential for the lock of hair laid in the coffin with imagery similar to RB's "Gold Hair": "Her head's bright harvest laid she in the mould, / Flooding death's emptiness with billowy gold" (lines 1-2).

technically a hairstyle), this description has clear correlatives with the formal compositions of hairwork. Her hair is “not flowing free”, but arranged into a fixed, lasting creation. It is “curled”, “coiled”, and “calmed” in a way that evokes the rounded enclosure of a locket (the repeated “c”s of these lines effecting the circular, returning structure of the curl), while it is, in one sense, entering the analogous enclosure of the coffin. It is “pressed flat” like a piece of palette work, “spread” as with a tool. That the girl conceals coin in her hair means that gold is actually hiding in her locks, but gold is worked into her hair in the figurative sense too. The girl’s hair is symbolically caught between wealth and poverty —“like a crown” and “like a cap”—or between her actual local identity as a girl of Brittany, donning the cap, and an aggrandised fantasy.

In the several additional stanzas of the poem (which became 21-23, added by RB after George Eliot argued that the girl had insufficient motivation for her actions), the idea that it is the coin that is base, an affront to Heaven, and not necessarily the girl’s hair, is still more apparent. In the added framing, it is made explicit that the girl values her hair almost purely for its capacity to hide coins. Hair is aligned with gold as a thing that is hoarded, not acquired for trade but collection, and thus shown to hold its value for the girl within the context of her desire to acquire more, possess more, and remain physically and avariciously attached to her “yellow wealth” (line 47). Jane Bennett considers part of the psychology of hoarding as amassing objects which present “the reassuring illusion that at least *something* doesn’t die” (“Powers of the Hoard” 253). There is, at the same time, something of a death drive underlying this compulsion, a desire to become one with inorganic matter, to let a material agency take over and become purely and permanently object (252, 258-59). If the girl’s hoard of gold and hair is understood in these terms, it satisfies and helps to realise her desire to (contrarily) live on in death as static matter, much as Porphyria’s strangulation by hair aids her lover’s realisation of a supposedly more permanent, pure love object. The corpses in these poems not only feature beautiful hair, but the hair is a crucial part of their bodies’ capacity to be imaginatively reworked as enduring matter.

> Why, there lay the girl’s skull wedged amid
> A mint of money, it served for the nonce
> To hold in its hair-heaps hid. (“Gold Hair” lines 98-100)

It is unclear in these lines whether it is the girl’s skull or money that is hidden in

the heaps of hair, blurring the boundary between body and objects. It may be the hair that holds in place the coin, which in turns fixes the girl's skull at the centre of the coffin, framing the revelation of those that disinter her. But whichever has "served for the nonce" (fulfilled its purpose or served for the time being), the girl's skull, money, and hair wedge each other in. In this way, the girl uses her hair to initiate the process of her body being overwhelmed and overcome by dead matter. In preventing the circulation of something designed to circulate—the coin—and preserving the integrity of something so often cut—her hair—she anticipates and orchestrates the place of her corpse as an object among objects. Like Porphyria, the girl's body is analogous with hairwork in being reduced to a corpse (the lifeless matter of hair) at the same time as elevated to a prize or gift (an aestheticised, desired form), a hoard of gold and golden hair from which others may perceive or derive more value than the donor.

The lock of hair as a reward to be won appears again in "By the Fire-side" (*Men and Women*, 1855) in which "That hair so dark and dear" (line 217) of the woman, with equally desired "dark grey eyes" (line 216), is revered because its bestowal is dependent on the goodwill of the donor: "For the hope of such a prize!" (line 220). EBB, too, twice urges that a lock of hair must be given freely in her letters to Mary Russell Mitford, by which she means the donor must be free to refuse the request.[22] On the 19 August 1841, she asks: "Wd you send me the least shred of your hair, my beloved friend? Wd you?– It wd be such a gift. Yet say *no*, freely, if you *think no*" (*BC* 5, 111-13). A few days after on the 25 August she returns to the subject: "But you dont *say* whether you mean to give me (in exchange) the precious shred of hair. Refuse it if you like—say 'no' freely in a moment!—only *not* because you dont think I love you enough!" (*BC* 5, 114-16).[23] The invitation of refusal is not simply a matter of politeness or deference on EBB's part. It is a necessary predicate on which the lock of hair gains additional significance. It frames the request as unlike a regular request, acknowledges that it places unusual pressure on the addressee to respond favourably, and demonstrates that in asking for such a

[22] Henry Cholmondeley-Pennell represents the refusal of a gift of hair in "The Wedding Gift" (*Puck on Pegasus*, 1862) in which a woman requests a lock of hair from her male suitor who refuses and is consequently denied her hand in marriage.

[23] EBB and Mary Russell Mitford later corresponded over the gift of Mitford's father's hair, which was sent to EBB worked into an onyx and pearl ring. On the 14 January 1843, EBB writes: "Of course it is there—& very distinctly plaited—& I prize it sacredly" (*BC* 6, 287-90).

gift one places oneself in a position of risk. The exchange must be based on existing affection. The bestowal of the lock of hair, a thing given as an expression of that bond, is a worthy gift because it cannot meaningfully circulate, be replicated or exchanged for other material. Its individual and bodily nature determine its inalienability from its donor and the act of its bestowal (rather than its being taken or given second-hand) is an intrinsic part of its post-exchange value. In this way, the request and exchange of hair is affect forming and affect contingent. If refused, the request lays bare unrequited feelings (or may at least be perceived in this way) and the relationship may be damaged. If acquiesced, it enhances and elevates a relationship. The gift of hair relies upon and consolidates, rather than creates, affinity.

### "The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise": Working and Trading the Lock

Walter Savage Landor connects pride, mortality, and gold in his quatrain "On Seeing a Hair of Lucretia Borgia" (1825):

> Borgia, thou once wert almost too august
> And high for adoration; now thou'rt dust.
> All that remains of thee these plaits unfold,
> Calm hair, meandering in pellucid gold. (lines 1-4)

The lock of hair functions as a memento mori, reminding the speaker in its presence and enduring beauty of its donor's absence and decay. The two couplets frame and reiterate the comparative and contrastive capacity of the lock of hair as a memorial which, in reducing the body to static matter—to "Calm hair"—unveils its immaterial and transcendent potential—"pellucid gold" (line 4). The plaited hair at once "unfold[s]" Borgia's corporeality, her physical "remains" (line 3), while in it can be seen something of an afterlife (whether spiritual or in earthly fame). In this conceit, the lock of hair becomes a subject of ekphrasis. Landor's poem is one of a number of poems composed on the act of viewing the lock of hair of a historical figure.[24] John Keats's "Lines on Seeing a

[24] Mary Cowden-Clarke wrote several poems on the locks of hair of famous figures for *Honey from the Weed* (1881): "On a Ring of Leigh Hunt's Hair", "On Mrs. Somerville's Hair", "On Florence Nightingale's Hair", and "On Garibaldi's Hair". There are also examples of poems composed around viewing the lock of hair of a loved one, such as American poet Sarah S. Mower's "Lines Upon a Lock of Hair" (*The Snow-Drop*, 1851).

Lock of Milton's Hair" (1818) is the more famous, but Leigh Hunt's "To Robert Batty, M. D., On His Giving Me a Lock of Milton's Hair" (1818; published in *Foliage* as three sonnets—the second cited below is the first of two "To the Same") captures the emotional life that hair evokes and safeguards in the face of death and loss.

> There seems a love in hair
> 	though it be dead -
> It is the gentlest, yet the
> 	strongest thread -
> Of our frail plant: a
> 	blossom from the tree -
> Surviving the proud trunk
> 	as though it said -
> "Patience! gentleness is
> 	Power - in me
> Behold, affectionate eternity" (lines 9-14)

The sestet of this sonnet, presented here as it is laid out in the manuscript fragment of the poem (held by the ABL, Victorian Collection), breaks up and elongates the lines as though unfurled to reach across the distance of the page. The end dashes of alternate lines, which mark the end of each full line for the printed version, punctuate the right margin like cut hairs, splaying out. Or, considering the effect of the alternately indented left margin, these lines can be seen to shuttle back and forth across the page like threads woven or worked, curling back on themselves. They inadvertently but nonetheless ekphrastically replicate the hairs represented (both Milton's and the wider culture of hair mementos implied).[25] Like Landor's representation of Borgia's hairs which, though plaited, "unfold" her ("On Seeing a Hair" line 3), Hunt's lines are coiled and cramped onto the page as into an enclosure or frame, mimicking the common means of preserving and viewing the lock of hair. In this way, the poetic representation of hair becomes a form of hairwork. It takes the lock of hair and transforms it through the sonnet form into a crafted, aesthetic object.

The poetic working of hair is apparent in EBB's "The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise" in which a lock of hair given from poet to poet is figured through

[25] For further discussion of this poem as a work of ekphrasis, see Leila Walker, *Touching Time: Forms of Romantic Temporality* (2015; 96-100).

(or, rather, against) the transactions of the marketplace.[26]

> The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
> I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
> And from my poet's forehead to my heart,
> Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,— (lines 1-4)

The poem intertwines the figures of hair and gold, or more aptly in this poem "merchandise" (line 1), playing on the diction of commerce and trade associated with the lock while emphasising, too, a poetic context of exchange. The poem's foremost mercantile metaphors—the Rialto or marketplace; the merchandise to be traded; the mart itself; the argosies or merchant ships and the goods they carry—frame the lock of hair as a commodity to be bought and sold. There is a sense of mobility to these metaphors, that hair might travel as cargo and be taken to and negotiated with upon a physical marketplace, which conjures the far-reaching postal network (the means by which EBB and RB initially exchanged hair) and the European hair trade. These metaphors suggest, too, that there is a monetary value to be derived from hair through its transformation by labour (refining, working, marketing) as well as some value inherent in the material. A lock which "outweighs argosies" supposes its correlation with gold, or in Marx's terms "gold-magnitudes" (84), in its iteration of weight as a measure of value, though the way merchants bought hair from donors by weight (against its quality) may also be inferred. As discussed in relation to RB's "Gold Hair", hair could be bought from French peasant women for only a few francs or even "with ribbons, handkerchiefs, and other trinkets" (Dodd, "Wool and Silk" 13), a full head of hair being far lighter than the sum advertised per pound.[27] In working hair into something more—whether a wig or hair jewellery—its potential price rises sharply. The poem's mercantile metaphors apprehend hairwork as a process that creates or realises value, though this lock is shown to exceed mere monetary value in "outweigh[ing]" the measures of exchange. The "curl for curl"

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[26] The Venetian setting recalls Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, with EBB's barter of "curl for curl" (line 2) redolent of the exacting bodily contract of a pound of flesh which will be deemed void and recompense sought, Portia reasons, "if the scale do turn / But in the estimation of a hair" (*Merchant,* IV.i, lines 326-27). The lock of EBB's poem, "outweigh[ing] argosies" (line 4), feels the pressure of this allusion.

[27] This trick of the hair merchants, and the prices they achieved for their part in the process, was noted in "Several Heads of Hair": "The price paid to these girls seems to vary from about a franc to five francs per head […] So much does it rise in value by the collecting, the sorting, the cleaning, and other preparatory processes, that its wholesale market price is generally from thirty to sixty shillings per pound" (Dodd and Wills 63).

trade of locks demonstrates, furthermore, a certainty in the transaction, that the value of the lock does not lie "tenuously in the material", as Sheumaker posits ("This Lock You See" 433), but more assuredly in its form. There may still be some sense of incongruity in the lock of hair being treated as a commodity when it is patently not a commodity (in this context at least). But it must be urged that commodification plays out in the same fashion in the emotional economy in which hairwork participates. The drive to make hairwork is an attempt to fix and display its sentimental associations and value, to bring out the kinds of worth that are already perceived in it by its donor and recipient and make them apparent to others. So too, if the feelings the lock of hair gives rise to and communicates are ephemeral, does hairwork render its affects the more intense and lasting. The mercantile metaphors of "The soul's Rialto" in this way draw on both the likeness and the distinction between the lock of hair and forms of commodity.

The poem's other metaphors are a little more tricky to decipher. The motion from the "forehead to my heart" of line three returns as "on my heart, as on thy brow", as the exchange of curl for curl is once again envisioned in the repetition and reversal of images. But this first motion, followed by the affirmation that the speaker will "Receive this lock" ("The soul's Rialto" line 4), creates a curiously sacramental allusion. The sign of the cross is figured within the poem's ostensibly commerce-laden first quatrain. If the black lock is, despite its shade, taken as an analogue of gold in its relation with material wealth, the tangling of the two metaphors and the prevailing diction of trade, barter, and riches would seem to cast its quasi-religious reception as idolatrous. If the lock's associations are first and foremost spiritual, with worldly riches as a point of contrast, the lock aligns more with the conceit of the lock as a medium through which to glimpse the donor's salvation (as in "Only a Curl", which I will turn to shortly). The interpretation that acknowledges both possibilities, and that seems to best fit with the sense of the lock as a material that is being imaginatively worked, is of the sign of the cross in the poem as prefiguring a wedding ceremony. As with "I never gave a lock of hair away", the speaker recognises the lock as a token of betrothal, except that this lock is the other side of a promise fulfilled. The sign of the cross is made before or upon receiving communion (which follows the marriage service) and so the act of mimicking something of this action around the lock affirms its connection with the fulfilment

of marriage vows, rather than their anticipation. And, lending the lock heat "till mine grows cold in death" (line 14), any lingering sense of anticipation that might be derived from the lock changes too, from facing the union of marriage to looking on to its dissolution. "The soul's Rialto" thus brings resolve as well as prefiguring the lock in its inevitable purpose: to outlast and remember the dead and memorialise their lived relationships.

The sonnet makes an obvious pair with "I never gave a lock of hair away" in that it immediately follows in the sonnet sequence (this being Sonnet XIX), it continues and completes the subject of the giving and receiving of a lock of hair, settling the reciprocation of gift exchange, and it may be paired biographically as another dramatisation of RB and EBB's exchange of locks of hair.[28] "The soul's Rialto" takes up many of the ideas of "I never gave a lock of hair away" but, if the former poem begins the process of poetically working the lock of hair, the subsequent poem reworks the subject and in doing so effects an even more apparent poetic hairwork. There are several points of replication between the poems: the speaker's own hair which casts "shade on two pale cheeks" (line 9) returns as the "bay-crown's shade" and then "shadows" of another's dark hair made "safe from gliding back" (lines 8, 11); "The kiss my mother left" on the speaker's hair (line 14) turns to the "smooth-kissing" of another's lock (line 10); and the memory of the mother that "died" (line 14) gives way to the speaker's own future, "cold in death" (line 14). There is a shift in tone, not quite from passive to active or from looking back to anticipating the future, but enough that the mirroring of these images between the poems appears as a series of hazy reflections. The exchange of "curl for curl" (line 2) is in this way not precisely like for like, but a payment in kind, a reciprocated gesture that strengthens the relationship between the donors: it provides mutual assurance. That the two poems seem to respond to one another hints that the two curls, as their donors, might be likewise intertwined.

These two poems may also be coupled with a material object and record of the Brownings' relationship: a dried bay leaf kept from their visit to the Garden of Palazzo Lanfranchi in Pisa the year they were married (ABL: H0587), which is placed within a plait of EBB's hair cut during her illness in 1823 when she was around the age of seventeen (see fig. 3.iii). This composite piece,

[28] RB agreed to send a lock of his hair before receiving EBB's in a letter that employs the same terms of address as EBB's "I never gave a lock of hair away": "Take it, dearest" (28 November 1845; *Courtship Correspondence* 161).

mounted under glass, unites a familiar token of youth (and its decline) with something novel, a mark of new beginnings, much like the two poems under consideration. These otherwise unrelated relics are shown, in their alignment, to form part of the same record. Though not quite past and present, or beginning and end, the plait and leaf signify a life lived (up to the point the plait was cut) against a life still to live: the souvenir of a honeymoon, in remembering a happy day spent together, looks forward to more to come.

Fig. 3.iii — Lock of EBB's hair cut during her illness of 1823; mounted under glass with bay leaf (H0587). ABL: H0475.

This combined memento engenders what Geoffrey Batchen terms a "temporal oscillation", a collapse in "any distinction between being and becoming" in the intersection of discrete moments (33). Batchen's discussion specifically concerns jewellery that incorporates photography and hair. He argues that the distinct moments suggested by this collection of things (photograph, hair, jewellery) mean that no one moment is privileged. The photograph displays the past, the receding moment in time at which the image was captured, and the lock of hair displays the present, even the future, as a metonymic figure of the body rendered timeless as an (almost) incorruptible

token (Batchen 41). Yet, for the plait of EBB's hair and the leaf, the reverse appears to be true. The plaited lock of hair, in relation to the subsequently collected leaf, recedes into the past. The leaf announces, within the circle of the plait like the innermost growth ring of a tree, an altered present (stitched to the frame while it was still green and pliant) and a figure for the future. Like EBB's lock of hair sonnets that continue and rework their subject, these objects work (with) one another to reshape and reimagine the form and meanings of the memento.[29]

To read the two poems against this memento, it would appear the plait of EBB's girlhood manifests the retrospection of "I never gave a lock of hair away"—"My day of youth went yesterday; / My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee" (lines 5-6)—its grey hue overwhelming the few warm brown strands that thread scantily through, faded in illness and bleached over time. There are frayed hairs all along the length which tucks beneath the frame, reinforcing its inertia, trapped by its protective enclosure. If this plait remains in any way allied with EBB's body, and her state of invalidism that confined her to her room in Wimpole Street for so many years, it is on this point.[30] The long plait is imperfectly done, its uneven strands weaving from side to side as it tapers to the end. In this visual cue of weaving, a further link to EBB's poems emerges. Where "I never gave a lock of hair away" is assonant in every end-rhyme (which might be notated as ay/ee/ears/ide), "The soul's Rialto" holds significantly more consonance: "mart" / "heart" (lines 2, 3), "athwart" / "counterpart" (lines 6, 7), "black" / "back" / "lack" (lines 9, 11, 13). This consonance helps to aurally punctuate the lines, which are also a little more frequently end-stopped than the prior poem, reinforcing a change in the speaker from hesitation to surety: the lock brings the assurance of shared feeling. More certain, too, is the poem's metrical structure which deviates or, as it would seem in "I never gave a lock of hair away", hesitates only once at "**Here** on my **heart**" (line 13). This deviation, contrary to its effect in the prior poem, does not produce a sense of uncertainty. Quite the opposite, it illustrates certainty, a deliberate syntactic and physical placement of the lock *here*. The last consonant triad of "The soul's Rialto"—"black" / "back" / "lack" (lines 9, 11, 13)—is particularly striking because

[29] The "bay-crown's shade" (line 8) of Sonnet XIX may even correspond with the bay leaf preserved here.

[30] RB met with EBB on ninety-one occasions in her room in her father's house and the first time they met elsewhere was when they were married (Karlin xi).

it breaks the first iteration of “black” into two near-like forms. The rhymes of “back” and “lack” become a near-duplication of the shade which must be spliced back together to make the whole. Alternatively, this breaking of the “black” lock might suggest its capacity to be split into strands and woven into a new form. Sibilant line endings are interspersed throughout the poem, “merchandise” / “argosies” / “eyes” / “surmise” (lines 1, 4, 5, 8) and “breath” / “hindereth” / “death” (lines 10, 12, 14) which, alternating with consonance, effect another means of weaving, patterning, and enclosing the subject of the lock to match its material curl, coiling back on itself, and the act of its being physically tied by the speaker (line 11). The sonnet, like the physical frame around the plait and the leaf, composes and works the subject, playing upon the curl’s physical forms and its latent meanings through its formal presentation.

### “Only a Curl”: Gold in Heaven or on Earth?

To return to Landor’s overt “pellucid gold” (“On Seeing a Hair” line 4), one further tension in the golden lock lies in its connotation of either spiritual wealth or worldly riches. The trope in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry concerning children predominantly presents the golden lock of hair as spiritual. The fairness of the lock is a signifier of the child’s salvation and its golden appearance a direct correlative of their value (to God as to their family).[31] Sir Brooke Boothby’s “On a Locket, with Lock of Hair of Penelope His Child” (1791), another poem “on” a lock of hair, begins: “Bright, crisped threads of pure, translucent gold!” (line 1). In less ambiguous terms than Landor’s poem, this speaker suggests by his “translucent gold” that the lock of hair of his dead child may become a medium through which Heaven is seen, a sign of the angelic nature of the child mourned.

EBB’s “Only a Curl” and its reflection on a dead child’s “single gold curl” (line 4) is very much of this tradition. The poem’s dazzling diction of “bright”

[31] Several poems collected in Henry Southgate’s *Gone Before* (1874) are part of the tradition of mourning a child’s death and linking the golden lock with Heaven. Caroline Norton’s “The Mourners” (1830) has the lines: “We will bury her under the mossy sod, / And one long bright tress we’ll keep” (lines 37-38); William Cox Bennett’s “That silvery voice is blended with the minstrelsy on high” (1861) describes a “pair of little baby shoes, / And a lock of golden hair” (lines 9-10) that are left after the child’s departure for Heaven; and G. R. Gifford’s “Only a lock of hair” (1866) bemoans that the lock is “Only one link, a link of gold, Between the past and me” (lines 9-10). Later poems on golden locks of children’s hair include William Watson’s “A Child’s Hair” (1892), which resolves that the child’s lock “Shall forfeit not the auroral ray / And eastern gold” (lines 74-75).

(line 8), “brightness” (line 23), and “light” (line 20) is not the lure of gold, but of Heaven. The act of being “drawn by a *single gold hair* / Of that curl” (lines 68-69, my emphasis) is an allusion to Heaven in itself. The gold hair which draws the speaker “from earth’s storm and despair, / To the safe place above us” (lines 69-70) recalls the “golden Chain” (lines 1005, 1051) by which earth is suspended from Heaven in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667; Book 2). Milton’s poem draws in turn from Zeus’s illustration of his strength as capable of hauling up land and sea with a chain of gold in Homer’s *Iliad* (Book 8). The apparent physical fragility of the child’s hair, especially in an isolated strand, belies its divine strength. Its gold signifies its power, a heavenly light which guides one to eternal life rather than a sign of the child’s frailty and descent to death. This single hair is not a figure of vanity and foolishness augmented by the diminution of the hair to a single strand, as it is for Alexander Pope’s subjects—“Fair tresses man’s imperial race ensnare, / And beauty draws us with a single hair.” (*The Rape of the Lock*, Canto II, lines 27-28).[32] Nor does it relate to the seduction of Lady Lilith’s pursuer in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s “Body’s Beauty”—“And round his heart one strangling golden hair” (line 14)—in which the single hair becomes garrotte-like, a discreet and cunningly deployed weapon which recalls the aestheticised violence of “Porphyria’s Lover”. In “Only a Curl”, the single gold hair carries *more* substance for its being only one hair. Its singularity is its indivisibility and power. The golden hair is not a correlative of worldly goods, false gold or a token of vanity, but a material through which God and Heaven, and the equivalence between children and heavenly bodies, becomes tangible.[33]

The brightness of the lock is synonymous with the departed child (“the face of your angel flashed in”, line 22) and the moment of their departure from the world (“a rapture of light”, line 20) is a deferred incarnation of deathbed

[32] In his essay “Criticism on Female Beauty” (1825), Leigh Hunt states he was given a “solitary hair” of Lucretia Borgia’s hair, stolen by an acquaintance (Lord Byron) from the Ambrosian Library in Milan (122). On the envelope was written Pope’s line: “And Beauty draws us with a single hair” (122).

[33] Abigail Heiniger makes a similar argument for the significance of Evangeline St Claire’s golden hair in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). Heiniger argues that the locks of hair Eva gives to the household’s slaves before her death position her as “an active, angelic force” (338), moralising the recipients and leading them via her golden locks to Christian salvation and Heaven.

radiance.[34] Its enduring gleam testifies to their lack of pain, that their body does not die but sleeps. There is, however, a great deal of tension in this work of representation. Galia Ofek and Emily Apter link the imagining of the lock "as an almost magical matter" (Ofek 48) to female fetishisation, a feared loss of phallic power wherein the representation of the lock of hair as angelic, and thereby belonging to the angels, denies the mother's actual loss of the child (Apter 105; Ofek 49). Because the child is imagined as a gift from God—"God lent him and takes him", "He gives what he gives", "He draws back a gift" ("Only a Curl" lines 26, 31, 53)—the child's inalienability *as* a gift is divided between mother and maker. In adopting these terms of gift exchange, the mother is able to recognise and deny the child as her own. The child's hair facilitates a persistent tension: it does not resolve but defers, endlessly, the mother's loss and the need to confront it.

Another way of framing this tension is as between vital materialism and material vitalism. In vital materialism, the material world is all there is but matter holds a kind of vitality in persisting regardless of human interaction or intention. As Jane Bennett explains, "a vital materiality can never really be thrown 'away', for it continues its activities even as a discarded or unwanted commodity" (*Vibrant Matter* 6). Corpses might be considered a key instance of this, and Catherine's corpse in *Wuthering Heights*, exhumed by Heathcliff and pondered again by Lockwood as a body still, somehow, alive at the close of the novel, might be regarded as markedly vibrant matter. So too with the curl of "Only a Curl", its "bright fellow-locks put away / Out of reach beyond kiss, in the clay" (lines 8-9), because it acts as an agent with its own trajectory and tendencies (Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* viii), drawing the mother towards itself and to Heaven. In material vitalism, on the other hand, matter is charged with immaterial energy, some soul-like essence or life force, and may offer a glimpse of a ghostly presence behind it. The lock of hair, in this case, is an actual repository of the disembodied spirit. Mesmerism is a branch of material vitalism, and a practice in which EBB did not wish to participate. In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, EBB discusses her sister Henrietta being put into a mesmeric trance by her friend, Mary Minto: "Minto begged Arabel to get a lock of my hair

[34] Margarete Holubetz discusses this trope in deathbed scenes in Victorian novels. The appearance of light around the deathbed or the apparent ecstasy and lightness of the face of the dying suggests their entry into Heaven, or may even be taken as proof of their eternal salvation (20-22).

which none but myself had touched, by diplomacy, & wrap it in oilskin,—that she, Mary, might send it to a chief Rabbi of the Magnetisers in Paris, who was to declare straightway the nature of & remedy for my complaint […] I refused to part with my locks for any such purpose of witchery" (24 November 1843; *BC* 6, 57-60). Worried that she has too much imagination and solitude to risk even the thought of her hair in the hands of a French clairvoyant (and resisting, too, Catholic superstition), EBB envisions an imaginative engagement with the immaterial through the material, a link between the lock of hair and spirit, and a means of interaction between the body and bodiless forces that may work upon or through the lock of hair.[35]

Fig. 3.iv (left) — Lock of Robert Barrett Browning's hair, 18 March 1849. ABL: H0501.
Fig. 3.v (right) — Lock of Robert Barrett Browning's hair, date unknown. ABL: H0502.

The lock of the child's hair in "Only a Curl" is vital and precious in itself, treasured not for its intricate form but for the affections, memories, and spirit it manifests. The two locks of Pen Browning's hair in the ABL collections

[35] In a letter to Hugh Stuart Boyd a few weeks later, EBB asks "do you remember the harm which all the old witches (whom I am beginning to believe in) did with a lock of hair? What charms of horror were wrought by it!" (12 December 1843; *BC* 8, 83-85). She brought up the subject again in a letter to Henry Fothergill Chorley, explaining her refusal to send a lock of hair to the mesmerist for fear she would feel a treading on her sofa and bed at all hours, with something "pulling a corresponding lock of hair on my head at awful intervals" (28 April 1845; *BC* 10, 177-79).

demonstrate this most clearly: one apparently cut when he was nine days old (see fig. 3.iv) and another undated but, judging by its grisly appearance, cut in later life (see fig. 3.v).[36] The lock cut when Pen was a baby is curled into the shape of a bow, or perhaps an infinity symbol, a golden token of youth and possibility. It is golden brown, rather than baby blonde, and curiously long given Pen's supposed age.[37] The other lock curls untidily round itself and its various shades of blonde and brown and grey mark the passing from youth to old age. This messy lock echoes and mingles those of its mother and father—the many wispy white locks of hair of RB and the long, variously dark and fair locks of EBB that are gathered in the ABL—as well as recalling the indeterminate shade of Pen's baby lock, retracing its curling and crossing shape. EBB wrote fondly of Pen's hair in her letters and occasionally sent locks out to her friends, proud of but precious about his long golden ringlets, not wishing to cut them too often or too short. She writes to Joanna Hilary Bonham Carter, "I will send you in some niggardly way the 'hairs' you ask for—confessing myself a miser" (25 May 1854; *BC* 20, 225-26). In casting herself as "miser" in this exchange, and in doing so preserving as far as possible Pen's infantile long curls, EBB aligns a child's hair with wealth once again. Not cutting Pen's hair, and only reluctantly sending out his locks, is not only a disavowal of Pen's maturing as he grows but, as in "Only a Curl", it denies the inevitable death of the child in preserving their child-like hair.[38] The golden lock of the child's hair reflects their immortal soul as an incarnation of innocence, and also negates the loss of their body to age, death, and decay.

## Conclusion

A few weeks after RB's request for a lock of EBB's hair, she sent it to him

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[36] The date given in the ABL catalogue for the lock of Pen's hair posted to Henrietta and Arabella Moulton-Barrett (18 March 1849, cut when he was nine days old), is a month out from the date given on a slip of paper kept with the lock (18 April 1849, cut when he was just over a month old). Owing to the dated letter the lock was originally sent with, I believe the latter to be the erroneous date.

[37] EBB acknowledges Pen's darker samples of hair in a letter to Henrietta Moulton-Barrett, writing of its growing fairer: "his head is covered with hair, .. but it is not as dark as the original locks, of which you have a specimen, .. a good deal lighter,—yet with a shade which predicts darkness presently" (20 July 1849; *BC* 15, 317-20).

[38] In the poem "To a Boy" (*Prometheus Bound*, 1833), originally written by EBB in a letter to Septimus Moulton-Barrett (11 February 1827; *BC* 2, 22-23), EBB discusses the cutting of a boy's long hair to mark his becoming a man, since the curls "did less agree / With boyhood than with infancy" (lines 26-27). RB cut Pen's long locks soon after EBB's death.

in a ring bearing her nickname, “Ba”. Once more, the lock of hair coiled into a frame of sorts—this time a ring, which renders more explicit the romantic and specifically betrothal implications of the hair—shows the aesthetic form’s capacity to bring out the latent significations of its matter. EBB’s enclosing her hair in jewellery recognises its value, even if that value is subjective, to be determined by the recipient. RB had the ring resized so that he could wear it. When he received the ring back from the jeweller, however, EBB’s lock of hair was missing. She sent him another one, RB reasoning that “it seems probable that there was no intentional mischief in that jeweller’s management of the ring —the divided gold must have been exposed to the fire,—heated thoroughly, perhaps,—and what became of the contents then!” (15 December 1845; *BC* 11, 240-41). Though an accident, this happening realises one of the many anxieties involved in entrusting the hair of loved ones to the care of jewellers. In light of the rise of more elaborate hairwork fashions and the parallel rise in the alleged misconduct of some hairworkers, which I will turn to in Chapter Four, the idea that a jeweller might misplace and even destroy the hair underscores the precarity of involving a professional. To work hair with one’s own hand, or perhaps not to work or exchange it at all except, through its imagined associations, poetically, appears at least a surer means of preserving and securing its material and meaning.

The tension that runs across RB and EBB’s poems also resides in the potential hazards of relinquishing a lock of hair to another. In its being given as a gift, affective and economic expectations may become uncomfortably entangled. Each poem plays upon the conceit of hair as an exchangeable commodity at either end of the spectrum: they are fraught with true and false gold, worth and worthlessness, avarice and spiritual hunger, possession and dispossession. RB’s poems, in particular, relate golden hair to base wealth, falsity, and perverse desires. In “Gold Hair” and “Porphyria’s Lover”, fair hair is so desired and fetishised that, though it is *not* cut from the body, it holds a tantalising potential to be cut, worked, and exchanged. In EBB’s poems, the exchange of hair, according to the contradictions of gift exchange, threatens to create burden where there should be bond. Yet, because “I never gave a lock of hair away” and “The soul’s Rialto hath its merchandise” represent the lock of hair through ekphrasis, working the lock poetically, formally, its material and meaning are more clearly shaped according to the intentions of the speaker/

donor. As with the literal, physical working of hair, it is not only the material that signifies but *how* it has been represented and the form the material takes. The golden lock of hair of EBB's "Only a Curl", which places the fair lock of a child as a sign of and link to an afterlife, performs a kind of ekphrasis in itself, expressing or becoming a conduit to Heaven. In this way, though the lock of hair is rife with unclear and contradictory connotations, poetic form works to secure it against slippery, ambiguous meanings by articulating its latent significations and framing its underling value.

RB and EBB's poetic working with hair demonstrates its imaginative potential as a subject and means of representation. Poetic hairwork creates an analogue for how its ideas and affects are given form, emphasised, and articulated. This does not lessen, however, the importance and centrality of physical processes to hairwork. The focus of my next chapter, accordingly, moves away from analogous forms of hairwork and poetic or textual engagement to consider what may be gained from more direct material engagement with hairwork. If RB and EBB's poems apprehend hairwork as a knotty and often contrary process, Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek*, confronts hairwork as an equally enigmatic product.

## Chapter Four: "Pondering on that little circle of plaited hair": Hairwork, Materiality, and Identity in Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854)

Hairwork articulates identity through its very material. Hair is synecdochic of an individual and becomes, in its separation from the body, capable of being worked into new forms, exchanged as a token of affection, and of reifying a relationship. As hair is shaped physically, worked, and worn according to advances in technique and fashion, it imaginatively shapes and frames the identities that it lends its material to represent. Yet, in transforming hair into such intricate ornaments, hairwork might be seen to obfuscate the likeness between the hair and its body of origin. How is the person from whom the hair came to be recognised in an elaborately worked piece? What or, more precisely, *who* is a hair bracelet like—and how?

These are some of the many questions underlying the uncertainty with which Mat Grice views his sister's hair bracelet in Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854). Assuming the role of detective in his own family's hushed-up history, Mat continually turns to the hair bracelet and the identities it represents as he searches for the missing links in the story of Mary's disappearance and death. The bracelet, a piece of mourning jewellery made with the hair of their sister, Susan, has since had the hair of Mary's lover, Arthur Carr, worked into it. As Mat attempts to solve the mystery of Mary's demise (and, then, what became of Mary's child), he finds that this hair bracelet proves difficult to decipher. With little else to go on, Mat begins to think around the hair bracelet, pondering upon the surplus locks of Arthur's hair kept inside Mary's letters. Material is aligned with documentary evidence, hair discovered within and considered alongside letters and records in a way that suggests a likeness of form though not, necessarily, parallel readability.[1] In this chapter, I consider how the hair bracelet that Mat investigates in the course of his search for Arthur privileges material over textual engagement. I argue that in the novel hairwork functions not as a precise analogue to documentary evidence but as an alternative form of record that resists a like mode of reading. It is the materiality of hairwork, rather than its occasional textual markers, that signifies identity and which must be unravelled if Mat is to find the answers he seeks.

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[1] I discuss the difficulties and dangers of reading hair as an analogous text in greater detail in "'Golden Lies'? Reading Locks of Hair in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Tennyson's 'The Ringlet'" (2018).

What is most significant for this discussion of hairwork in *Hide and Seek*—aside from the plot in depicting a hair bracelet as a means by which to identify someone—is the way Mary's bracelet problematises identity as something that may be simultaneously clear and obscure, visible yet concealed. Several Collins scholars have discussed issues of identity in his novels in relation to disability and illness.[2] Kylee-Anne Hingston, for instance, finds the anxiety over the "slipperiness" of identity in Collins's fiction to be related to instabilities of the body. In *Hide and Seek*, though Madonna's becoming deaf-mute means she communicates differently, and her uncertain parentage destabilises her identity in one sense, Mary's hair bracelet more clearly undermines a sense of stable or determinable identity and its communication. This piece of hairwork for most of the novel hides bodies and relations even when it appears to aid their seeking. As Charlotte Gere and Judy Rudoe note, after commenting on *Basil* (1852), which holds its own secret exchange of hair tokens, these "[t]rinkets of little or no value—a jet brooch, a locket enclosing a portrait or hair, a ring with a particular combination of stones or a bracelet of plaited hair—hold a whole world of information" (152).[3] This containment of information, made literal in Basil's locket of his secret wife's hair, illustrates that although hair signifies identities and relationships through its material and form, it still needs to be opened up somehow, its testimony coaxed out, this "world of information" unpacked.

Defining the materiality of hairwork is difficult because it sits at the intersection between several supposed binaries: body and object, living and dead matter, presence and absence, the natural and the crafted, the sentimental and the fashionable, the authentic and the affected (Goggin and Tobin 2; Gray 221; Holm 140; Rosenthal 1-2). From these tensions arise the identities that hairwork encodes. Because a lock of hair is synecdochic of the person from whom it was taken, its belonging to another as an exchanged object reifies a relationship. It shapes one's identity by association, by the way it has been crafted and kept, as well as memorialising the body from which it was

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[2] See, in particular, Samuel Lyndon Gladden, "Spectacular Deceptions: Closets, Secrets, and Identity in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch*" (2005); Jennifer Esmail, "'I listened with my eyes': Writing Speech and Reading Deafness in the Fiction of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins" (2011); and the chapter on *Hide and Seek* in Heidi Logan, *Sensational Deviance: Disability in Nineteenth-Century Sensation Fiction* (2019).

[3] Basil, his brother, Ralph, and his sister, Clara, all keep locks of hair as keepsakes. Basil accidentally betrays the secret of his marriage to Margaret to his sister when a locket containing her hair swings out of his waistcoat.

taken. Hairwork signifies, then, a subjectivity that is both individual and relational. Giving or receiving hair and having it worked into a memento frames one's identity in relation to another as family, friend or partner.

### Hairwork and its Hindrances: Identification and Authenticity

Hairwork signifies identity in its most basic sense because its hair derives from individuals: it represents them. Because it was most commonly owned or worn not by the person from whom its hair derived but by another, it also represents a set of relational identities. Hair was made into and worn as hairwork to signify the relationship between parents and children, siblings, partners, lovers or friends and, by implication, it often suggests something of the social identity of the person who gave their hair. It might be the prominent hair brooch of a proud mother, the cherished hair ring of a fiancé, or the private, closed locket of one recently widowed. It establishes identity by association and display. Hairwork also serves to reinforce culturally constructed aspects of identity, such as gender, race, and class. Helen Sheumaker argues that hairwork in America in the nineteenth century was not only commissioned and worn by the white middle classes but was a particular means of manifesting and performing that identity (*Love Entwined* 1). It was the preserve of white, free people, many of whom had enough wealth to pay a hairworker for their services and who were part of a culture invested in representing oneself as sincere through carefully curated possessions (1). Earnestine Jenkins has argued, with material that brings a new perspective to Sheumaker's account of American hairwork and whiteness, that hairwork was also used in "efforts to document and claim [a] mixed-race identity" (60). The family archive of Jane Wright (1835–1909), a women of mixed black and white ancestry from Memphis, Tennessee, includes jewellery made of her hair as well as photographs which served, according to Jenkins, as "visible links for those identified as mulattoes or light-skinned individuals to sexual encounters between enslaved black women and white slave masters" (60). Wright's hairwork is thus part of her negotiating and asserting her sense of self, personal and national history, family lineage, and racial identity.

In Britain, hairwork was also a means through which to express class and position through its form, expense, and design. Its use in gendered accessories

makes this most apparent. There were key differences between the forms that men's versus women's hairwork took as an expression of gender roles (Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death" 36), most notably for middle-class men. Henry Rushton includes shirt links, pencil cases, pen holders, keys, and watch guards in his *Illustrated Catalogue of the Newest Designs of Hair Jewellery* (circa 1858), which would support Sheumaker's claim that masculine accessories in hairwork were a means of showing men's investment in their work and fidelity to their family (*Love Entwined* 136).[4] The most common masculine hairwork accessory of the period, the watch guard (or fob), fulfils this dual purpose of economic and sentimental reminder most graphically.[5] In one sense, the hair watch guard served to link the keeping of work-hours and appointments back to the family, marking the importance and impact of public affairs on private life and the connectedness of marketplace and household. It also stood as a reminder of the preciousness of time spent at home with those same loved ones whose hairs composed the chain. The Albert chain, named after Prince Albert, brought a sense of national identity and aspirational, refined masculinity to the watch guard. Thus Bradley Headstone of Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) is presented as a man of the times, if fashionable to a fault, through his attire: "with his decent silver watch in his pocket and its decent hair-guard round his neck, [he] looked a thoroughly decent young man of six-and-twenty" (218).

If hairwork represents its donor's and possessor's identities, these aspects of identity should be readily apparent in hairwork. Yet in reality, and as we shall see represented in *Hide and Seek*, there are clear limitations on what hairwork reveals of those involved in its creation to the viewer. The identities of and relationship between the donor of the hair and the possessor of the hairwork are often extremely difficult to deduce. It is relatively straightforward to locate the names belonging to locks of hair that have been sealed within letters, described in correspondence, or kept enclosed in inscribed lockets and cases, or articles with clasps and bands like hair bracelets and rings that bear an inscription or

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[4] The Hunter Collection of mourning jewellery in the National Museum of Scotland holds three tie pins containing hair, another likely masculine form of hairwork (NMS: K.2001.886.109, 110, and 111).

[5] Some watchmakers offered hairwork among their services, partly because of the potential add-on purchase in offering chains as well as watches, but also because they had the skills needed for the craft. Watchmaker-hairworkers included W. Loof of Tunbridge Wells and F. J. Spiller of Taunton.

whose commission may be mentioned in letters. For hairwork without some kind of corresponding text, however, there is always some degree of uncertainty about its provenance. To take another example from Dickens, in *Oliver Twist* (1838), orphaned Oliver is found with his mother's gold locket containing two locks of hair and a wedding ring. The locket is engraved with the name "Agnes" and leaves a blank space for Oliver's surname and date of birth. The anticipated but missing information captures the indeterminate quality of hair kept as a record or memento: the questionable capacity of this token of birth, death, and family to document identity. Hairwork materialises a connection with the past but does not necessarily communicate the details of its history.

Even when a chain of owners might be traced, as with the Brontës' personal effects in the BPM, many articles of hairwork have changed hands several times, been passed between family and friends, sold at auction, and have circulated across Britain and, for the Brownings' personal effects in the ABL, America before finding their way into museum and library collections.[6] While other artefacts sought out for a collection might be verified through handwriting, hallmarks, photographs of the object, or other known and distinctive characteristics, hairwork cannot be verified by description or matched by likeness alone. This is quite at odds with how hair is matched via likeness, through the donor's child, in *Hide and Seek*. Even if likeness were a legitimate means of identification, many articles of hairwork have no accompanying form of likeness (more hair of the supposed donor, a photograph or portrait of them) from which to proceed.

A flower spray made of brown hair in the National Museum of Scotland is a prime example of the kinds of uncertainty that can surround hairwork in the absence of other means of identification (see fig. 4.i). The flower utilises gimp work in its petals along with braiding techniques around the stems, meeting old and new forms of hairwork, the familiar and the novel. There is very little information on this piece in the museum catalogue—no certain date, donor, or location for its making—and its uniform shade only adds to its ambiguity. Hair bouquets or wreaths, made up the hair of many donors, are often labelled along the stems or within the frame with names, dates, or at least a family name. As a

[6] On 1 May 1913 Sotheby's began a sale of the Browning collections following the intestate death of Pen Browning which, as with the sale of the household effects of the Parsonage after the death of Patrick Brontë in 1861, meant the collection was widely dispersed before being gradually bought up and collected together at the ABL.

single flower made of one donor's hair, there is no label, no frame, and the usual purpose of hair flowers to signify intertwined members of a family is absent too. Its import might be romantic, mournful, of the affection between family or friends, or something else entirely. It may be a purely aesthetic choice of ornament. How, then, are we to identify anything certain about this piece?

Fig. 4.i — Gimp work flower spray, nineteenth century (date unknown).
NMS: A.1865.34.A.10. © National Museums Scotland.

The issues with trying to determine the sources of the Brontës' hairwork warrant repeating here: an individual's hair is different shades and textures according to their age and health when it was cut, hair of family members can be difficult to tell apart and, on top of this, cut hair can fade in colour, change texture, and lose shine over time, depending on its storage. It cannot reliably be attributed to an individual by sight or touch. Locks of hair and hairwork defy attempts at individuation even with the aid of modern technology. Though hair holds DNA, the kind stored in the hair shaft (mitochondrial DNA) does not differentiate an individual from their parents or siblings or offer the same level of information as that stored in the hair follicle (nuclear DNA). The latter is, almost invariably, absent in locks of hair and hairwork because the hair is cut and not plucked. One thing that can be determined from a sample of cut hair is the presence of arsenic. The Marsh Test, invented by James Marsh in 1836, detects traces in hair or nail scrapings and can ascertain whether the arsenic was ingested over a long period, affecting a good length of the hair, or only recently, affecting only hair taken from near the root (D. Doyle 311). Modern forensic hair

analysis, though sometimes used in place of urinalysis because hair offers a longer history of a person's drug use in preserving this record as it grows, is still unreliable in many respects (Cole and Gautam, para. 2).[7] There is little that can be confirmed about an individual or their activities using their hair alone.

Despite being collected as articles that belonged to a particular person or family, the uncertainty about precisely whose hair is preserved in museum collections cannot be resolved. For figures like the Brontës and the Brownings, who were so highly invested in possessing locks of their family and friends' hair and whose fans, as well as friends, requested or sought out their locks, it is ironic that their hairs have lost their surety. Though infused, in Deborah Lutz's term, with the "aura of singularity" in its attribution to an individual (*Relics of Death* 9)—inscribed on a locket or clasp, in a note, or mentioned in a letter—hairwork cannot reliably be traced back to its roots, as it were. It is so difficult to verify if an article of hairwork derived from a particular donor that its hairs "become unmoored from their close relationship with one unique body, becoming unstable signs with a representational promiscuity" (Lutz, *Relics of Death* 9). The very material sought for its promise of authenticity as an actual piece of the individual becomes shrouded in uncertainty. For those that made hairwork for themselves rather than risk the substitution of hairs by an unscrupulous or devious hairworker, this issue of identity and authenticity must inevitably arise too. Across time and distance and numerous possessors, the guarantee of fidelity, the authentic irreproducible body hairwork stands for, is compromised.

Two opposing notions may be drawn from the crisis of authenticity here: one in which the uncertainty of the true donor means the hair opens up imaginative possibilities—the idea that it *may well be* the desired person's hair affects the aura of the object regardless—and another in which the hair becomes, as a result of uncertainty, inconsequential—it loses its unique appeal in its potential to be anybody's hair.[8] Aislinn Paige Hunter argues for the former in her formulation of the "autographic object": "objects that have been raised to

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[7] Cocaine and cannabis, for instance, may be detected in hair but it cannot be determined whether their presence is from use or passive exposure (cannabinoids can be transferred by touch and secondhand smoke; Malchik, para. 7).

[8] There is something of the logic of the Unknown Solider memorials in both of these formulations in that unidentified or unidentifiable hair can represent one body and all bodies, at once fulfilling its purpose to memorialise one individual in the mind of the mourner and inadequate to do so in its indeterminacy.

a special status through their association with, and ascription, [sic] to the family" (49). These artefacts may not be made of the hair of the given person and may have no connection to them whatsoever, yet their suggested provenance is sufficient for the viewer to see them through the lens of the figure to whom they are ascribed (48). Their value lies in their power to evoke the person, to lend matter to their memory (even if the hair *is* borrowed from another), rather than in their legitimacy.

Hair anonymised in scientific collections takes this idea in another direction. Discussing human remains preserved for display in nineteenth-century medical museums, Samuel Alberti writes that:

> [I]t is a central tenet of my argument that material culture is more a process than a state. Objects and bodies are constantly in flux—objects made from bodies especially so. It is clear that this process, rendering flesh in material culture, involved considerable work, a complex series of transformative processes. (6)

There is a clear difference between body parts clinically preserved in fluid, injected with wax or dried and hair that has been tucked fondly inside an envelope, plaited and tied or worked into hair jewellery. But there is also a striking similarity between the terms of transformation Alberti sees in preserved human remains and the transformative act of hairwork. Like the medical specimens Alberti discusses, hairwork similarly "freezes time, rendering the indistinct visible, the ephemeral durable, providing a permanent reference point" (6). The purposes may be different—to preserve in order to educate versus to remember the individual and a personal relationship—and Alberti notes the distancing of personal identity in medical specimens (6). Yet body-objects in the form of scientific collections and hairwork alike can, according to Elizabeth Hallam, "come to form a 'social nexus', a materialization of social relatedness especially among family, kin and wider communities" (31). Whether a personal or public artefact, concerned with affect or anatomy, preserved hair supposes the viewer may at least imagine some relation: an association between their body, lineage, and identity and the specimen. In this way, hairwork can capture an identity, even if it fails as a source of identification. Indeed, identity can be understood in three ways: as the fact of who someone is (the actual donor), a set of characteristics (relating to gender, class, and so on), and a sense of likeness (to identify *with* someone). The latter sense, of identity as an

associative link based on similarity or congruence—as a perception of likeness—is the most apt way to understand how hairwork figures and relates to its donor.

### Thinking Through Likeness

Jules David Prown outlines various approaches to material culture which together form a holistic means by which to assess objects (as discussed in the Introduction). Proceeding from description, to deduction, to speculation—from what is evident about an object and what may be deduced to the kinds of ambiguities and questions that cannot be neatly resolved (7)—in studying objects we often find that there is only so much they can tell us, being "disappointing as communicators of historical fact; they tell us something, but facts are transmitted better by verbal documents" (16). Though intended to commemorate a person and relationship, hairwork is one such disappointing communicator: hence why the clasps of hairwork are commonly inscribed and locks of hair kept in labelled envelopes. Despite this apparent reliance on text, hair and other body-relics in Victorian novels do, Lutz observes, "often furnish a means to authenticate identity, like an autograph or handwriting, proving the subject and his or her body to be unrepeatable and non-reproducible" ("The Dead Still Among Us" 136). Especially in terms of objects represented in fiction, locks of hair and hairwork might serve as forms of record which, though more difficult to interpret than verbal documents, signify something of their donor and recipient by virtue of the individuality of the material and the chosen form in which it is preserved.[9] When looking for the kinds of information that may be stored in an object, then, the form that the object takes, whether as a simple lock of hair or a piece of intricately woven hairwork, must be considered a key part of its intimation of meaning. The form and design of a piece of hairwork—its shade, shape, size, pattern, clasp, inscription, and other aspects of its ornament—is *how* it signifies.

"What's it like?" he asked aloud, turning suddenly to young Thorpe.

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[9] This approach which seeks to align real and represented objects draws on Elaine Freedgood's close inspection of Victorian object histories in *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2010), in particular the idea that objects represented in novels "are not always semiotically severed from their materiality or their relations to subjects and objects beyond the narrative frame" (158).

> "What's what like?"
> "A Hair Bracelet."
> "Still harping on that, after all my explanations! Like? Why it's hair plaited up, and made to fasten round the wrist, with gold at each end to clasp it by." (*Hide and Seek* 255)

Zack Thorpe's brief descriptive response to Mat's question goes some way toward addressing what form a hair bracelet might take, but cannot answer to the uncertainties that so often come with hairwork: whose hair is it made from, who made it, and who owned and wore it? While these sorts of questions may be asked of any unidentified artefact, with hairwork the impulse to speculate is hard to resist.[10] A body, or at least a representative fragment, lies before the viewer, prompting them to seek a human connection, to guess at the backstory that severed hair from head. This manner of speculation can be productive because it begins to tease out the possibilities, the latent ideas, behind the preservation of this hair as a piece of jewellery. Though Mat appears to know "perfectly well that there [is] not the slightest present or practical use in examining the hair" of Mary's bracelet (361), it is his initial reluctance to study this object, and to concede that to do so may reveal something more of the identity of Arthur, that slows the progress of his investigation. To demonstrate what may be unravelled if we do engage with hairwork on a material level, I will turn to a real instance of a like, and equally enigmatic, piece of hairwork.[11]

A hair bracelet in the Harrogate Museums and Arts Collection, composed of brown hair worked around a thread mould, has only a couple of inches of hair remaining, frayed beyond repair (see fig. 4.ii). Its overlapped ends, encased in battered and bent metal, bear the inscriptions of two names: Alfred and Clara. The hairs sticking out from Alfred's side appear on first glance to be of the same ashy brown hue as those on Clara's end of the bracelet. But, on closer inspection, this shade appears ever so slightly warmer—perhaps the result of the other hairs fading over the years, being exposed to the sun or, given the two names, a sign that there were once two locks of hair worked into this piece. Did both Alfred and Clara give their locks to be worked, to meet in the middle that now lies exposed? Were they husband and wife, or engaged to be, or possibly

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[10] Marcia Pointon notes that hair bracelets "*invite* speculation upon two absent bodies, that of the donor of the substance and that of the wearer of the bracelet" ("Materializing Mourning" 56, my emphasis).

[11] For a discussion of this investigative approach to material culture, particularly concerning textiles, see Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion* (2015).

brother and sister? Were they related in another way, or simply close friends? Was this piece commissioned for their betrothal, as a token of their mutual affection, in anticipation of their parting for a time, or for one mourning the other? The uncertain provenance of this bracelet, as with so many other articles of hairwork in museums, eludes the very kinds of particularity in which hairwork has its roots.


Fig. 4.ii — Damaged hair bracelet, nineteenth century (date unknown). HARGM: 5005.

Yet, though these questions remain unanswered, the frayed hairs of the bracelet draw the viewer in. Just as I found with the hairwork of the BPM collections, some clues are only to be perceived up close by the wearer or handler, privileging touch over sight. Fine splintered strands stick out from the few inches of worked hair that remain intact and, though barely to be seen from a distance, may easily be felt—likely created by rubbing against a cuff, the inside of a pocket or from frequent handling. While every other hair bracelet in the Harrogate collection is in pristine condition, ornately worked or bejewelled, that this one is not only damaged but worked simply in a functional, solid design supports the notion that this piece was worn often and not made just as a display piece.[12] The bracelet encodes a reciprocal touch, its roughened texture

[12] The general class and condition of the hairwork in this collection may be on account of its location in Harrogate (if donated locally), a popular spa town for wealthy, middle-class Victorians. The Royal Pump Room, which now houses the museum, was built in 1842.

created and then felt by the touch of its wearer. On the clasp, close and frequent contact has almost rubbed out the inscribed names of those anxious not to lose their connection to distance or time. Thinking on the circularity of the bracelet's making and unmaking, the worn inscription and frayed ends of the hairs thwart the desire for touch once again. The bracelet in its damaged state gives rise to a hidden quality, a sense of partial erasure, which underscores its place as an object that invites speculation: ultimately unknowable, but materially preserving something of the identities and relationships it represents.

**Mary's Hair Bracelet**

Alfred and Clara's hair bracelet would appear to hold many similarities with Mary's in *Hide and Seek.* A letter from Jane Holdsworth—a friend Mary has trusted with the commission of the redesigned bracelet—records that a parcel has been returned to Mary containing "the prettiest hair bracelet" that Jane has ever seen (216):

> I will answer for your thinking the pattern of your bracelet much improved since the new hair has been worked in with the old […] You may be rather surprised, perhaps, to see some little gold fastenings introduced as additions; but this, the jeweller told me, was a matter of necessity. Your poor dear sister's hair being the only material of the bracelet, when you sent it up to me to be altered, was very different from the hair of that faultless true love of yours which you also sent to be worked in with it. It was, in fact, hardly half long enough to plait up properly with poor Susan's, from end to end; so the jeweller had to join it with little gold clasps, as you will see. No country jeweller could have done it half as nicely, so you did well to send it to London after all. (215-16)

Like Alfred and Clara's, Mary's bracelet features the hair of two people and a gold clasp inscribed with two names. Though it is not described as having frayed or unravelled, in being redesigned and reworked by a jeweller this bracelet has been taken apart, or in craft terms "drizzled", in order to incorporate the hair of the second person.[13] What Jane's letter fails to mention, however, is that Arthur's hair has been added to the bracelet without there being any alteration made to its inscription. A sense of an identity and a relationship being hidden in this hair bracelet, which at once displays and conceals a

[13] "Drizzling", also known as parfilage, was the practice of unwinding bits of old lace, tassels, and braiding to be reworked, repurposed or to release any gold or other precious threads and parts that could be sold on (Toller 90).

second donor of hair, is even more tangible than for Alfred and Clara's damaged bracelet. Though its state at the point it comes into Mat's possession goes unmentioned—whether still smooth, a little roughened or even broken—it circulates and passes hands enough times in the course of the novel to imprint something of its chain of owners onto the piece, however covert and difficult to trace that chain may be.

The bracelet is almost constantly hidden away, as well as hiding identities within itself—it is sealed within a parcel by Jane, tucked in Mary's dress pocket, kept by Mrs Peckover, locked away in a drawer by Valentine Blyth for years, then hidden in Mat's jacket pocket. This trajectory marks it as a parallel body to Mary who, after hiding her pregnancy from her family and leaving for another county, is buried beneath a grave board with only initials, like those on the bracelet, to mark and mask her remains. While the bracelet is physically portable in its capacity to travel and circulate, which forges a network between those drawn together by its keeping (and hiding), the sentiments and information it holds are anything but. John Plotz argues for the portaging of sentiment in and through portable property and with its circulation, especially in the form of jewellery, "the potential transmissibility of affect" (*Portable Property* 32). The relationships and identities represented and thereby made portable by this hair bracelet are, however, rendered obscure and potentially inaccessible by its materiality. The strands of hair in the bracelet represent two individuals and their relationships with Mary (both of which, in Arthur's case, are unknown to Mat). In being reworked from an object of mourning, remembering her dead sister, Susan, into a romantic token, with Arthur's hairs added at a later date, the bracelet has become an embodiment of two distinct ties of affection and, with them, two sets of associations. As such, it represents two aspects of Mary's identity as a devoted sister and faithful lover. Even in its material presentation of these two identities and relationships, Mary's bracelet is still difficult to untangle as a token of private affections. As commissioner and owner of this enigmatic piece of hairwork, Mary presents herself, in Christiane Holm's terms, as "a participant in a hidden intimate network, from which other viewers are excluded" (140), and deliberately so. Her bracelet is designed not merely to represent affections and relationships, or to render them portable, but simultaneously to conceal them.

Since hairwork was no longer associated so firmly with mourning by the

mid-century, wearing it could suggest any number of familial, friendly or romantic connections. As Jeanenne Bell notes, unlike mourning jewellery made with hair, romantic hair jewellery was not usually engraved with a name (21). It could exist as an anonymised love token but, because of this, its provenance was open to interpretation and could be misconstrued. Kristen Miller Zohn's comment on Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), that articles of hairwork "worn both privately and publicly and seemingly cherished, give confusing messages about the various relationships" (para. 2), resonates with Mary's bracelet in *Hide and Seek*.[14] The bracelet supposes a public or outward-facing network of relations and affections but belies an unseen drama of authentic feeling of which the wearer is acutely aware.[15] As Jillian Heydt-Stevenson argues in relation to the dubious hair brooch of *Sense and Sensibility*, hairwork may even "embody and propel phantasmagorical fictions" because it can "perform the roles or the identities that the characters' bodies desire but cannot enact" (41). The new romantic associations of hairwork, coupled with the visibility of the hair, led to its participation in anxieties over the display of social and affective ties. Mary's bracelet signals her romantic desire for Arthur and, given the knowledge of his desertion, her fiction of his fidelity while keeping their connection obscure to others.

The decision to memorialise Arthur and their relationship in this particular hair bracelet is, moreover, a surreptitious tactic on Mary's part. In historical terms, if the bracelet was reworked with Arthur's hair around 1828 (the year Mary and Arthur's child would have been born, as calculated by Mat), it was made around the decline of the Regency fashion for hair enclosed within brooches and lockets and before the trend for table work (jewellery woven out

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[14] When Edward Ferrars appears wearing a palette work ring "with a plait of hair in the centre, very conspicuous on one of his fingers" (96) in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), though he proclaims it be the hair of his sister, Fanny, the Dashwood sisters imagine it to be Elinor's hair and a profession of his love. For a discussion of gift exchange, courtship and marriage in the novel, see Lauren Wilwerding, "Amatory Gifts in *Sense and Sensibility*" (2015).

[15] Elsewhere in Austen, other kinds of jewellery give rise to anxiety over potentially confusing messages. In *Mansfield Park* (1814), Fanny Price agonises over which necklace chain to wear to her ball: one from Mary Crawford or one more recently given to her by her cousin, Edmund. The chain is a necessary means of her displaying an amber cross given to her by her brother. Since Mary's chain was originally bestowed by her brother, Henry, Fanny's suitor, her wearing of it may be viewed as a declaration of Fanny's interest in him, a reciprocation of his desire, and a symbolic hierarchical placement of a lover's affections beside her brother's and above her cousin's (Fanny's desired suitor).

of hair on a circular table) that came to Britain in the late 1840s.[16] The plaited bracelet is, in this respect, neither highly fashionable nor a rare thing to own and wear. There is nothing out of the ordinary in Mary's bracelet precisely because, as the narrator states, "a Hair Bracelet is in England one of the commonest ornaments of woman's wear" (*Hide and Seek* 256) at both the time it was reworked and in the present at which Mat considers it. As late as 1871, an article on "Love Gifts" in *Temple Bar* lists "bracelets of hair" as one of "the most usual love-gifts" since, albeit hyperbolically, "time immemorial" (M. Law 249). A hair bracelet does not mark Mary as particularly fashion-forward nor distinguish her relationships as unusually intimate. Conversely, it serves to conventionalise the sentiments and relationships that it commemorates. In line with hairwork fashion from late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century it has even transitioned from momento mori, a reminder of death, to momento moveri, reminder of affection (Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death" 34), in being remade from a mourning piece into a romantic token. It has changed with the times, shifting in form and purpose not to display Mary's adherence to trends but to hide her private feelings within an object that adheres to the ordinary of the day.

The reworked bracelet may also be linked with the growing professional trade in hairwork since it was given over to a jeweller for its redesign and remaking. Presumably taken to premises nearby Jane's address of "Bond Street, London" (*Hide and Seek* 215), Mary's bracelet was worked in the vicinity of the commercial hub of the hairwork trade in Soho.[17] This point is particularly troubling if we consider the bracelet against the anxieties that surrounded professionally-made hairwork, as well as the hair trade at large, detailed in Chapter One and some points bear repeating here. The quality and quantity of hair necessary to create a table work bracelet—the most popular form of hairwork in the mid-century and similar in process to Mary's plaited bracelet—

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[16] There are some pieces made with braided hair from the Regency Period, but table work only became popular in Britain in the 1840s and 50s, as explained in Chapter One. For a discussion of Regency hairwork fashions, see Kristen Miller Zohn, "Tokens of Imperfect Affection: Portrait Miniatures and Hairwork in *Sense and Sensibility*" (2011).

[17] London hairworkers' premises were concentrated around Soho and Fitzrovia, within or nearby Soho Bazaar and the Pantheon, and some hairworkers held premises even closer to Bond Street on the west border of Soho: Fosser of Hanover Street, Alfred Shuff of 43 Great Marlborough Street, F. L. S. of 215 Regent Street, Henry Rushton of 213 Regent Street, and Charles Packer of 78 Regent Street. An 1857 article on "The Hair" in *The Irish Quarterly Review* mentions a hairworker's premises in Burlington Arcade, located just off of Bond Street, where they "delight to examine the chef-d'oeuvres of the workers in ornaments of hair, and we respect them as the Benvenuto Cellinis of the craft" (834).

meant that the clients of hairworkers were concerned that their loved one's hair might be supplemented or swapped with longer, thicker hair sourced from elsewhere. Hair harvests in France, Germany, and Switzerland contributed to an estimated fifty tons of human hair being imported to Britain annually by the early 1850s according to Alexander Rowland (*The Human Hair* 157), who reasons that "many a sorrowing relative, kisses, without suspicion, mementoes eked out from hair that grew not upon the head of the beloved one" (160). Rumours about other sources of hair circulated in periodicals in the 1850s and 60s and included: barbers' clippings, sales from impoverished women, assaults by hair merchants on women and children, clippings from prison, asylum and workhouse inmates, rag-picked rubbish sites, and even the dead, shorn in their graves (Dodd, "Art-Amusements" 205; Dodd and Wills 61-2; "The Hair", *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* 326; "The Human Form Divine" 49). These warnings tended to involve hair destined for wigs and hairpieces but, because of the blurred lines between the trades, they nonetheless fed into the anxiety that hairworkers may be depriving their clients of their beloved ones' hair. For clients sending the hair to be worked and returned via post, like Mary, the threat of the loss or substitution of hair was even more tangible.[18] The writer of an 1850 article on the new trends in hairwork for *The Ladies' Companion* is careful to add the caveat that only ladies working hair for themselves may "insure [sic] that they do actually wear the memento they prize, and not a fabric substituted for it, as we fear has sometimes been the case" ("Hair Work" 377).[19]

In Mary sending Arthur's hair and her hair bracelet away to be worked, and in doing so engaging with London's growing but increasingly anxiety-inducing hairwork trade, the question arises: can we trust that it is Arthur's hair that was added, or is another's hair hiding in the bracelet? With Arthur's hairs "hardly half long enough to plait up with poor Susan's, from end to end" (*Hide and Seek*

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[18] Many hairworkers advertised mail-order services for clients unable to visit their premises, with their pattern books often "sent free to any part of the kingdom" ("Hair Mementos.—C. Olifiers"). They were careful to emphasise the safety of the transaction. Henry Rushton writes a typical preamble in his *Illustrated Catalogue of the Newest Designs of Hair Jewellery* (circa 1858), "that any Lock entrusted to me will not be allowed to go out of my possession until worked into the form desired, and carefully returned" and that his work "can be safely transmitted through the post" (1). Christian Olifiers writes similarly in his *Album of Ornamental Hair-Work for 1850* that "he can promise to return any hair entrusted to him, for it never leaves his possession until worked into the ornament required" (7).

[19] This article, originally titled "A Recent Importation from Germany" was reprinted under the title of "Hair Work" in the American publications *Peterson's Magazine* and *Godey's Lady's Book* in the same year. The latter has been used as the source for this citation.

216) and some apparently surplus locks returned by the jeweller, the supposition that such a swap might have been made, and even hinted at by Jane's words, is not unfounded. That "the jeweller had to join [Arthur's hair] with little gold clasps" (216) to hold it in place goes some way to dispelling this notion since, as *Elegant Arts for Ladies* (1856) explains, bracelets could be made with hair as short as a couple of inches: "a chain can be worked in any number of separate portions and united by gold slides" (4). The striking resemblance between Arthur's hair and his son's golden brown locks would seem to affirm the authenticity of the bracelet (and trustworthiness of the jeweller) at the novel's denouement. Yet there remains a lingering suspicion that there may be more hiding in the bracelet, more potential for deception, than is recognised in the course of Mat's investigation.

**Material Engagement: Working With Hair**

Though Mat's hair-centric means of detection is peculiar to *Hide and Seek*, locks of hair and hairwork are used to reveal or affirm identity across Collins's fiction.[20] In his detective novels, metaphorical allusions to hair—"by a hair" and "a hairs-breadth"—recur as figures of precision and precarity that are brought to bear on fateful discoveries and missed opportunities alike. The discovery of Rosanna Spearman's footprint in *The Moonstone* (1868), one such stroke of luck, is all the more fortunate since "[t]he mark was not yet blurred out by the rain—and the girl's boot fitted it to a hair" (344). It is hard to discuss the detective plot of *Hide and Seek* without recourse to the language of "unravelling" and "untangling" (and it would neglect the rich texture of the novel's engagement with hair to do so), but discussion of its figurative narrative strands, working, and weaving is more pertinent. *Hide and Seek* formally reflects the two-part hair bracelet it concerns. It is divided into two sections with

[20] Other examples of locks of hair and hairwork in Wilkie Collins's fiction include: the lock of hair tied with a dirty ribbon in "The Lawyer's Story of a Stolen Letter" (1854); Mademoiselle Clairfait's three hair bracelets made with the hair of her pupils in "The French Governess's Story of Sister Rose" (1855); the little morsel of hair that Sara Leeson asks Rosamund to bury with her in *The Dead Secret* (1857); the ring given to Laura Fairlie containing the hair of her uncle in *The Woman in White* (1859); the lock of Frank Clare's hair tied with silver thread and kept by Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* (1862); the lock of Oscar Dubourg's hair worn in a locket by Lucilla Finch and the lock of her hair that she unwittingly ties in a ribbon for Nugent Dubourg in *Poor Miss Finch* (1872); Major Fitz-David's album of locks of women's hair and the lock of Sara Macallan's hair worn in a locket by Miserrimus Dexter in *The Law and the Lady* (1875); the lock of Lord Montbarry's hair tied with a golden cord kept by Agnes Lockwood in *The Haunted Hotel* (1878); and the lock of Lord Harry's hair kept in Iris Henley's desk in *Blind Love* (1889).

two main strands of narrative and is itself a thing "inscribed as a token of admiration and affection" (Dedication). "The Hiding" details a little of the history of Zack, Madonna, and their family lives. A chapter concerning the *idea* of a hair bracelet closes the first half of the novel while, as Zack airs his thoughts on a suitable gift for Madonna, the existing bracelet and the narratives that connect it with Madonna's origins remain hidden. Mrs Peckover tells Zack that Madonna has a hair bracelet already, but nothing more. The significance of the bracelet is not explained until Mat enters the story in "The Seeking".

Mat's material mode of investigation is first put to work on another record of the body and its identity: a tombstone. Mat visits his family's burial plot in Dibbledean and notes the blank space on the tombstone where Mary's name should appear:

> There was sufficient vacant space left towards the bottom of the tombstone for two or three more inscriptions; and it appeared as if Mat expected to have seen more. He looked intently at the vacant space, and measured it roughly with his fingers, comparing it with the space above, which was occupied by letters. (207-208)

Touching this tombstone and measuring its significance with regards to Mary with his fingers, Mat demonstrates his distinctively tactile detective work. He surmises from the wordless space the possibility that Mary may be alive and demonstrates his ability to deal with visual and material clues, to infer an identity and a narrative in and from the absence of text. When Mat eventually finds the letters "M.G." on the wooden board of a grave in Bangbury (365), however, it is not immediately apparent that this is Mary's resting place. As Elaine Freedgood argues of Pip's visual interpretation of the "evidence" of his parents' tombstone for "lack of reading material" at the opening of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), it is not so much the text on the grave that connects it to Mary in Mat's mind as its metonymic relation to her (18).[21] Mary's piece of board signals that she died too poor to afford a more robust memorial. The board is broken and covered by "brambles, briars, and dead leaves" (*Hide and Seek* 364) as though the churchyard is slowly subsuming her memory into the soil. The still-visible initials serve to conceal her name, connecting this

[21] The serial publication of *Great Expectations* in *All the Year Round* overlapped with Collins's *The Woman in White*, another novel in which the material conditions of a tombstone (Mrs Fairlie's, which Walter Hartwright notices has been recently but incompletely cleaned) provide evidence as well as an encounter with a key witness.

memorial with her initialled bracelet as well as Arthur Carr's beguilingly (and falsely) initialled letters. Mary's initials in this context convey a desire, either on the part of Mary or those that buried her, to hide her full name and, in doing so, the family name she has supposedly disgraced. Mat's conclusions are confirmed with the arrival of Mrs Peckover, who comes to tend to Mary's grave. He demonstrates how taking account of material and visual cues can illuminate as much as, if not more, than textual prompts alone.

While Mat's detective work in the second half of the novel is certainly "of the flimsiest sort", with most of the mystery "so apparent that the reader has much less difficulty solving it than the detective does" (Ashley 48), this is not the point. As an early detective figure whose role it is, according to Neil C. Sargent, "to forensically reconstruct the past by reasoning backward, from visible effects to their concealed causes" (289), what Mat can, and does, base his investigation on are the observable, material components of Mary's bracelet. Writing that "Jewels in literature highlight the external, visible and ornamental in relation to the hidden, secret and not to be revealed" (*Brilliant Effects* 3), Marcia Pointon captures the duality, and even duplicity, that jewellery can represent. Arthur's worked locks take the place of jewels in Mary's bracelet, their visible yet hidden aspect emphasised by the bracelet's formal attributes that Mat has to consider: the inscription lacking Arthur's name, the gold slides added by a distant jeweller, and Arthur's short hairs worked in alongside another's more substantial locks. Because Arthur is a character who hides in plain sight—he is the first father figure we encounter in the novel and is frequently referred to by Zack, although he is not connected to the bracelet or Mary's child, Madonna, until the final chapters—the bracelet establishes, and even imitates, his visible yet hidden body. Looking at each of these three aspects in more detail—initials, gold clasps, and hair—we can see more clearly how the bracelet encodes Mary and Arthur's identities and relationship, even as it demonstrates the susceptibility of hairwork to speculative interpretation in the course of Mat's materially-minded investigation.

The clasp of the bracelet has not changed since it was first made and reads "M.G. In memory of S.G.", which Mat understands instantly as "*Mary Grice. In memory of Susan Grice*" (*Hide and Seek* 343). The bracelet's inscription remembers the death of Susan, but is deliberately forgetful of the still-living Arthur. This omission codifies Arthur's secret courtship of Mary, as well

as her anxiety to keep her affections hidden. But equally, in its redesigned form, the bracelet becomes forgetful of Susan in spite of its inscription. That one donor's hair is known and evident serves to absent them from speculation and to bury their part in its creation. Although the bracelet is made up mostly of Susan's hair, this sister does not play any real part in the story. The mourning aspect of the bracelet is at once its most visible aspect—its initial design, inscription, and the majority of its hair all concern Susan's death—and the part that remains most obscure as it is only Arthur's romantic contribution to the bracelet that is under investigation. But this bracelet does ultimately come to serve Mat as a token of his mourning for Mary. The bracelet remains a family relic in Mat's hands despite the intrusion of Arthur's hair, which comes to mark his part in Mary's death rather than in her life. There is a fitting circularity or eventuality to the events that the bracelet comes to commemorate, just as its material form is "a smoothly coherent circular form secured by a clasp and, beginning where it ends, suggesting perpetuity" (Pointon, "Materializing Mourning" 56). Initials are also shown to be as concealing as they are revealing with regards to Arthur. When Mat attempts to trace Arthur through letters kept by Mary, he finds his correspondence is "signed in the same way, merely with initial letters" (*Hide and Seek* 263). Both signed initials and the hair in the bracelet function as "a kind of dramatic shorthand" (Lutz, *Relics of Death* 130) for Arthur's identity, each expression of self simultaneously a mask. It is only when Mat comes to read Joanna's confessional letter that he discovers Arthur's full name, though this itself is the pseudonym of Mr Thorpe, thrice concealed by the bracelet, initials, and alias.

The nature of Arthur's relationship with Mary is similarly hidden within the bracelet. In one sense, the bracelet represents absence through its presence since it preserves Arthur's hair in anticipation of his separation from Mary, whether by distance, death or, as is the case, by desertion. Arthur exchanges locks of hair with Mary ahead of a trip to Germany, as detailed in a letter: "How glad I am that I gave you my hair for your Bracelet, when I did; and that I got yours in return! It will be such a consolation to both of us to have our keep-sakes to look at now" (*Hide and Seek* 265). In its commission during a period of Arthur's absence from which he never returns, the bracelet already supposes disconnection through its attempt to maintain a material connection between Mary and Arthur. Further still, in redesigning an existing bracelet, Mary

materialises but hides the extent of her affection for Arthur, just as she hides her pregnancy which goes undetected for months, passed off as pining for her lost lover. The hushed-up out of wedlock affair that leads to Mary's child being left fatherless places the bracelet's inscription in another light. With Arthur's contribution unacknowledged on the clasp, the addition of his hairs could be read as an adulteration, even bastardisation, of the bracelet. The "little gold fastenings introduced as additions" (215) to keep Arthur's shorter hairs in place subtly play into this idea. The Gold and Silver Wares Act of 1854 (the same year the novel was published) lowered the minimum authorised standard of gold wares from eighteen to nine carats, making gold jewellery more affordable but less pure, imitable by baser substances.[22] The "delicate golden tinge" to Arthur's brown hair, "brightly visible in the light, hardly to be detected at all in the shade" (400), means that his strands reflect the questionable gold fastenings that join them to the bracelet. Alongside the availability of lower-grade gold alloys in jewellery in the mid-century, writes Ann Louise Luthi, mass-produced jewellery meant that impersonal standardised messages such as "In Memory Of" became more prevalent (18). The changes in jewellery production over time, from when the bracelet was first made to its second incarnation, might indicate a shift not only from mourning to love but from genuine to less sincere displays of affection. There is a pervasive sense of inauthenticity to Arthur's part in the bracelet's making both materially and romantically.

In attending to the hair in the bracelet, the problems that the bracelet's reworking pose for Mat's investigation become all the more apparent. The "very different" hairs "worked in with the old" (*Hide and Seek* 215) are a material record of Arthur's identity that might be traced back to him and serve in turn as proof of his deception as a jilting lover and the masquerading Mr Thorpe. But, "Prettily run in along with the old hair" (216), Arthur's locks are hard for Mat to inspect in bracelet form. They are physically hidden to a large extent by there being "very little of one kind [of hair], and a good deal of the other" (86), with Arthur's sparse strands "hardly half long enough to plait up properly with poor

[22] Standards of 15, 12 and 9 carat gold were authorised with the 1854 Gold and Silver Wares Act. The introduction of lower standards, along with being able to register to have gold and silver goods assayed and marked at offices other than those in the jeweller's local assay office without incurring penalties, meant that gold was altogether more affordable and rose in popularity across the middle and lower classes as a result. Before this, lower standards of gold were often imported from America, especially for watch cases. See Samuel Timmins, *Birmingham and Midland Hardware District* (2013; 504-505), based on his 1866 reports.

Susan's" (216). The working of Arthur's hair into this bracelet in this way further disguises his contribution since Susan's dark locks offset the few golden brown strands. That the hairs in the bracelet are more difficult for Mat to examine than the surplus locks of Arthur's hair, enclosed with Jane's letter to Mary, brings to the fore the question of the relation between materiality and textuality. The bracelet is frequently placed amongst papers in the novel: it is returned to Mary following Jane's letter, locked in a drawer of Valentine Blyth's writing bureau, and carried in Mat's jacket pocket along with Mary's letters. Even the surplus locks posted back by the jeweller are preserved in paper. But though Arthur's hair is found within a letter, and so framed by a text in one sense, in examining these locks Mat demonstrates that hair is not exactly comparable with documentary evidence. As a distinctively material form of record, it must be engaged with in another way.

### The Hairwork Plot and the Paper Trail

The alignment of hairwork with text is particularly striking in a novel that lacks a consistent paper trail.[23] While Mary's bracelet, in particular, is positioned as a substitute text because it stands in place of a birth certificate for Madonna, the fact that it is patently not a birth certificate, and features no readily apparent textual information, emphasises its material significance. Hair is not placed in relation to texts because it offers analogous legibility, but rather because it resists or frustrates straightforward meaning—it demands material and visual literacy.

Finding on Mary's dead body "nothing more—no letters, or cards, or anything" (86) to mark her maternal link to Madonna, Mrs Peckover and the clergyman preserve Mary's hair bracelet, along with a cambric handkerchief embroidered with her initials, and keep them with her daughter, Madonna, handing them over to Valentine upon her adoption. As a substitution—they are preserved in the absence of any textual records relating to Mary and Madonna—these objects record Madonna's parentage in a way that emphasises issues of identity and identification. The lack of legal papers to authenticate a story like

[23] Ronald R. Thomas comments on "the special status granted to texts—especially legal documents—in the sensation novels of the 1860s" and notes "the typical Wilkie Collins detective is engaged in a quest to discover the content of certain secreted or stolen or even fraudulent legal documents" (79).

Mary's might, in Sara Malton's terms, be indicative of "the extent to which the illegitimate child was frequently conceived of as a forged, corrupted document" (7), especially following the bracelet's lack of an acknowledgement of Arthur in its inscription. Madonna, in tandem with the bracelet, becomes part of the proliferation of potentially unreliable evidence, conceived of not only as a material stand-in for documentation but, perhaps, another form of false document. But like the numerous hair clippings in the archive of Mary Anne Disraeli which serve, as Daisy Hay argues, to "contextualize her story, speaking between the silences of paper" (340), this little archive of Mary's possessions also fleshes out her untold story in an affirmative way, becoming a material presence that testifies to the existence of missing persons and unrecorded events. The bracelet articulates silence itself in representing Mary's exile, in its presence in the absence of a death certificate for Mary, and in materialising the fact of Arthur's unrecorded paternity. The task that Mat sets out to achieve, however, in seeking to recover two people and confirm their identities—Arthur and his child—is a task more often resolved in mystery and detection fiction with recourse to properly certified documents to settle questions of identity (Thomas 79; Malton 151). Owing to Mary's scarce correspondence with Jane and Joanna's burning of Arthur's letters, Mat has little to go on in this respect. The handful of witnesses who might offer oral testimonies are either unwilling or dead or their testimonies partial, which only reinforces the sense that crucial information is missing (or has been purposefully omitted). With no known authoritative source on the story of Mary's demise, Mat turns to hair to fill the gaps left by a lack of documentary evidence.

Valeria Woodville faces a similar predicament in *The Law and the Lady* (1875) as she tries to piece together information on her husband's guilt or innocence with regards to the death of his first wife. As she scours the shelves of Major Fitz-David's home for a clue to her husband's hidden past, a hair album catches her eye. It contains locks of hair from the Major's romantic affairs. The locks of the album appear like idealised corpses, each lock of hair devoted "to reminding the Major of the dates at which his various attachments had come to an untimely end" with tomb-like inscriptions such as "My adored Madeline. Eternal constancy. Alas: July 22nd, 1839!" (87). As with Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Only a Curl", the lock of hair memorialises and materialises a body and a relationship and thereby denies such loss *as* loss. The lock, cut off and

thereby unchanging, facilitates the idea of "eternal constancy" in its enduring gleam despite the physical and, perhaps, moral decline of the donor from which it came. There is something of the sexual jealousy of Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" (1842) in this dating of each woman's parting, a drive to deny the circulation of their bodies to other men by immobilising them in death. The deathly erotic charge of this is more apparent when considered against Miserrimus Dexter's lock of hair stolen from "the cold remains of the angel", Sara Macallan, Eustace Woodville's dead wife (*Law and the Lady* 298).[24] Yet while Dexter hides Sara's hair in a locket around his neck, the Major curates his collection in the pages of a sumptuously velvet-bound and silver clasped book. Keeping the hair of these women is a means of securing their continued tactile presence in spite of their absence. But, for the Major, it is also a means by which to command and resolve the narrative of each relationship. In using such mournful epitaphs, the Major casts each ended romance as a death. Just as Mat ponders on Arthur's lock of hair as he attempts to work out its place in his sister's story, that the Major orders and annotates and dates these locks of hair speaks of a desire to align them in and as a narrative form. Indeed, that Valeria is drawn to this particular book foreshadows her eventual work of re-ordering and reading Sara's torn letter at the novel's climax. Both letter and locks are encountered as material fragments that become, through the work of ordering and framing, akin to strands of narrative.

Mat works with hair in another sense by reflecting on the bracelet. As he forges the connection between the bracelet mentioned in Jane's letter and the one he has glimpsed in a drawer at Valentine's house, Mat mentally brings together documentary and physical evidence in a way that mimics the bracelet's form as a textually inscribed token of a material body. Hairwork becomes one with the mental work of identifying connections and unravelling identities as Mat meditates on the bracelet:

> Once more, he was pondering on that little circle of plaited hair, having gold at each end, and looking just big enough to go round a woman's wrist, which he had seen in the drawer of Mr Blyth's bureau. And once again, the identity between this object and the ornament which young

[24] Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) provides an example of this sex-death relation in the cutting of Emma's hair on her deathbed. Charles Bovary wishes to take a keepsake of her hair, but fumbles with the scissors and pierces her temples as he takes the lock, penetrating her dead body in an act that is both erotic and violent.

> Thorpe had described as being the thing called a Hair Bracelet, began surely and more surely to establish itself in his mind. (*Hide and Seek* 257)

Verbal description is aligned with the physical object as Mat simply joins the two together. He recalls the description of a bracelet supplied by Zack and the appearance of one in the drawer of Valentine's bureau, linking these two by likeness just as the bracelet itself effectively links remembrances together. More significantly, here we see Mat beginning to think through the bracelet as he thinks about it. Contrary to the Brownings' poetic hairwork, Mat's thinking upon the bracelet seems to shape *his* thoughts to *its* form, rather than his mind and words working upon the material of the bracelet. The repetition in this passage of "Once more" and "once again", leading on to "surely and more surely" suggests the circularity of the bracelet, as Mat's "pondering on that little circle of plaited hair" takes the shape of the thing it contemplates. The bracelet establishes itself in Mat's mind as a pattern for thought as well as a material object. It is as though the different components of the mystery clasp together as he thinks on it. "The secrecy in which Mr Blyth chose to conceal Madonna's history, and the sequestered place in the innermost drawer of his bureau where he kept the Hair Bracelet, [begin] vaguely to connect themselves together in Mat's mind" (258) as verbal concealment is positioned against physical concealment, reiterating this coupling of documentary and material evidence. The resonance between these two lines suggests that working with these hairs is as much imaginative, mental work, as it is physical, craft work, as Mat forges the connection between the hair bracelet and other potential evidence.

The detective work of *Hide and Seek* involves, as William Henry Marshall states of *Basil*, "the accumulation and then the synthesis into meaningful narrative of the private records (letters, journals, expiational accounts, and the like) of various characters" (Marshall 31). "The like" of Marshall's summation becomes shorthand for something much more tangible, though nonetheless documentary, when we consider the material "private records" that pervade this Collins novel: the hair bracelet, locks of hair, embroidered handkerchief, grave board, pressed flowers, and the like. Each of these objects is a means of recording a particular relationship either between two people or between person and object. To compare Basil's lock of his secret wife's hair to Arthur's lock, both are given as tokens of promise. They function as testaments to their donors' intentions and as authenticators of identity, much like signatures, and yet

exceed textual records as actual bodily fragments rather than mere representations. Mat's work of detection, then, is not only a matter of tracing a narrative between textual and material records of identity—the locks of hair, oral testimonies, and letters he looks to in his search for Arthur—but it is his material engagement with the bracelet that strengthens his resolve and brings him closer to finding the answers he seeks.

### Making Connections: Remembrance and Association

It is because Mary's hair bracelet may be a means of her daughter's identification that Valentine Blyth keeps it locked away in a drawer. He fears the bracelet may be recognised and then Madonna reclaimed by a former relation. Hairwork, then, can be seen as an object of double meaning in that it holds, in Plotz's conception, a "broadly shared, interchangeable, impersonal meaning and [a] poignantly personal aspect, which coexists with the former invisibly, or in ways accessible only to those who are already attuned to the sort of resonances that such personal associations produce" (*Portable Property* 12). Plotz's idea of this double meaning in objects provides one way through which to consider what the hidden aspect of hairwork constitutes. These invisible associations are not invisible because they are formally disguised—it is not that the hairs in Mary's hair bracelet have been worked entirely beyond recognition—but because they rely upon existing associations. To reiterate Holm's argument, hairwork deliberately constructs a "hidden intimate network, from which other viewers are excluded" (140). The role of the viewer within this network is not only recognition, then, but also remembrance. Articles of hair exemplify this kind of object as they call to mind the body from which they came. Magdalen Vanstone of *No Name* (1862) speaks to a lock of her ex-fiancé's hair as she reflects on her changed circumstances: "I can sit and look at you sometimes, till I almost think I am looking at Frank. Oh, my darling! my darling!" (220). Personal associations and memories come to the fore in this scene as the lock falls "from her fingers and into her bosom" and becomes more than a remembered body, now a remembered embrace that is felt "as if it followed the falling hair" (221). Madonna and the bracelet, however, do not link directly to existing associations or memories for Mat. To him, Madonna *seems* something more: she resonates with his remembered image of his sister. So too

with the hair bracelet, as Mat is attuned to its potential personal significance after reading Jane's letter but cannot be sure it is the one he seeks. Indeed, Mat's unfamiliarity with hairwork and his "not knowing that hair bracelets are found in most houses where there are women in a position to wear any jewellery ornament at all" (*Hide and Seek* 260) mean that he is ignorant of many of the broader, visible implications of Mary's bracelet as a sentimental token and fashionable accessory. Since Mat has, in this sense, only partial or suspected knowledge of the meaning and significance of the bracelet, he must find associative links to its donor by other means.

Mat's conviction that the strands of Arthur's hair will lead him to the man himself comes to the fore as he heads towards a railway station, a site suggestive of the mobility of the body but also informational connectivity.

> As he pursued his way back to the railroad, he took Jane Holdsworth's letter out of his pocket, and looked at the hair inclosed [sic] in it. It was the fourth or fifth time he had done this during the few hours that had passed since he had possessed himself of Mary's Bracelet. From that period there had grown within him a vague conviction, that the possession of [Arthur] Carr's hair might in some way lead to the discovery of Carr himself. He knew perfectly well that there was not the slightest present or practical use in examining the hair, and yet, there was something that seemed to strengthen him afresh in his purpose, to encourage him anew after his unexpected check at Dibbledean, merely in the act of looking at it. "If I can't track him no other way," he muttered, replacing the hair in his pocket, "I've got the notion into my head, somehow, that I will track him by this." (361)

Mat's resolve is strengthened by possession, by owning a token of Arthur's body that he can touch, ponder, and refer to, as much as by the information that it may supply. He senses that this hair has the capacity to bring him closer, physically and mentally, to uncovering the body from which it came. As he looks at Arthur's hair for "the fourth or fifth time" within "a few hours", he establishes a kind of ritual. His meditation casts the hair as the locus of a compulsive drive, something akin to the "repetitious remembrances of mourning" that hair bracelets imitate and facilitate (Pointon, "Materializing Mourning" 56). Pointon is here referring to the circular forms of much hairwork mourning jewellery which symbolise the eternity of the soul of the donor but may equally suggest the repetitive cycle of remembrance on the part of the wearer. In mourning for his sister and at a dead end with his enquiries into the whereabouts of Arthur, Mat's engagement in repetitious behaviour as a means of moving forward is therefore

significant. He fetishes the hair as he repeatedly uncovers and handles it, finding comfort "merely in the act of looking at it" as though this material engagement is itself a guard against loss, against failure, or at least a controlled simulation of it.[25] Mat's mastery over the strands of hair becomes a sense of mastery over Arthur, of bodily possession and transmission.[26] But it is not this mode of animistic thinking alone that drives Mat's impulse to study the hair. While there is a sense that "sympathetic magic" is at work through this hair—the idea that "the piece of the person can bring the presence of the whole" (Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us" 131)—this does not necessarily suppose spiritual connectivity. Mat has spent twenty years trapping animals for food and fur on his travels in America (hence he gives "Marksman" as his surname to Zack when they first meet). He returns again and again to the hair as this is his peculiar means of discovering the whereabouts of Arthur—he is explicitly out to "track him" (*Hide and Seek* 361). In his "vague conviction" that this hair will lead to Arthur (361), Mat recognises the elusive but distinctive nature of the material as a bodily fragment, a trace. The tracking of Arthur by his hair clippings also darkly recalls Mat's loss of his own hair at the hands of Native Americans. Mat imagines his scalp as a trophy "on the top of a high pole in some Indian village" (187), a symbol of the strength and endurance of his assailants. Scalping, a practice in Native American warfare often performed on enemy tribes, may be linked with financial gain as colonists offered bounties for scalps during various conflicts.[27] With Mat having collected animal pelts for money and his own scalp taken from him, this gory alignment of scalp, hair, and money calls into question the potentially bloody or financial recompense he may be seeking from Arthur. Mat's former trade, then, placed against this act of examining the hair, emphasises material engagement because in following this

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[25] The extent to which keeping locks of hair and hairwork engages in Freudian *fort da* and fetishistic behaviour, especially given their place in mourning culture, is discussed by Pointon in "Wearing Memory: Mourning, Jewellery and the Body" (1999; 69).

[26] James Frazer explains this form of sympathetic magic in *The Golden Bough* (1890) as the belief "that the sympathetic connexion [sic] which exists between himself and every part of his body continues to exist even after the physical connexion has been broken, and that therefore he will suffer from any harm that may befall the severed parts of his body, such as the clippings of his hair or the parings of his nails" (258).

[27] During the American Revolutionary War, Governor Henry Hamilton became known as the "Hair-buyer General" for reportedly promoting Native American attacks on American colonial settlements and offering payment for white scalps. See Bernard W. Sheehan, "'The Famous Hair Buyer General': Henry Hamilton, George Rogers Clark, and the American Indian" (1983) and Ashley Kendell, "The Crow Creek Massacre: The Role of Sex in Native American Scalping Practices" (2018).

"long hunt on a dull scent" he (rightly) anticipates that a trail will, with diligent adherence to material cues, manifest and yield a body in due course (360-61).

The true identity of Arthur Carr is uncovered when, on coming to visit a battered and bruised Zack, Mat is presented with a curl of Zack's hair cut from around the wounds on his head and swept into newspaper. However, Madonna's and not Mat's keen eye discerns the likeness between Zack's and Arthur's hair.

> While she was thus engaged, an old newspaper, with some hair lying in it, caught her eye […] she recognised the hair in it as Zack's by its light-brown colour, and by the faint golden tinge running through it. One little curly lock, lying rather apart from the rest, especially allured her eyes; she longed to take it as a keepsake—a keepsake which Zack would never know she possessed! (396)

Madonna is quick to notice the gleam of a lock of hair and sees in it the same subtle qualities that enable Mat to match it with Arthur's successfully. The "faint golden tinge running through" the hair, noted here by Madonna, mimics the "running through" of "the same delicate golden tinge" that Mat notices when comparing the locks (400). Yet Mat's eyes and hands, his tools in material detection, are initially overwhelmed by this revelation, "his restless eyes fixed in a vacant stare" and "his hands clutched round the old newspaper" (398).[28] As Madonna takes up the lock of Zack's hair from the newspaper after Mat snatches back Arthur's hair, Madonna demonstrates her superior material literacy, not reading between hair and text but drawing material evidence together into a coherent whole. That Madonna solves the mystery, as a character who relies on the powers of sight and touch to communicate, intensifies the visuality and materiality of the scene. She demonstrates an alternate mode of material communication in her unique mode of sign language, referring to others through impersonations and odd signals, known only to her adoptive parents and close friends. In this sense she is, like the hair bracelet, fully understood only by those within her own "intimate network" (Holm 140). Lutz refers to hair's "storytelling force" through its "silent testimony" (*Relics of Death* 146), but it is most tangibly Madonna's mute language of gesture that suggests this different kind of communication in the novel, more gesture than

[28] The work of the eyes and hands is a motif that recurs in the novel through Valentine's work as a painter, with Zack, Madonna, and eventually Mat drawn in to his lessons. For a discussion of Collins's representation of painters and engagement with Pre-Raphaelitism see Graham Law and Andrew Maunder, *Wilkie Collins: A Literary Life* (2008; 22-25).

speech, more haptic than textual.

Still, it is not necessarily Madonna's sharpened senses as a deaf-mute that enable her to make the connection more easily than Mat. Madonna's ability to detect a likeness that Mat has failed to notice, as he asks himself "Why had this extraordinary resemblance never struck him before?" (*Hide and Seek* 400), may be answered to some extent by thinking in terms of gender. Perhaps what Madonna wields as the last surviving female Grice is, in Elisabeth Gitter's words, the "exclusively female power to weave the family web" (936); to reveal her father and, consequently, uncle and half-brother and in doing so reunite the family.[29] In solving the mystery with hair, "it is also her art: the strands of hair she plaits, the threads she weaves are […] analogous to the narrative thread, the story line, the strands of the plot" (Gitter 938). This textile analogy places Madonna as the weaver of the threads of her family as she unites her half-brother and father's hair. The tobacco pouch given to Madonna by Mat supports this link between femininity, textiles, and family bonding as she places her needle, thimble, and silk reel in the pouch to show Mat how pleased she is with his gift (*Hide and Seek* 332). Mary's fingers, pinpricked from "knowing as she did about fancy work" (84), anticipate her daughter's skills, and her workbox preserves the locks of Arthur's hair that will eventually bring her family together again alongside her embroidery samples and needles (214).[30] Valentine inadvertently picks up on the implications of gender as he emphasises *"her* hand which held up the hair for you to look at, and *her* little innocent action which led to the discovery of who her father really was!" (418, original emphasis). Madonna's material engagement with Zack's hair pieces her family back together even as it unpicks the mystery of Arthur Carr.

In being given away by his son's hair, the idea that hair both reveals and conceals the identity of Arthur is realised. Mat reasons that Zack must have connections with Arthur, since he cannot be the man himself, and so places

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[29] Galia Ofek comments along the same lines that "Madonna's hair bracelet ties the lost hero to his family and community, restoring him to social networks and human love" (204). While I am not convinced that either Madonna or the bracelet "restore" Mat to his family and community—he soon leaves to resume his independent life wandering alone across America—the process of the investigation and Madonna's relation to him do turn Zack into a brother figure for Mat.

[30] Another curation of motherly identity can be seen in Sara Leeson's workbox in *The Dead Secret* (1857). The "little stolen keepsakes" (346) of her illegitimate child, Rosamund, are kept together with a hymnbook given to her by the girl's father. Sara seeks to bind her family together through hair in death, asking of Rosamund: "lay [the hymnbook] on my bosom with your own dear hands, and put a little morsel of your hair with it, and bury me in the grave in Porthgenna churchyard" (346).

Arthur's hair in a trail of bodies and likenesses: "The similarity between the sleeper's hair and the hair of Arthur Carr was perfect! Both were of the same light brown colour, and both had running through that colour the same delicate golden tinge, brightly visible in the light, hardly to be detected at all in the shade" (400). The resemblance between Zack's and his father's hair is emphasised by their both having a golden tinge "running through" which, being "brightly visible in the light", is also telling of the material (and specifically visual) literacy that it demands. Just as Mary's letters and bracelet are brought out from their dark hiding places, with Mat bringing them "towards the window" (212) and "close to the flame of the candle" (343) respectively to examine the material, so it is with the golden tinge of these locks that, "hardly to be detected at all in the shade", needs to be seen and examined carefully for its significance to be recognised. Mat's direct matching up of locks to other locks and heads of hair reiterates the idea that hair may be used to identify the body from which it came. The near-completion of Mat's investigation is brought to a halt, however, as he waits for the man behind the bracelet to answer for himself.

**Conclusion**

Mat's long-anticipated confrontation with Arthur Carr/Mr Thorpe is brought to an abrupt close when Mat presents Thorpe with the bracelet containing his hair. Holding the bracelet before Thorpe and urging him to "Look at it again! Look at it as close as you like—" (409), Mat sees the man become in the flesh as still, silent, and puzzling as the bracelet. As Thorpe falls back into his chair in a swoon, the scene ends with the same uncertainty that hovered over his strands in the hair bracelet: is this man "Dead?" (410). The bracelet raises questions and fails to supply their answers once more. Mat leaves without the resolution he has been seeking, still speculating. At this point in the novel, there is a clear sense of the limitation of material evidence, with hairwork shown to be a particularly frustrating object, obscuring as much as it reveals. To turn again to Alfred and Clara's hair bracelet and its unknown qualities—the relationship between the two names it records, whose hair it preserves, and how it came to be broken—it would seem that the capacity of hairwork to fully resolve questions of identity, the body, its relations and its history are limited. These bodily objects invite speculation in one sense, suggesting intriguing possibilities

around the lives of their donors and possessors, but at the same time invite uncertainty, denying resolution.

Mary's bracelet is, finally, accounted for when Thorpe explains its remaining mysteries in a letter written to Mat after recovering from the shock. Thorpe's letter reveals his history, his surprise and guilt at being confronted with the bracelet, and gives the reasons behind his desertion of Mary. The verbal testimony of one within the "hidden intimate network" of the bracelet at last unravels its close binding of affections and connections (Holm 140). Though the bracelet remains in some sense a disappointing communicator, a limited and at times indecipherable source of information that must rely on text for its explication, Mary's bracelet is the device that prises from Thorpe this final confession. If the hair bracelet invites speculation from its viewer, from its donor it demands explanation. The bracelet unveils Thorpe's true identity and, given the note that he left Mary not knowing she was pregnant, we might also see the bracelet as uncovering several identities for Thorpe.

Just as Mat comes to think through the bracelet, his circling thoughts taking the shape of the material he ponders, Thorpe's letter replicates the pattern of the bracelet in another way as he works back through his memories, reworking his sense of his place in the story of Mary's life in the process. The hair bracelet is for him the manifestation of an unknown sequence of events, a narrative that diverges from his assumed knowledge. It is a point of reconnection with his past and, its trajectory explained by Mat, a material realisation of a daughter that reworks his identity as a father. In this way, the bracelet crafts new connections by representing those already reflected in its material and form.

As Jane Wildgoose writes, bodily relics such as hairwork "provide the impetus for storytelling in ways that are far more resonant than words alone" ("*Beyond All Price*" 722). Hairwork intersects with letters, oral testimonies, documents, and other textually inscribed matter (such as gravestones and embroidered handkerchiefs) because it too may be used to discover and recover something of the past, whether a past time, event, person or relationship, and can offer a more personally resonant, expressive means of doing so. As I will explore in the next chapter, the capacity of hairwork to forge and preserve links between people in spite of their real or figurative distance begets a sense of resolution even in contradictory states. More clearly, here,

hairwork holds visible and hidden identities in tension while supposing a congruence between material and textual forms of knowledge. It functions as an alternative form of record that complements verbal testimony, rather than superseding it, confirming identity in the meeting of material and textual evidence. While in *Hide and Seek* hair is placed against textual records, with Thorpe's letter disclosing more than could be construed from Mary's bracelet alone, the materiality of hairwork, its physical presence and the bodily material it shapes and preserves, remains crucial to its capacity to signify identity.

## Chapter Five: "These links which connect us with the past": Hairwork and Affective Ties in Margaret Oliphant's *Phoebe, Junior* (1876) and *Kirsteen* (1890)

> When we think of the imperishable nature of human hair we can easily understand the anxiety with which a tress or lock cut from the forehead of a friend who is perhaps long among the dead, or separated from us, not only by miles and miles of ocean, but by new ties and new cares, is preserved. We look upon the few solitary hairs which call back the dear face never more to be seen, scenes never again to be revisited, and incidents long held by the past among its own. It is not surprising, then, that these links which connect us with the past should be treasured, as we see them sometimes turning up neglected and forgotten from some tiny drawer of an escritoire, long thrown aside in the lumber-room; and still more frequently preserved in the trinket, valued not for the goldsmith's art which it displays, but for the few hairs clustering within. (Speight, *Lock of Hair* 83-84)

In *The Lock of Hair* (1871), Alexanna Speight underscores the importance of hairwork as a means of preserving and connecting with the past at a time when the craft was swiftly declining. Speight tries to maintain its currency first by placing hairwork against a much longer history of hair used for social and memorial purposes (the first part of the book, "Its History, Ancient and Modern, Natural and Artistic"), and then attempts to revive the practice by reintroducing the hairwork of a few decades earlier. In this passage, which opens the second part of the book, Speight urges the capacity of the lock of hair to overcome the separation of loved ones across time and space, finding its unique facilitation of memory lies in bringing together people remembered ("the dear face never more to be seen") with places recollected ("scenes never again to be visited") and moments recorded ("incidents long held by the past among its own"). Yet there is a tension in Speight's formulation between the "treasured" hair and its being "neglected and forgotten". Only in the lock's working is its potential to connect these people, places, and moments realised. The reader is made to imagine their loved ones' locks of hair tucked away and out of sight in the recesses of the home and thereby encouraged to craft their tresses into something ornamental and worthy of display. Speight proposes his decorative styles of hairwork as a means of renewing the lock's connective potential through the display of hair, rather than hiding it within a locket or leaving it unworked inside an envelope in a drawer.[1] The woven, coiled or embroidered

[1] As stated earlier, Speight refers to himself with male pronouns throughout *The Lock of Hair.*

strands of hairwork reify “these links which connect us with the past” and give shape to the idea that hair can preserve a relationship across, and in spite of, time and distance.

Margaret Oliphant’s *Phoebe, Junior* (1876) tells the story of a young woman with her own “new ties and new cares” and her relationship with her family’s older generation. Phoebe Beecham, a modern middle-class woman from London, pays a visit to her grandparents—on the side of the family “in trade”—in the town of Carlingford to secure an inheritance on her mother’s behalf. She soon wins the admiration of her grandmother and is offered a family heirloom: a large solid gold brooch filled with the childhood locks of her Tozer aunts and uncles. Phoebe is acutely conscious of the vulgarity and outmodedness of this piece as well as the family ties the brooch and its passing down to her represent. The connective potential of hairwork is part of the reason Phoebe politely refuses the brooch. The people, place, and moments the brooch connects—the Tozer family of Carlingford and their history as shopkeepers—render it a threat to Phoebe’s social aspirations. If she is to keep company with the Northcotes, a middle-class Anglican family, and gain the affections of Clarence Copperhead, their rich tenant, she must distinguish herself from her lower-middle-class relatives. Hairwork here manifests that which cannot easily be changed or negated—family, class, roots—ties which might persist despite the changing tide of time and circumstance.

*Kirsteen: The Story of a Scotch Family Seventy Years Ago* (1890) is similarly concerned with the tensions between familial and romantic loyalties. The daughters of Drumcarro face estrangement or the threat of death at their father’s hand for choosing partners deemed below the gentility of their ancient Scots ancestry or for refusing the hand of an acceptably genteel suitor. Kirsteen places herself in an uncertain position when she allows a handkerchief embroidered with her hair, one of a set she initials “RD” for Robbie Douglas, to be taken by Ronald Drummond as he leaves with Kirsteen’s brother to join a regiment in India. Speight records the anxiety that comes with “miles and miles of ocean” (*Lock of Hair* 83) between the donor and recipient of a lock of hair, and Kirsteen’s handkerchiefs are accordingly made in anticipation of geographical and temporal separation. Working with hair becomes a way for Kirsteen to demonstrate her familial affection for her brother while covertly communicating her romantic fidelity to Ronald. As souvenirs of home for

soldiers going to war, they are also created with the knowledge that their recipients may never return. The lovers' exchange over the handkerchief haunts Kirsteen's memory as "the gold thread that should run through all the years" (*Kirsteen* 40). The handkerchief is a manifestation and reminder of Kirsteen's promise to Ronald ahead of their long separation, affecting the decisions she must make in his absence and the event of his death. It is the reason she refuses her father's orders to marry the eligible, if older, Glendocart and flees to London to work as a seamstress in Miss Jean's establishment. Kirsteen reclaims the handkerchief from Ronald's mother following his death in battle, stained with his blood but with "her thread of gold shining undimmed" (277). In this way, Kirsteen's hairwork materialises affective possibilities and promissory ties. The handkerchief comes to mark an unfulfilled commitment yet, because she refuses to let it go, maintains its connective potential.

Phoebe resists the bestowal of hairwork upon her, while Kirsteen refuses to let hers go to another. In this chapter, I argue that both, therefore, impede the circulation that makes sense of hairwork's connective potential, that makes it most clearly a "link", in Speight's words, between generations. What the novels share is a narrative of the decline of hairwork not for want of portability, to draw on John Plotz's concept, but because of it. Plotz argues that the portability of property—in particular, property that carries sentiment while bearing clear monetary value, such as jewellery (*Portable Property* 32)—was part of an object's usefulness and desirability for the Victorians, and that the capacity to circulate may in itself produce cultural value (*Portable Property* 9). In other words, that an item of property is portable means its fiscal and sentimental value can be transferred to others, and fiscal and sentimental value is realised through this transferal. For much hairwork, this dual purpose is clear. The Tozer hair brooch bears the sentimental value of its childhood curls upon the weight of its solid gold mount. Phoebe intends to win her grandmother's affections and an inheritance and receiving the brooch is a guarantee of both. Wealth and favour are not, however, the only things rendered portable through the brooch. Hairwork reifies and preserves the identities of its donors and recipients and makes a material and lasting object of a moment in their shared history: it is a relationship and its past life made portable. The portaging of hairwork—the way it is passed along the lines of kin, bestowed upon another, or gifted out of family

and friendship circles—threatens to remember and recirculate one's personal history in potentially uncomfortable and disruptive ways. Kirsteen and Phoebe both desire to arrest the circulation of hairwork, along with the affects and alliances of the past it carries, for this same reason, if to different ends. The passing of the hair-embroidered handkerchief to Ronald's mother upon his death assumes a familial but not a romantic meaning and threatens to prevent its return to Kirsteen, while the Tozer brooch, in Phoebe's insistence that her grandmother keeps and wears it, is denied matrilineal circulation. Another consequence of portability is that hairwork threatens its donors and possessors with stasis, socially and romantically, in materialising identities and relationships at one point in time. This may be the desire of Kirsteen, wishing to preserve her attachment to Ronald as well as to her family name and sense of self, but it is what Phoebe, seeking to ascend to a position of wealth and class above her current station, resists.

Scholarship on Oliphant has frequently addressed the social mobility of her female protagonists, though this is generally framed as a tension between their drive to find opportunities for themselves to gain power and influence, and their limited means of transcending their class.[2] Whether Oliphant was a feminist or anti-feminist, conventional or subversive in this respect is a recurrent subject of debate.[3] The eponymous *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866) and *Hester* (1883), as well as the latter's Catherine Vernon, are often the focus of these discussions owing to their careful negotiation of matters of family, money, and class. Yet *Phoebe, Junior* and *Kirsteen* also centre on women attempting to break or rework the bonds of family and find for themselves a new place (figuratively and literally) in society.[4] Both women try to maintain the distinction of class despite their associates and the more humble position they find themselves in: Phoebe with her shop-owning relatives, Kirsteen with Miss Jean and the seamstresses. The part that dress plays in this respect is significant and

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[2] See, in particular, Melissa Schaub, "Queen of the Air of Constitutional Monarch?: Idealism, Irony, and Narrative Power in *Miss Marjoribanks*" (2000); Andrea Kaston Tange, "Redesigning Femininity: *Miss Marjoribanks*'s Drawing-Room of Opportunity" (2008); Andrea Serdinsky, *Female Power and Career in Selected Novels by Margaret Oliphant* (2011); and Susan Zlotnick, "Passing for Real: Class and Mimicry in *Miss Marjoribanks*" (2012).

[3] See, for example, Wendy S. Jones, "Margaret Oliphant's Women Who Want Too Much" (2005) and Seda Cosar Celik, "Pro or Anti-Feminist? Margaret Oliphant's *Hester*" (2016).

[4] Elsie B. Michie's *The Vulgar Question of Money: Heiresses, Materialism, and the Novel of Manners from Jane Austen to Henry James* (2011) and Nancy Henry's *Women, Literature and Finance in Victorian Britain: Cultures of Investment* (2018) both feature chapters on Oliphant's women and money.

has received much critical attention as one of the principal means by which Oliphant's heroines gain and exert influence and fashion themselves into figures of the power to which they aspire.[5] For Phoebe, dress is a means of self-fashioning (or, more aptly, self-preservation), and is therefore a key part of her strategy to maintain her middle-class credentials while in her grandparents' company. Phoebe's mother buys new things for her daughter to wear in Carlingford, wishing her to appear good enough to be taken for a Duke's daughter, and so passes on the ability to elevate a perceived class identity through dress (Zakreski, "Fashioning the Domestic Novel" 66). Yet if, as Patricia Zakreski argues, the novel "explores generational change through the trope of sartorial conflict" ("Fashioning the Domestic Novel" 56), then Mrs Tozer's hair brooch and her granddaughter's reaction to it can also be understood through Phoebe's lack of knowledge of the craft. In terms of the historical trajectory of dress, what is rethought, reworked or cast aside by Phoebe in the 1870s is the material that Kirsteen crafts decades earlier, and so too with hairwork. Though no less sartorially-minded than Phoebe, Kirsteen does not cast a critical eye on hairwork in the same way. Kirsteen has an affective investment in hairwork that Phoebe lacks because she makes it herself, with her hair, and to commemorate her relationships. Equally, the knowledge and skills that Kirsteen demonstrates in her hair embroidery are those that Phoebe overlooks owing to her historical distance from the making of her grandmother's hairwork brooch. Talia Schaffer picks up on conflicts within hairwork in her analysis of Mrs Tozer's hair brooch, arguing that the brooch embodies the tensions within the novel's relationships—money versus sentiment, old versus new, tradition versus modernity (*Novel Craft* 151). In my reading of the novel and its brooch, I argue it is not only these tensions surrounding the brooch's bestowal that render it objectionable to Phoebe, but its specific relation to hairwork fashion, production, and declining handicraft culture.

At this crucial point in the historical trajectory of hairwork, Speight urges the amateur to attempt the craft themselves more emphatically than any professional hairworker writing before him. The repetitive, precise, and time-consuming process of hairwork must be a part of how it realises affect if it was

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[5] See Elsie B. Michie, "Dressing Up: Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Oliphant's *Phoebe Junior*" (2002); Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles and Activism* (2009); and Patricia Zakreski, "Fashioning the Domestic Novel: Rewriting Narrative Patterns in Margaret Oliphant's *Phoebe, Junior* and *Dress*" (2016).

not always enough to keep unworked locks of hair or those worked by another's hand. For this reason, I will first reflect on my attempt to make hairwork before turning to *Phoebe, Junior* and *Kirsteen*'s representations. I want to understand how the experience of making hairwork impacts on its connective potential, and to what extent engaging with the process enables me to comprehend its affective charge.

### Hairwork and its Hindrances: Working with Hair

In July 2017 I attended a practical workshop on Victorian hairwork as part of the interdisciplinary conference "Death & the Maiden" at the University of Winchester. Courtney Lane, a hair artist and historian based in Kansas City, Missouri, led the workshop, which involved practising gimp work on real human hair extensions and dyed horsehair. The workshop presented an opportunity to try the art of working hair and see what affects or ideas might arise for me from the process, yet there were already several hindrances framing the experience: one set of issues with the process and another with the material. First, at a conference exploring death, we made a form of mourning jewellery without any specific context of bereavement or memorialisation and did so in a short period of time, guided by a practitioner, in a conference room with other workshop participants. Secondly, I worked with the hair of an anonymous individual and a horse while attempting to access the more personal significations of hairwork. Nevertheless, certain affective and experiential aspects of the process and material of hairwork became more clear to me because of how jarring some of these constraints were.[6]

The term "gimp" denotes a thread with a cord or wire running through it, or in lace-making a coarser thread which forms the outline of a design. In the context of hairwork, the technique involves twisting and looping hair together with wire around a thin tool such as a knitting needle. This produces a row of looped strands around a wire stem which can then be manipulated into larger

[6] Similar constraints and possibilities informed the practice-based research of Jane Wildgoose when she travelled to Leila's Hair Museum in Independence, Missouri, to learn to make gimp work for a project involving hairwork and human remains ("Ways of Making" 88). She did not know, or even meet, all of those that donated their locks for her hair wreath (91-92). This made sense in her project, however, because it was in part an attempt to engage with the "lost but not forgotten" identities of those whose remains were taken by Victorian collectors for scientific research (91).

loops or spirals (see fig 5.i). It is often used to figure petals and leaves in hair flowers and within larger wreaths. Gimp work makes sense of amateur hairwork as a skill that is passed down in person, from generation to generation or, in this case, teacher to student. It requires less artistic sensibility than it does dexterity, someone to demonstrate and offer guidance on the right posture for the hands and proper tension for the hair. It rewards practice and patience which, though useful for table and palette work, are all the more important because of the simplicity of the form created and the visibility of individual loops.

Fig. 5.i — Row of gimp work on knitting needle. Image taken during hairwork workshop at the “Death & the Maiden” conference at the University of Winchester, 23 July 2017.

Gimp work requires precision at every stage. There is little scope for redoing a section or hiding errors under a metal join, as with hair jewellery. To begin, the hair should be of equal length. Even a few shorter strands will result in splaying along the length of the wire and make the piece look feathery and worn. If the hair is tied too loosely, one side of the design will appear flattened at the wire base and the hair will slip back through, ruining the effect of the upright loops along the length. In the main part of the process, hair is wrapped around the needle, forming one loop, and the wires are then crossed over one another perpendicular to the needle to fix the loop in place. This step is repeated until there are only a couple of inches of hair left. The technique requires consistency of touch or, more precisely, of tension, pressure, and placement to produce even coils. The looped hair must be tucked firmly under the needle with a finger

while the wires are crossed or it loosens and unfurls. Like braiding hair on the head, there is an art to hooking the hair with the fingers, which is needed to complete the process with any consistency or speed. Once the line is complete and the wire tied off, the row of gimped hair is slipped off the end of the needle. This becomes more difficult, time-consuming, and potentially damaging to the gimped hair if the row has been wound too tightly or too far up the needle's length. If the row will not slip off with a firm pull when grasping the hairs at the beginning of the row, then pliers become necessary to grip the hairs (potentially breaking them) and to shuffle the row down the needle.

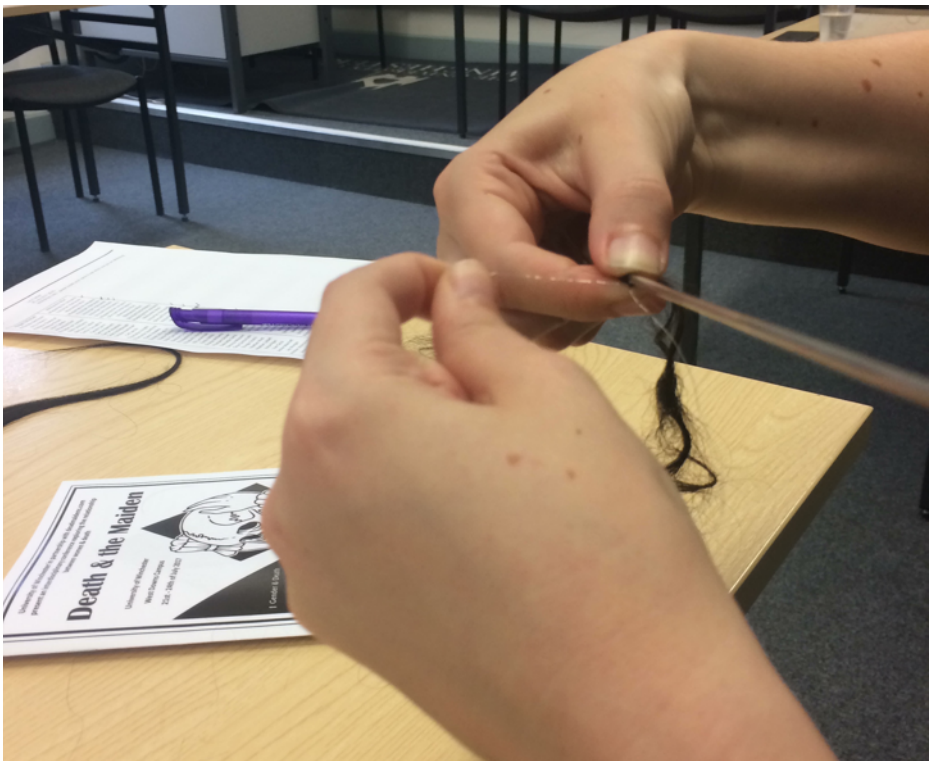


Fig. 5.ii — Another workshop participant working her friend's hair. As above.

The anonymised palette of human and horse hair I used in the workshop highlighted the importance of having some personal connection to the donor of the hair in order to experience hairwork as an affective process. I had no connection to the people (or horses) whose hair lay on the worktable. I did not make a piece of hairwork as a gift for a loved one, to commemorate a treasured event or relationship, or (as the conference theme suggested) as an act of mourning. There were a couple of participants who were better prepared for the task in this respect. As everyone got up to select hair from the worktable, the person next to me remained seated. She pulled out of her bag a small parcel of

blue tissue paper, not unlike the acid-free paper found around locks of hair in archives. The paper unfolded to reveal three or four neat little bundles of dark curly hair (see fig 5.ii). Her friend, she told me, had a haircut recently and, having heard about the hairwork workshop, asked her hairdresser to tie up the ends of her hair before snipping them off. She posted them from the U.S. to the U.K., enacting not only the use of the lock of hair as a friendship token, but as something connecting friends separated by a great distance. Someone on the other side of the room, after a practice run working with the hair supplied for the workshop, took a pair of scissors to cut her own hair.

I selected fair hairs from the table to match mine so that I might at least imagine the process of working with my own or a family member's hair. The small weft was long and glossy and came already tied and glued to a plastic loop at one end. Real human hair extensions, like the one I worked, have even greater anonymity than the unattributed articles of hairwork found in museum collections. The current global hair trade is such that these strands are likely to have come from South or Southeast Asia or Russia, but pinning down their precise origin is (unless bought specifically from an ethical and transparent supplier) very difficult (Berry 64-67).[7] Unlike the vast majority of Victorian hairwork, these hairs have undergone a process of depigmentation and dying that entirely masks their original shade (64). Because of its predominantly Western consumption—which Esther Berry delineates as "the unequal relationship between First World consumers and Third World producers" (64)—hair for hair extensions is selected from particular donors for its structural likeness to Caucasian hair (65). The whole process is one which strips or "lifts" the hair of its specificity to an individual and its ethnic significations and dyes the hair with other more marketable, more uniform, more "white" pigments: it is a process of symbolic colonisation (78). Against Victorian hairwork, specifically, there is also the matter of the fate of the donor. It is safe to assume that the donor of the hair for an article of Victorian hairwork is now dead, even if the piece was not made to mourn them. But the human hair that circulates in today's market cannot determine even this much about its donor. It becomes, in Berry's terms, a "zombie commodity" in its "living-dead undecidability" (64). Its gloss and fairness are part of its deceptive appearance which evokes vitality

[7] Emma Tarlo attempts to trace the network of donors and consumers of hair in the current global hair trade in *Entanglement: The Secret Lives of Hair* (2016).

without any clear point of reference to the body from which it grew. Modern hair extensions elude the very particularities in which hairwork has its roots.

Fig. 5.iii — My finished gimp work piece. As above.

My attempt to apprehend the experience of Victorian hairwork practice failed on another account in that I endeavoured in one workshop to make a discrete gimp-work piece. The setting in which I worked—a conference room with twenty academics—and the time limitation imposed on the task—two hours —was patently un-domestic. I did not dedicate many hours and, as often was the case, weeks and months to refining and expanding the piece, creating only a small three-part bunch of looped strands (see fig 5.iii). I was taught and supervised in this process by a contemporary hairworker, not a close friend or relative, and so bypassed the potential for affective exchange through the craft in this way, too. In sum, I was unable to recreate many of the affective, material, and experiential dimensions that the process involved for those crafting personal mementos in their homes. The constraints of the workshop made clear, however, the skill, precision, patience, and affective investment needed to

fully engage with hairwork as a highly personal and exacting process. Many of the metaphoric or abstract aspects of hairwork became tangible and immediate as I made it: tension, touch, care, meditation. The process involved repeating actions in the same way that the product supposedly aids the viewer in returning to, and mulling over, the sentiments encoded. Despite its unknown donor, the small piece of gimp work I took home with me after the workshop did feel more valuable, more personally meaningful, for the little time and effort and skill I had put into working it.

Fig. 5.iv — Hair wreath made by Sarah Hunter, circa 1866-70. CC: 984.80.

Gimp work was almost always used to create the smaller individual parts of a larger composition. A hair wreath at Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria, British Colombia, encapsulates the forms and purposes to which gimp work was commonly put (see fig. 5.iv).[8] The huge glass-fronted shadow box, which looms over an upstairs sitting room, is filled with gimped hair arranged in a horseshoe around a central heart. Its flowers are shades of brown, near-black, blonde, auburn, white, and light grey. The sections range from large loose rolls of hair

[8] For a discussion of nineteenth-century Canadian hairwork, see Melissa Zielke, “Forget-Me-Nots: Victorian Women, Mourning, and the Construction of a Feminine Historical Memory” (2003).

tied together and laid against the white backdrop, to tiny tight coils that spring up towards the glass case. Beads are sewn into the centres of some flowers and slotted at intervals along tiny gimp work loops. The wreath was made by Sarah Hunter at Otonabee, Ontario, between 1866 and 1870 and is composed of the hair of her parents, six sisters, herself, and a horse (the donor of the grey hair). The scale of the wreath as a project—the years the wreath took to complete and the number of donors involved—is striking. The repeated rows of gimp work which layer over and encircle one another encode the hours taken over the gradual incorporation of a proliferating material, amplifying its temporal and spatial magnitude. The time taken over the wreath supposes something worthwhile not only in the result, but in the process itself: that the stages of collecting, preparing, working, and arranging the hair were a part of its construction of affective meaning for Hunter. That an animal's hair features in the composition may be an aesthetic choice, a material used for contrast and decoration like the beads, or about utilising readily available materials. But the way the grey hairs are placed within the bunches of rolled hair against all the other shades suggests closeness and attachment, a desire to include the horsehair within the affective network of the wreath, and demonstrates how hairwork might be used to manifest other kinds of relationships.

There are some unresolved questions about the wreath's generational involvement, however. Did Hunter's family members help her in this task, enacting their affective ties while displaying them in the wreath? Were the skills for its making passed down from parent to child, reifying its preservation of intergenerational bonds? What is known is that Hunter gave the wreath to her sister, who gave it to her daughter and she to her daughter who donated it to The Castle Society. The hair wreath weaves together the hair of parents and children, recording youth and age together, and in so doing creates an object of lineage concurrent with synchronicity. Its being passed down brings out its connective purpose, not only for the two generations of its donors but in its latent anticipation of a continued family and their material and genealogical inheritance. My small sample of gimp work, made by inexperienced hands in an academic setting, rushed, messy, and composed of an unknown donor's hair, does not compare and simply cannot capture the kinds of affect signified in Hunter's wreath. Though the process of working can help to shape the affective meaning of hair, as in Hunter's painstakingly collected and laboured over

wreath, a personal context—a relationship between the donor and possessor of the hairwork—is a crucial predicate of its affective charge.

Hunter's wreath corresponds on many points to the hair-embroidered handkerchiefs of *Kirsteen* and the Tozer hair brooch of *Phoebe, Junior*. Kirsteen, like Hunter, utilises the readily available material of her own hair, taking time to work it as the light fades on the emotionally charged evening of her brother's departure from home, and uses her hairwork to manifest two kinds of relationship: romantic as well as familial. As I learned from my own trials, Kirsteen's hairwork relies upon and develops a set of skills that reward patience and practice, but are also a matter of aptitude and instinct. The attributes she demonstrates in embroidering her hair into handkerchiefs—her distinctively-Douglas red hair, worked with creativity, skill, and devoted labour—are also those she utilises when she enters Miss Jean's establishment. The innovation of using her hair in embroidery foreshadows her working "with much of the genuine enjoyment which attends an artist in all crafts, [Kirsteen] liked to handle and drape the pretty materials and to adapt them to this and that pretty wearer" (*Kirsteen* 197). Touch, careful handling, tension, creativity of composition, and individuation are as much a part of her process for hairwork as for her couture dresses.

The Tozer brooch, which I will turn to first, has similarities with Hunter's wreath, despite being so different in form. It preserves the hairs of only one generation in their youth but, as it is offered to Phoebe by her grandmother, it is a dynastic heirloom nonetheless, created and circulated to affirm and extend family ties. Hunter's wreath and the Tozer brooch feature the hair of many family members, manifest familial affection, and figure continuity. They visualise a connectedness between family members and are intended to be passed down along matrilineal lines. Yet both are forms of hairwork that fell out of fashion well before their bestowal on the next generation. To reiterate a point from Chapter One, gimp work was never popular in Britain to the extent it was in North America and Canada and only entered into American manuals such as C. S. Jones and Henry T. Williams's *Ladies' Fancy Work: Hints and Helps to Home Taste and Recreations* (1876) when hairwork as a whole was on the decline.[9] Similarly, palette work, the most likely form of hairwork in the Tozer brooch, was

[9] Maureen DeLorme writes that hair wreaths and other kinds of framed hairwork were made in Britain but were smaller than their American counterparts, usually less than ten inches tall (149).

popular in the 1840s and 50s and underwent a revival in printed instructions in the early 1870s, but failed to regain fashionable status. It became an outmoded style associated with mawkish sentimentality and mourning culture. As a household ornament and a piece of jewellery respectively, the wreath and the brooch were made to be seen, to be placed or worn prominently, and so come to their intended recipients with the implicit obligation to display them. Their hairs and hairwork forms pose a barrier to their proper disposal, at once irreplaceable in material and discomfiting to their prospective owners on account of design. Hunter's great-niece was able to donate her family wreath and have it reclassified as a historical artefact. It now hangs in Craigdarroch Castle as an illustration of the kinds of decorative handicraft on display in a late nineteenth-century middle-class home. For Phoebe, no such relocation of the brooch is possible. That the brooch offered to her directly by her grandmother is large, ugly, unfashionable, relatively expensive, filled with the Tozers' hair, and that she has little or no knowledge of hairwork as a craft, come together to render her decision to decline it a difficult and delicate matter.

### The Tozer Brooch and its Undesirable Relations

Mrs Tozer wears her hair brooch to greet Phoebe on her arrival in Carlingford. It is a part of her ensemble of lavish accessories, pinning and pulling together all that is layered beneath it:

> Mrs. Tozer had put on her best cap, which was a very gorgeous creation. She had dressed herself as if for a party, with a large brooch, enclosing a curl of various coloured hair cut from the heads of her children in early life, which fastened a large worked collar over a dress of copper-coloured silk, and she rustled and shook a good deal as she came downstairs into the garden to meet her grandchild, with some excitement and sense of the "difference" which could not but be felt on one side as well as on the other. (*Phoebe, Junior* 131-32)

The Tozer brooch exemplifies a family-oriented identity and aesthetic. To welcome her granddaughter, Mrs Tozer wears the fancy (if outdated) clothing that years of shopkeeping have earned, at once demonstrating Tozer wealth and taste. The hair brooch worn prominently at her collar evokes the importance of family to Mrs Tozer: the hairs of her children are both sentimental and decorative. But, with all of these layers of silk and lace and accessories along

with Mrs Tozer's excitement and entrance crammed into one sentence, the excess of her dress stifles the affective import of the brooch. There is a tension between her wearing the brooch as part of an ensemble put together "as if for a party" and its domestic, sentimental associations, which points to some friction between the childhood locks and their large gold mounting. It is designed to be worn as part of a performance of pomp rather than as a personal, intimate possession. Schaffer argues, accordingly, that the brooch embodies monetary interests, despite seeming to symbolise family harmony (*Novel Craft* 151). Indeed, it indicates Mrs Tozer's economic power insofar as its bestowal anticipates the greater financial inheritance that Phoebe has been deployed to Carlingford to secure.

Though Galia Ofek calls the "talismanic" representation of the brooch as "a charmed object" which might gain status for Phoebe an "irrational over-valuation" on the part of Mrs Tozer (50), Mrs Tozer's excitement here, Phoebe's panic when she is offered the brooch, and Mrs Tom's keen desire to have it for her daughter suggest their anticipation of real consequences for its possessor. These consequences are involved, though not exclusively, with the "implicit class transformation" that Phoebe wearing the brooch (once it is offered to her) would entail, as Elizabeth Langland notes, reading it alongside Mrs Tozer's further offerings (of the same style as her dress in this scene): a lace collar, brightly coloured silk dresses, and a pad ("Nobody's Angels" 294). Yet the brooch is materially and affectively different from any other accessory that Mrs Tozer might offer. While the gaudy hair brooch signals lower-middle-class taste, it holds additional and specific relations to hairwork, its history, and the Tozer family—as palette work made several decades ago, possibly by a hairworker, with the hairs of Phoebe's Tozer relatives—which render it incompatible with Phoebe's personal motives and sensibilities.

Zakreski points to Phoebe's sartorial sense and the way her education, money, and taste mean she can dress "as if she were middle class" ("Fashioning the Domestic Novel" 66), the implication being Phoebe's class is, especially when she arrives in Carlingford, no certain or fixed thing. Her identity as the refined daughter of the minister of Crescent Chapel is at odds with her identity (and, more importantly, her being identified as) the granddaughter of the lower-middle-class Tozers. Phoebe's reasoning "even if poor dear grandmama's habits are not refined, which I suppose is what you

mean, mamma, that does not make me unrefined" (*Phoebe, Junior* 119), betrays her anxiety that her visit to Carlingford, and particularly her interactions with her grandparents, might lower rather than affirm or raise her middle-class status. In Mrs Hurst's assumption of Phoebe, "I don't suppose she has any position, being old Tozer's grandchild", this proves to be the case. Phoebe's middle-class dress only indicates to Mrs Hurst "how one may be taken in" by appearances (146). Elsie B. Michie outlines how Phoebe tries to transcend her class through dress, arguing that in representing the gestures that would shut down her attempt (such as Mrs Hurst's snide comments about Phoebe's position), Oliphant at once critiques and reinforces middle-class exclusivity and elevation ("Dressing Up" 306). Michie does not include rejecting the Tozer brooch as part of the trajectory of Phoebe's elevation, but it is a crucial moment in her determination and projection of a middle-class identity—one which must show deference and respect to the older generation, but establish its own character, whether through dress, possessions or behaviour.

The Tozers are, in their own way, however, socially mobile. Their wealth earned in trade has enabled them to gain some standing in Carlingford and to retire to one of the oldest houses in Grange Lane. Their house and its decoration foreshadows the Tozer brooch in being large and costly but, as the finery of a previous owner, time-worn: "the walls continued as [Lady Weston] had left them, painted and papered with faded wreaths, which were apt to look dissipated, as they ought to have been refreshed and renewed years before" (*Phoebe, Junior* 127). The framing of the novel as a return to Carlingford and the last of its chronicles is made manifest in this unchanged wallpaper and with it the idea that the Tozers, while economically mobile, have not sought to reinvent themselves in line with their financial elevation. The brooch in this context, as in its initial appearance amid Mrs Tozer's unfashionable finery, represents the Tozers' aspiring but dated claim to middle-class status and resistance to cultural change. The brooch's many curls and sizeable gold mounting emphasise the family's proliferation and prosperity, like their house in Grange Lane. Yet, the brooch and Mrs Tozer's attachment to it betray a fixation, as in Speight's formulation, on people, a place, and a time gone by: the Tozer children, raised on Carlingford's high street while working as shopkeepers. It betokens a level of wealth, and a desire for material refinement, but also expresses the desire to remain, to settle, to preserve.

In Phoebe Beecham Junior, however, the family's wealth is met with taste, education, and other middle-class sensibilities:

> It is unnecessary to say that her disinterestedness about her grandmother's brooch was not perhaps so noble as it appeared on the outside. The article in question was a kind of small warming-pan in a very fine solid gold mount, set with large pink topazes, and enclosing little wavy curls of hair, one from the head of each young Tozer of the last generation. It was a piece of jewelry very well known in Carlingford, and the panic which rose in Phoebe's bosom when it was offered for her own personal adornment is more easily imagined than described. (172)

The narrator's wry tone indicates the great difference between the affects the brooch elicits in Phoebe and those it is supposed to give rise to and encode. Following Mrs Tozer's heart-centred sensation of excitement when she wears her brooch to greet her granddaughter, Phoebe's panic is correspondingly felt where the brooch would be pinned: on her bosom, as a shadowy but embodied anticipation of its bestowal. Surface and interior, as well as nobility and self-interest, are in tension as much in Phoebe as in the brooch. The comedy of the situation, that this relatively small article holds as much weight for Mrs Tozer as for Phoebe but in very different ways, belies the real conflict between the brooch and its potentially expansive consequence. The capacity of the oxymoronic "small warming-pan" to produce tension resides in its framing hair which is itself highly sentimental and bathetic, precious and beautiful to Mrs Tozer and undesirable and distasteful to Phoebe.

While the brooch implicates class more broadly, its hairwork negotiates close family relationships. Hair is, at first, that which differentiates Phoebe from her relatives. Having "a great deal of the hair of the period", her internal sense of what is current and fashionable corresponds—by "a freak of nature" (55)—with her outward appearance:

> She had a great deal of the hair of the period, nature in her case as, (curiously, yet very truly) in so many others, having lent herself to the prevailing fashion. How it comes about I cannot tell, but it is certain that there does exist at this present moment, a proportion of golden-haired girls which very much exceeds the number we used to see when golden hair had not become fashionable—a freak of nature which is altogether independent of dyes and auriferous fluid, and which probably has influenced fashion unawares. (55)

Even in respect of chance, Phoebe's currency of appearance is ascribed

unconscious power, “influenc[ing] fashion unawares”. Phoebe is part of this proliferation of golden-haired women who have, by being numerous, established the trend. However sardonic the tone of this passage may be, her hair is ascribed the agency to shape fashion, as well as to participate in it. The “little wavy curls of hair” (172) of Phoebe’s aunts and uncles, either lightly worked or arranged in their natural waves, are also anchored in a historical moment. They display a past trend in hairwork as well as preserving the hairs of the donors in their youth (when their shades or textures might, like Phoebe’s, have been in vogue). Yet neither in its inception nor in the moment it is offered to Phoebe is it allowed that the brooch might have any influence on fashion. Rather, it imitates the more common fashions of its time and carries into the present the sense of Carlingford’s localised style as behind the times if this is what is admired and imitated, still, by Mrs Tom in her own “brooch almost as big as that envied one of Mrs. Tozer’s” (173).

Mrs Tom covets the Tozer brooch because she conflates the ostentatious display of wealth with appearing middle class. Its gold and gemstones align with her inclination to “show and vanity” (140), though she recognises, too, its affective and social import within Carlingford. As a gift to Minnie, it would affirm kinship structures within the family—a point Jill Rappoport raises in relation to the tight-knit community gift-giving of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* (1851)—though this form of circulation might close off kinship structures rather than expanding them (*Giving Women* 74). The brooch is caught up in the politics of material and familial inheritance, both an heirloom of the family (which Mrs Tom has, besides, married into and perhaps craves its implicit approval) and a precursor to financial inheritance. Mrs Tozer’s desire for Phoebe to take her brooch is not, then, for the simple pleasure of bestowal.

> “I should like Mrs. Tom to see you with that brooch as she’s always wanting for Minnie. Now why should I give my brooch to Minnie? I don’t see no reason for it, for my part.”
>
> “Certainly not, grandmamma,” said Phoebe, “you must wear your brooches yourself, that is what I like a great deal better than giving them either to Minnie or me.
>
> “Ah, but there ain’t a many like you, my sweet,” cried the old woman wiping her eyes. “You’re my Phoebe’s daughter, but you’re a touch above her, my darling, and us too, that’s what you are.” (*Phoebe, Junior* 171-72)

Phoebe’s politeness and superb social management in declining her

grandmother's offer as a form of flattery prove her ironically worthy of the esteem Mrs Tozer wishes to confer through the brooch. Mrs Tozer wishes for Mrs Tom to see the brooch on Phoebe, suggesting her desire, and its power, to proclaim the matrilineal line of command. Accepting and wearing the brooch would centre Phoebe as the Tozer family's heir apparent, raising the brooch and the Tozers "a touch above" with her. Her refusal is thus an abdication that thwarts the will of the outgoing generation. Its bestowal on Minnie now, after Phoebe's rejection, would affect the brooch's sense of singularity. Phoebe seeks to interrupt this exchange, too, ostensibly denying Minnie precedence as a potential Tozer matriarch. Yet it may equally be a kind of camaraderie that Phoebe saves her cousin the embarrassment of turning the brooch down in turn or, worse, being forced to wear it by her mother.

Phoebe may not be rejecting hairwork per se. The gaudy extravagance and scale of the brooch's other materials—its being "a small warming-pan" of solid gold with "large pink topazes"—could be a factor in Phoebe's disinclination to accept it. Heavy gold mountings and topazes, especially on a brooch, are characteristic of high-Victorian jewellery, a part of its "prevailing richness" (Bradford 28-29). The large bejewelled brooch is obviously and ostentatiously of another decade. This slight anachronism, coupled with the several locks of hair at its centre, means the Tozer brooch commits the same mistake as Mick Hoggarty's hair brooch in William Makepeace Thackeray's *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841). The Hoggarty brooch is composed of a portrait, diamond, and blue enamel and filled with thirteen locks of hair. As Jean Arnold argues, it "merges a number of contemporary styles of jewellery into a cluster of poor taste" (49).

Likewise, if the more hairwork is jewellery the less it is hair, as in Schaffer's formulation (*Novel Craft* 149), then the sentimental associations of the Tozer brooch's childhood locks may be lost beneath the heavy frame. Affect is aestheticised in hairwork, but risks being overshadowed by the introduction of other materials. In other words, if "good" hairwork is first and foremost about the hair woven or enclosed, "bad" hairwork sidelines hair in favour of other components. Gold and gemstones and large, ornate casings have the potential to negate rather than elevate the sentimental associations of the hair with which they are brought into union. As in Speight's comment on hair tucked away in a locket, "valued not for the goldsmith's art which it displays, but for the few hairs

clustering within" (*Lock of Hair* 84), the mounting should be subordinate to the lock it encloses. Though the Tozer brooch is of the kind of palette work Speight champions, the goldsmith's art appears here to be at least as apparent as the hairworker's. The brooch's mounting conveys, too plainly, the hand of a jeweller in its construction. It is not stated whether the locks of hair in the brooch were gathered and worked by Mrs Tozer (or another relative) and placed in the brooch or if the hairs were given to a jeweller to be worked and mounted. This factor matters not because there arises the possibility for substitution and deception if the hairs were handled by a jeweller, as with Mary Grice's hair bracelet in *Hide and Seek*. The few short strands required for small flat designs meant there was less risk of this practice in palette work than in table work.[10] Rather, it is because the already overt fiscal value of the gold brooch becomes all the more stark if its hairwork, too, was part of a paid service.[11]

A hairworker's display case in the Harrogate Museums and Arts Collection is a representative example of early to mid-nineteenth century palette work and could feasibly be akin to the "little wavy curls" (*Phoebe, Junior* 172) arrangement figured in the Tozer brooch (see fig. 5.v). The case holds six worked-up designs in many shades of hair, from white and pale blonde to dark brown. Each composition features flattened half-curls of hair, known as Prince of Wales feathers, with some gold thread and seed pearls. The centre-right design bears five shades of hair stemming from a gathered centre with three thread wheat sheaves to create a bouquet effect. Palette work designs were highly conventional and relatively easy to accomplish. The Prince of Wales feather is the first design for which instructions are given in Speight's *The Lock of Hair* because it is the first an amateur might attempt (88). The display case of designs, though neatly executed, is basic, rudimentary work. So too with the Tozer brooch. The "hair cut from the heads of [Mrs Tozer's] children in early life" (*Phoebe Junior* 132) is, according to Speight's advice, "found more easily worked than that of grown persons" (*Lock of Hair* 121). The Tozer brooch is simple, easy work, lacking in novelty, and unoriginal despite the individuality of its hairs. If the case was made by a hairworker of or nearby Harrogate, it is like

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[10] William Martin, providing instructions for palette work flowers, notes that "Very short hair will do for this beautiful, simple, and easy work" (77).

[11] Of the brooches listed in *C. Olifiers' Album of Ornamental Hair-Work for 1850*, palette work pieces in gold mounts are significantly more expensive than table work pieces with little gold on them, each of the former being around two pounds and ten shillings versus a still sizeable table work brooch to be had for eighteen shillings (3).

the Tozer brooch in being made outside of London (the centre of hairwork manufacture). As explained in Chapter One, there was a perceived divide between town and city hairworkers in expertise, execution and, consequently, reputation. Jane Holdsworth's letter in *Hide and Seek* is once again pertinent as it comments on the bracelet being sent to London owing to the higher quality of the work produced there: "No country jeweller could have done it half as nicely" (216). The design's simplicity supposes a less skilled worker with a clientele of more conventional tastes.[12] The outdated and somewhat crude design of the Tozer brooch may, therefore, encode its provincial manufacture.

Fig. 5.v — Hairworker's display case, nineteenth century (date unknown). HARGM: 64/29.

As well as being well known *in* Carlingford, then, the brooch is patently *of* Carlingford or its environs. The critical implication for Phoebe, as the intended inheritor of the brooch and descendant of its hair donors, is that she too is of

[12] There are no markings on the display case by which to ascertain its provenance. Other items in the Harrogate Museums and Arts Collection were definitely made in London, for example, a Charles Packer hair necklace is in its original box (HARGM: 5009). The three hair bracelets that are very ornately table worked (HARGM: 5006, 5007, 5010) may indicate that the collection holds more hairwork from London or that there was a local hairworker capable of this advanced work and clients nearby who desired greater novelty.

Carlingford. The hairs suggest bodily inheritance and perhaps a discernible likeness between Phoebe and her older relatives. Though her own hair is never described as wavy, Phoebe clearly resembles her mother, the Phoebe senior to her junior, and "very evidently the rose to which this bud would come in time" (*Phoebe, Junior* 56). Her mother's curl in the brooch suggests the inescapability of her family line most vividly. Generations are brought together through this material and visual link between the past and present, through line and likeness. In his preface to *The Hair Worker's Manual* (1852), William Martin asserts "family groupings of hair of the different hues, from 'the cradle to the grave,' may harmoniously blend, as well in the plait as in brooches and lockets" (i). The "cradle to grave" spectrum of shades that might be used supposes a complementarity across, and because of, time while aestheticising the idea of family as a complementary palette of hair as much as a grouping based on affective fellowship.[13] Most multi-strand palette work pieces of the period display hairs in a floral design, like the bouquet formations of hair wreaths, or as an emphatic family tree, which would render explicit the way that Phoebe participates in the brooch's familial display by her relation to its donors. Visually and figuratively, the brooch supposes her own hair to blend with her relatives'. Indeed, Phoebe is used by her grandparents as another kind of accessory for their elevation. She is exhibited by her grandmother with as much family pride as the brooch betokens, taken out "to be made a show of to all the connection, as a specimen of what the Tozer blood could come to" (*Phoebe Junior* 138). The Tozer brooch encodes an idea of the continuity of family likeness and ties to which Phoebe, in her hopeful social mobility, does not wish to subscribe. It is too visible a "link" to the past, is too strongly connected with the Tozer family, and unabashedly aestheticises both in its dated worked hairs.

Still, Phoebe demonstrates that she is capable of finding value in older accessories and recurrent fashions. She happily appropriates the "bit of a rag of an old shawl" (173) she finds amongst her mother's neglected things (an Indian silk which Mrs Tom apprehends only for its age), though this choice is shown to be an exercise in sartorial discrimination. The Tozer brooch is another second-hand piece but, "offered for [Phoebe's] own personal adornment" (172), is not in

[13] There may be some tension in this pretence of harmony, especially in the context of the Tozer brooch, if its purpose is to smooth over affective conflict or difference by appealing to aesthetic complementarity. In other words, hairwork may present a harmonious grouping in spite of its donors' friction.

keeping with the way she selects and appropriates accessories and dress according to her particular aesthetic sensibilities. Carrie Dickinson posits that Phoebe chooses "artifacts she can use to influence those around her", arguing that she uses her shawl to refocus the congregation's attention in the course of one of Northcote's speeches as "a social tool that facilitates community and a sense of higher purpose" (225-26). Though the brooch might likewise be used by Phoebe to gain the favour of her grandparents and, assuming Mrs Tozer's belief in its influence, the congregation of Salem Chapel, it facilitates only the continuance of an existing community since its purpose is preservation rather than progress. Phoebe's refusal of her grandmother's hair brooch in favour of self-selected accessories, then, marks the alternative path she chooses to gain power and eminence. In much the same way, her shirking of Reginald May in favour of Clarence Copperhead is a means of gaining a shadow vocation—she eventually writes the speeches that see her husband through a career in Parliament. Like her decision to marry Clarence, her refusal of the brooch is only objectionable if romance and sentimentality are placed above utility, and these decisions derive from the same motivating factors.[14] The brooch may, indeed, be emblematic of the outmoded forms of familiar marriage, as articulated by Schaffer—cousin, neighbour, or local squire (*Romance's Rival*)—that Phoebe bypasses for a marriage of vocation and social elevation. In offering the brooch filled with the Tozer children's hair, Mrs Tozer makes an assumption of and places pressure on Phoebe's marital prospects—that Phoebe will proudly bear her Tozer heritage, make a marriage of the same class, continue the family line, and pass the brooch down to a daughter in turn. Phoebe's rejection of the Tozer brooch is, thus, part and parcel of her placing personal social and economic ambitions above those her grandmother assumes to be her lot. As when Phoebe states to Northcote that "to keep everybody down to the condition they were born, why, that is the old way" (*Phoebe Junior* 166), in the Tozer brooch Phoebe rejects class loyalty and the display of deference to a past generation for the mere sake of tradition. That the brooch is made to bear this much argumentative weight reflects the accretion of meaning in its hairwork on both specific, personal and broader, cultural levels, especially at

[14] In *Romance's Rival* (2016), Schaffer defends Phoebe's vocational marriage to Clarence, noting that modern readers tend to side with the romantic suitor (in this case Reginald) who offers qualities we have come to prize—erotic love, passion, escape, a new family or social circle—and can feel discontented with the heroines of novels by writers like Oliphant for their familiar, and thereby unexciting, marital choices.

this point in the historical trajectory of hairwork. Phoebe's decision to decline the brooch is not only owing to her relationship with the Tozer family, sense of class, and social aspirations, but also her lack of experience and knowledge of hairwork and wider handicraft culture.

### *Phoebe, Junior* and the Decline of Hairwork

Phoebe's attitude may be understood more sympathetically in light of her spatial, temporal, and experiential distance from the brooch's making. Phoebe has no hand in the process that renders Kirsteen's self-made hairwork, by comparison, so personally valuable. She has neither cultivated a relationship with its donors (her Carlingford-based aunts and uncles), decided a design, nor invested the time and skill to make it. Further still, Phoebe is offered an article likely made by a jeweller of Carlingford many years ago. The worked hairs of the Tozer brooch may *not* encode the touch, care, dedicated time, and skill of Phoebe's relatives if they preserve instead a transaction that framed them thus. If Mrs Tozer did not work the hairs in the brooch, she offers Phoebe hairwork without the skills to make it in turn. It follows that Phoebe finds it more difficult to connect with the particularities that, as I found in my own practice, are so important to the affective import of hairwork. Just as hairwork became less appreciated as the skill became more obscure, a reason for Phoebe's lack of enthusiasm for the brooch is her lack of engagement with the craft.

The activity of hairwork is entirely missing in *Phoebe, Junior*, and is a conspicuous absence when compared to the other novels I have explored thus far: *Wuthering Heights, Villette,* and *Hide and Seek* all feature some representation of or reference to the process of hairwork. This omission of the labour of working hair in the presence of its product indicates Phoebe's disconnection from the craft. Even disregarding the intervention of a jeweller, the geographical displacement of the Beechams from the Tozers—initially, Phoebe's mother's move from Carlingford to London—has created a displacement of the kinds of handicrafts and skills that were, like gimp work, more easily passed down from older to younger generations in person. Mrs Tozer's comment as Phoebe comes downstairs from dressing after rejecting the brooch, that "I'd dress you different, my dear, if you was in my hands" (*Phoebe, Junior* 173), makes clear her will to pass on her style, if not her skills. The

consequences are still more evident for Ursula May who, having lost her mother at a young age, is at a greater remove from the feminine handicrafts of the previous generation. She brings out some wax flowers to decorate the table in the family library which are "a production of thirty years since" (273) and seems unable or unwilling to disassemble and work something new from her materials. Ursula only mends and darns stockings (307), never practising fancywork. Since, as Schaffer notes, no one in the novel actually makes handicrafts (*Novel Craft* 146), it is reasonable to assume that a great many lack the skillset. Though Phoebe demonstrates her capacity to learn and engage with certain aspects of dress through her reading—in her immediate family, knowledge passes upward from child to mother, as Phoebe requests "let me read with you now and then, about the theory of colours, for instance" (*Phoebe, Junior* 56)—the presence of hairwork in print began to dwindle in the 1870s. Without an advocate or teacher of the craft, Phoebe's rejection of the brooch reflects her ignorance of hairwork as much as her knowledge of current fashions.

A return to the later material of Chapter One helps to contextualise and explain Phoebe's apparent distaste for hairwork. After Speight's *The Lock of Hair* in 1871 (which only gives directions for palette work in predominantly floral designs), there were no further dedicated guides to hairwork printed in Britain. Compendiums of crafts and domestic arts, such as Robert Kemp Philp's *The Lady's Every-Day Book* (1875; reprinted 1880), occasionally featured commentary on and instructions for hairwork, but presented it as just one branch of craft that might be attempted for the skills it employs and develops. Even before its decline, *Elegant Arts for Ladies* (1856) reasons that hairwork requires "Patience, lightness of hand, good eye-sight, and some knowledge of the principles of drawing" and rewards "practice, judgment, and perseverance" (13), rather than emphasising its then-fashionable end result.[15] Moreover, Philp's book, in guiding its readers in how "To Work Devices in Hair",

[15] Speight often comments on the transferable skills of hairwork, noting in accordance with *Elegant Arts for Ladies* that for more elaborate palette work "a slight knowledge of drawing becomes useful" (*Lock of Hair* 112). Alfred M. Sutton, reprinting Speight's instructions, reasons that "the young boardworker may elect to spend some spare moments in this pleasing and attractive work, which cannot fail to extend his knowledge and render him a more deft and careful workman" (198).

reproduces sections from *Elegant Arts for Ladies*.[16] The replication of guidance on hairwork from two decades earlier may simply be part of the compiling of existing material into a larger compendium. Yet its implication, especially in the context of the decline of hairwork in the 1870s, is of an attempted recuperation, a recirculation of the skills and knowledge needed for the craft in order to revive it before it falls into obscurity. Equally, the reprinting of old instructions for hairwork suggest it to be no longer evolving, as it was in preceding decades, and to have come to an end. There are no new developments, no novel techniques or designs, to divulge. There was some replication of material in hairwork manuals and articles across the century, especially from British to American sources owing to transatlantic scissors-and-paste journalism.[17] Stuart Blersch cites an American publication, *Hair Ornaments for Souvenirs and Jewelry* (n.d.), which borrows phrases from Speight's *The Lock of Hair:* "When we think of the imperishable nature of human hair…" (Blersch 7). If Speight's book was circulating around the same time as *Hair Ornaments,* as according to Blersch's estimation, this not only constitutes another transatlantic duplication of material but, more importantly, demonstrates a stagnation in invention after Speight's work (which only revamps the palette work styles of two decades since).[18] Hairwork, alongside guidance on making it, seemed to proliferate in the 1870s when it was actually a case of repackaging.[19]

The replication of hairwork material compounds criticism levelled at fancywork earlier in the century. As Zakreski explains, though certain kinds of fancywork such as embroidery were by the 1870s coming to be appreciated as creative and artistic endeavours (*Representing Female Artistic Labour* 22),

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[16] *Elegant Arts for Ladies* itself replicates a few sentences from *The Family Friend* (edited by Philp) from three years earlier, most notably the imperative: "Why should we confide to others the precious lock or tress we prize, risking its being lost, and the hair of some other person being substituted for it, when, with a little attention, we may ourselves weave it into the ornament we desire?" (*Elegant Arts* 3-4; Philp 55). The same section was used again in an article on "Parlour Occupations" in *The Sixpenny Magazine* in 1864.

[17] For a discussion of scissors-and-paste journalism, see Stephan Pigeon, "Steal it, Change it, Print it: Transatlantic Scissors-and-Paste Journalism in the *Ladies' Treasury*, 1857-1895" (2017).

[18] The second part of Speight's book was republished again in the U.S. as *Hair Ornaments: The Art of Working in Hair* by the National Artistic Hairwork Company (1887).

[19] Some later sources are explicit about their reprinting of earlier material and frame their instructions as a deliberate attempt to keep the craft alive. Alfred M. Sutton's *Boardwork* (1903), itself a revised and rewritten version of Edwin Creer's *Board-Work* (1887; hence Sutton's work being published and prefaced as the "second edition"), features an appendix on "The Art of Working in Hair—Flowers and Devices in Hair" which is present, still, in the 1921 edition. The appendix is yet another abridged reprinting of Speight, omitting the long history of hair and skipping straight to palette work (199).

twenty years earlier they were deemed an industrial rather than a fine art. As an 1856 article in *The Art Journal* puts it, the value of fancywork lay in its display of "manual dexterity" rather than originality ("A Novelty in Fancy-Work" 139). Any claim the Tozer brooch may make to creative expression is contested as a feminine and therefore mimetic form of craft with little that is new or imaginative in its design even at the time of its making. The judgement that in fancywork "the frequent repetition of a favourite design" is happily indulged and that "the workmanship is too frequently admired, while the very name of the designer is forgotten" ("A Novelty in Fancy-Work" 139) weighs even more heavily on hairwork and the Tozer brooch because the novelty of their heyday has passed. That Mrs Tozer asks her granddaughter to wear a hair brooch made years earlier, and likely not one of her devising or making, makes clear the stagnation of the craft at a point of recirculation without reinvention.

There is nothing in the brooch that Phoebe might reclaim even were she to disassemble and repurpose its components. The brooch is not fit for disassembly. Unlike table work which can be drizzled, unwoven, and refashioned, as with Mary Grice's hair bracelet in *Hide and Seek*, palette work is difficult to take apart and rework. If the hairs have been glued or gummed to a surface (as is almost certainly the case for an arrangement of several locks of hair), pulling them up may damage them and, besides cutting the strips of hair and using them in a collage composition, will not yield many new possibilities. If they have been pressed into the compartment of a brooch without glue, the hairs are equally likely to be too short or sparse for use in other articles. Some styles of hairwork, by contrast, were made with elaboration and expansion in mind, such as gimp work wreaths like Hunter's, which were arranged in an open horseshoe formation so that younger family members might add their hair later, with closed circular forms more often denoting a mourning piece (DeLorme 160). The Tozer brooch displays the family through one generation only as neatly composed, framed, and closed off. Even though it is offered to younger relatives, the brooch denies them any potential for participation in its practical and metaphoric construction. It is compromised with regard to fashion, too, in its unfitness for alteration or addition. Madeleine C. Seys notes the two meanings of fashion, as a popular mode and as the process of making and shaping: "Fashionable, then, refers to the quality of being stylish or in fashion, and to the capacity to be shaped or moulded" (5). To be truly fashionable is to be capable

of change in response to shifting values and emerging patterns to maintain currency (5), and so the Tozer brooch fails individually, as well as realising a failure of hairwork more widely. It does not allow for, as Zakreski terms it, "the constructive potential of cutting apart" with which the novel, as much as Phoebe, is concerned ("Fashioning the Domestic Novel" 57). The Tozer brooch is destined for disuse because it leaves no room for reinvention.

In *Kirsteen*, the continuity of time and family ties is likewise figured in the hair-embroidered handkerchiefs that Kirsteen works for her brother at the opening of the novel. Kirsteen evinces an expectation for the future and the realisation of conjugal ties in allowing one to go to her suitor as a kind of betrothal token. Hairwork here is not, as with the Tozer brooch, a product of temporally, spatially, and culturally distant relatives, circulated to preserve the past and established kinships, but a newly wrought means of anchoring Kirsteen, according to her desires, in her identity as a daughter of Drumcarro and future wife of Drummond. She clings to the social and affective connections of hairwork that Phoebe shirks. For Kirsteen, it is less that the past is brought to bear on the present, than that an anticipated future impresses itself on the ongoing present through the handkerchief taken by Ronald. It instigates change and shapes an individual sense of self for Kirsteen in a way that the Tozer brooch never could for Phoebe.

### Kirsteen's Hairwork Handkerchiefs: Embroidering Identity

Though *Kirsteen* was published fourteen years after *Phoebe, Junior*, the two novels present something like a before and after picture either side of hairwork's heyday. Maureen DeLorme notes the rarity of hair embroidery in memorial art despite its being an earlier form of hairwork (154) while, in her study of American hairwork, Helen Sheumaker passes swiftly over the topic because it would most likely have been made at home by the amateur, without instruction, and before the rise of palette and table work hair jewellery in the mid-nineteenth century (*Love Entwined* 2). Several museums hold exquisite examples of hair embroidery made by professional hairworkers, yet many that have survived are earlier artefacts that speak more of a culture of domestic

needlework than hairwork.[20] Two representative examples of late-Georgian domestic hair embroidery are a muslin apron in the V&A, which has “S.W.” and “1774” embroidered in hair in the top left corner of the garment (VAM: T. 105-1961), and an 1809 sampler made by Eliza Yates, completed at her school in Leicestershire, is similarly signed and dated—“Eliza Yates aged 9 / years, done at / Sileby School 1809”—and stitched entirely in black hair (Lutz, *Brontë Cabinet* 45). These pieces were embroidered at either end of the late eighteenth-century fashion for mourning jewellery set with hair, and before technologies and techniques for table work came to Britain. They are positioned at a point in time when hair was commonly used as a material of sentimental expression but when hairwork was as yet merely an extension of other feminine skills and domestic projects. As with hair jewellery, hair embroidery derives additional figurative and affective meaning from its design. In their hair-embroidered names and dates, these items suggest a desire to personalise, memorialise, and work one’s own body into the material while representing one’s identity in an aesthetic form. But while both involve laborious and repetitious processes of preparing, smoothing, threading, crossing over, tying, and otherwise working the hair, the craft of hair embroidery, as a branch of needlework, has more explicit associations with domestic economy and feminine forms of labour. Hair embroidery may denote thrift and resourcefulness, the material used because of the expense or scarcity of thread.[21] Hair has been used in embroidery by prison inmates for hundreds of years for this reason.[22] In decorating and documenting the identity of the worker, these signed and dated hair embroideries are modest but powerful

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[20] The Great Exhibition Catalogue lists a portrait of the Prince of Wales in hair by Hanssen and de Koning [sic] (Ellis 694), an embroidery of Milton in hair by Franc Heinrich Otto (1145), and a portrait of Queen Victoria in hair by Lemonnier & Co. (1223). None of these appear to have survived, but the V&A does hold a 1790 portrait of Rubens in hair made by Charlotte Elizabeth Munn (VAM: 1084-1884).

[21] A framed hair embroidery of a pastoral scene made by Agnes Swante Palm comes with the note “embroidered during the civil war when wool was scarce” (HRC: Framed embroidery in human hair on satin, with original wood frame). Agnes and her husband were Swedish immigrants to Texas, and this piece, depicting an idyllic pasture with cattle grazing and someone fishing by a lake, speaks to national as well as family identity and tradition, using a material and technique customary in Sweden to envision peace and plenty in a time of war.

[22] Lady Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox, worked her hair into *point tresse* (hair lace) while imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1574 (Earnshaw 77). Anna Maria Radcliffe, Countess of Derwentwater, embroidered a bed sheet with her and her husband’s hair after his beheading on Tower Hill in 1716 (Handley 173-74). The City of London Police Museum holds a pin-cushion embroidered by Annie Parker in her own hair in 1879 while she was imprisoned on charges of drunkenness.

reminders of feminine domestic work: a sampler, a schoolgirl's lesson to learn the basic skills of needlework; an apron, an outer-garment worn in the course of daily domestic duties to protect other, better clothing.

The handkerchiefs embroidered with hair in *Kirsteen* are, accordingly, products of domestic economy and affection. With a father who complains at the smallest expense, and a mother who bemoans her daughter leaving her side to visit the haberdasher, Kirsteen's decision to initial her brother's handkerchiefs with her hair is thrifty and sentimental. Her resourceful means of embroidery foreshadows her later work as a seamstress, applying herself "to the invention of pretty confections and modifications of the fashions" (*Kirsteen* 197), while the handkerchief itself holds historical connotations of sentiment and affect. Handkerchiefs were, in the nineteenth century, a commonplace accessory put to many uses.[23] Graeme Tytler notes some of the ways handkerchiefs are used in *Wuthering Heights*: to hang Isabella's dog from a bridle hook; to bandage a cut on Isabella's neck; to seal Linton's letters to Cathy (243). The "white cambric" (*Kirsteen* 26) of which Kirsteen's handkerchiefs are made, however, marks them as sentimental tokens even before she embroiders them with her hair. Jane Taylor writes that "The handkerchief, particularly if it was made of cambric, a linen produced in Chambray, Flanders, was closely associated with sentimental fashions", especially when given as a gift (477). In the eighteenth century, the cambric handkerchief, Jennie Batchelor states, was "perhaps the most resonant icon of sentimental exchange" and one that latterly became the subject of satire (156).[24] Margaret Delacour's exclamation in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), "'O, how I hate the cambrick-handkerchief sensibility, that is brought out only to weep at a tragedy!'" (229), alludes to the fashionable performance of sensibility associated with handkerchiefs (and hair comes into play, too, when it is assumed that Clarence Hervey is romantically attached because a lock of hair falls from a letter in his pocket). Oliphant picks up on this

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[23] Cambric handkerchiefs are mentioned in many of the texts discussed in this thesis: in *Villette*, Paulina Home embroiders a shred of cambric handkerchief to practice, while Ginevra Fanshawe embroiders her handkerchiefs because she is unable to afford ready-worked ones; in *Wuthering Heights*, Edgar Linton wipes himself with his cambric handkerchief after being hit with a tureen of hot apple sauce by Heathcliff; in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Eliza Millward works a cambric and lace handkerchief as she gossips about Mrs Graham; in *Hide and Seek*, a monogrammed cambric handkerchief is found in Mary Grice's pocket along with the hair bracelet; in *The Woman in White*, Mr Fairlie uses a delicate cambric handkerchief to polish a magnifying glass.

[24] Batchelor identifies the tearful exchange of Yorick's handkerchief in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) as a source for later parodies.

self-conscious behaviour in *Hester* (1883), when the eponymous heroine is angered by "her mother's foolish little pantomime" on their first ride out with Lady Catherine: "She became tearful, and fell away altogether into her pocket-handkerchief at almost every turn of the road, saying, 'Ah, how well I remember!' then emerged again from the cambric cloud, and cheered up again till the next turn came" (61).[25] Yet Oliphant does, as Valerie Sanders contends, distinguish between melodramatic, self-conscious, and profoundly felt emotion in her characters, and it is the latter which Kirsteen demonstrates in her private and muted return of affection to Ronald (187). Kirsteen may embroider cambric handkerchiefs, but she is not presented as belonging to a tradition of overwrought sentiment and its exaggerated display.

Kirsteen's handkerchiefs, then, already hold several figurative tensions in their fabric even before she works them with her hair. They are ambivalent items of interior feeling and its external performance with equal potential for authentic and inauthentic expression, which could mean some uncertainty for their recipient when given as gifts. Taylor argues that Jane Austen was able to diminish the connection with superficiality in her gift of a cambric handkerchief to her friend, Catherine Bigg, by enhancing its authenticity and individuality with an accompanying poem of her own composition. Though periodicals of the period "attest to the increasing association between fashionable affectation and the cambric handkerchief in the early 1800s" (J. Taylor 484), Austen's gift gained affective power through the invocation of speech and touch together and their aestheticisation in the forms of handkerchief and poem (478, 480). The same transformation can be seen in Kirsteen's delicate embroidery of Robbie's initials upon the handkerchiefs in her hair, a personalisation so subtle that the primary function of denoting to whom the handkerchief belongs becomes secondary to the affect encoded. The one handkerchief taken by Ronald, while seeming to contradict the individuality of the set because the initials are shared by Robbie and Ronald, is equally re-personalised through the private verbal exchange between Ronald and Kirsteen, much like Austen's additionally (textually) narrated exchange. Moreover, Kirsteen's worked hair holds deeply

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[25] In *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866), Lucilla frequently exaggerates her grief over her mother's death using her cambric handkerchief, which has been embroidered with forget-me-nots and thistles by Rose Lake: "Lucilla wept and stifled her tears in her handkerchief, with a warmer flood of vexation and disappointment than even her natural grief had produced" (32); "'I cannot help if it has a little effect on my spirits now and then,' said Miss Marjoribanks, looking down upon her handkerchief, 'to be always surrounded with things that have such associations—— '" (66).

personal but distinct significance for the two recipients. It betokens sisterly affection for Robbie and romantic intimacy and fidelity for Ronald. The capacity of the handkerchief to encode a secret secondary meaning for Ronald shows it to remain a contingent vehicle for affect, while its hair secures it against any claim of feigned sentiment. What Kirsteen's hair achieves for the cambric handkerchiefs, as with Austen's accompanying poem, is a materialisation of the qualities to which they aspire. Kirsteen's hair, carefully and lovingly worked into the fabric, emphasises and aestheticises the authenticity and deeply felt affect of her parting gifts.

The time at which the novel is set—its opening scene is between May 1814 and February 1815 at a point of dwindling fortune for the Douglas family—offers a more specific resonance between Kirsteen's cambric and her Scottish identity. The fine linen industry in Scotland, concentrated in the west, was at its height in the 1770s and 80s (accounting for one fifth of the value of linen in Scotland at the time) but, with the advent of cotton, had by the turn of the nineteenth century almost entirely ceased (Durie 173, 183). A mere one hundred and seventy yards of cambric was made in Scotland between 1818 and 1822 (Durie 183). Kirsteen works her (likely French) cambric handkerchiefs following the decline of Scottish cambric, adding a sense of national loss to the personal sentiments they encode. But in so doing, she underscores the significance of embroidering using her red hair.

Just as cambric is, at this time, a product and signifier of French manufacturing, so Kirsteen's red hair is a mark of her Scottishness and specifically of her Argyle ancestry.[26] Red hair, though rare, is more common in Scotland than anywhere else in the world.[27] Hector MacLean, writing in 1866, notes that Tacitus describes the Caledonians as a red-haired people, reasoning that "[t]he considerable proportion of red hair that abounded among this people produced a strong impression on the Romans, and led them to conclude that a prominent characteristic was a universal one" (209). Because it is "supposed that the people of Argyle, Galloway, and Ayrshire are the descendants of the

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[26] In *Villette*, Count de Bassompierre insults Graham for his Scottish lineage and "red" hair: "John Graham, you descended partly from a Highlander and a chief, and there is a trace of the Celt in all you look, speak, and think. […] The red—(Well then, Polly, the *fair*) hair, the tongue of guile, and brain of wile, are all come down by inheritance" (445, original emphasis).

[27] The relative rarity of red hair is played upon in a plot to trick red-headed Jabez Wilson into vacating his pawn shop for set periods in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Red-Headed League" (1891).

Irish Scots" (214), Kirsteen's red hair carries a further resonance beyond this stereotype of Scottishness, her red hair speaking to her more remote ancestry (in both the temporal and geographic senses).[28] With the youngest of the Drumcarro boys, Jock and Jamie, red-heads too, the family's historical and present sense of identity is carried by their distinctive red hair.[29] Kirsteen's hairwork is more striking still if her community is conceived of, as Arlene Young posits, as not just part of a domestic economy but a national and imperial one, designed to support Robbie as he sets out to join his regiment in India (42). Locks of hair and hairwork were typical mementos passed between family members travelling from Britain to India.[30] As Margot C. Finn writes, gifts of this kind "[alert] us to a series of associations among gift-giving, gentility, sociability, memory and family that underpinned British imperial expansion in later eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century India", and were a part of how families "established and maintained social and political relations across distance and time in the Romantic era" (204). Kirsteen's red hair, so firmly and richly associated with the Drumcarro family line, becomes a token which symbolises Robbie's allegiance to his country as well as Ronald's loyalty to Kirsteen.[31]

The novel's early nineteenth-century setting carries another implication for Kirsteen's red hair in relation to feminine beauty. Her unkind nickname at Miss Jean's of "Miss Carrots" is noted by the narrator as a peculiarity of the period, with Kirsteen and the seamstresses "little foreseeing a time to come when red

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[28] William Makepeace Thackeray's *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841) brings out the Irish associations of red hair through Mick Hoggarty's hair brooch: "this is the great jew'l of all Ireland […] These thirteen sthreamers [sic] of red hair represent his thirteen celebrated sisters,— Biddy, Minny, Thedy, Widdy (short for Williamina), Freddy, Izzy, Tizzy, Mysie, Grizzy, Polly, Dolly, Nell, and Bell—all mar'ied, all ugly, and all carr'ty hair" (25-26).

[29] Though I do not think *Kirsteen* draws on them, red hair also had negative associations in the nineteenth century. Havelock Ellis, in "Anomalies of the Hair" in *The Criminal* (1890), discusses the proportions of red-headed criminals and insane asylum inmates, supposing a correlation between bright red hair and criminal tendencies (76-78). Joanna Bourke explains that in physiognomical theories such as Ellis's, "[t]he body itself was the index of interior states and dispositions" and traits such as susceptibility to particular diseases were seen as a "mark of degeneracy" (424). Christopher Ricks discusses the prejudice against red-haired people as dangerous, libidinous, and potentially criminal in "A. E. Housman and 'The Colour of His Hair'" (1997).

[30] Margot C. Finn notes a number of examples, such as that Lady Anne Russell, on dispatching her third son to join his father and brothers in India in 1808, gave him three brooches containing "the hair of each individual of our family now in England" (211).

[31] Locks of hair were also exchanged between lovers before departure for war. The poem "Only a Tress of Hair" by H. F., published in *The Illustrated Household Journal and Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in 1880, portrays a man "vow[ing] to be constant" (line 4) by taking "Only a tress of hair" (line 5) from his sweetheart: "He dreams as he lies on the Indian plains,— / Of her, and their parting that day by the river" (lines 7-8).

hair should be the admiration of the world" (*Kirsteen* 195). Kirsteen's red curly hair associates her to some degree with the Pre-Raphaelite "stunners" of the mid- to late century, especially as it is not only red but "so abundant and so vigorous and full of curl" (23). Yet this is an aesthetic that goes unappreciated in her youth—"there were many who liked her looks in spite of her red hair" (23)—but then comes into vogue and is more or less passé by the novel's publication in 1890, mirroring the trajectory of hairwork.[32] Unlike Phoebe Beecham's golden "hair of the period" (*Phoebe Junior* 55), which marks her currency (and underscores her separation from an outmoded hair brooch), Kirsteen's red hair serves to historicise her craft. Still, *Kirsteen* portrays as desires many of the anxieties that *Phoebe, Junior* raises in its representation of hairwork as a signifier of a generational divide. While *Phoebe, Junior* portrays the disjunction between older and younger generations through hairwork, emphasising that this difference is in part the result of disparate geographies and class sensibilities, *Kirsteen* extends and excuses the temporal disjunction that arises with hairwork in making it an integral part of the text. The novel recognises hairwork as part of an antiquated culture of fancywork and sentimentality on an extradiegetic level in narratorial asides that frame the story as historical event and maintain that "every fashion is beautiful to its time" (*Kirsteen* 197). In other words, what is mildly anachronistic for *Phoebe, Junior* appears as a historicising detail in *Kirsteen.* It is because it was once ubiquitous before becoming passé that hairwork helps to illustrate a bygone era in, to quote the novel's full title, *Kirsteen: A Story of a Scotch Family Seventy Years Ago*.

Kirsteen's hair-embroidered handkerchiefs are thus an assertion of her identity and fidelity on personal, familial, and national levels. On the personal level, she demonstrates her feelings for Ronald in allowing him a handkerchief and makes a promise to wait for him as his future wife; on the familial, she works a set of leaving gifts for Robbie and shows her affection as sister; and on the national, she sends out into the wider world (via Robbie and Ronald as they travel to India) a small token of her red hair, a subtle and private sign of her family and its endurance in spite of temporal or geographic distance. In accordance with Speight's advocacy for "these links which connect us with the

[32] "A Flower in Her Hair" (1968), an American short story by Pauline C. Smith, portrays an anachronistic and disturbing admiration for red hair and gimp work when the protagonist's elderly aunt murders her so that she can add her red hair into the family's hair mourning wreath in the form of a poppy.

past" (*Lock of Hair* 83), Kirsteen's hairwork is also tangibly caught up with her personal history and remembrance, and is shown to be a form which is less concerned with changing fashions and resists the claims of the present and its ongoing and shifting alliances. Hairwork becomes for Kirsteen a structuring mechanism, an artefact that secures a particular time, place, kinship, and affective network against an uncertain future.

### Time, Ties, and Ronald's Interruption

As Kirsteen sits embroidering the handkerchiefs for Robbie on his last evening at home, with therefore a sense of occasion in the act of embroidering as much as in the gifts themselves, there arises a tension in the family and community they are intended to bring together:

> She carried her work to the window and sat down there with the white handkerchiefs in her hand.
>
> "And what colour will you mark them in, Kirsteen? You have neither cotton nor silk to do it."
>
> Kirsteen raised her head and pulled out a long thread of her red hair. "I am going to do it in this colour," she said with a slight blush and smile. It was not an unusual little piece of sentimentality in those days, and the mother accepted it calmly.
>
> "My colour of hair," she said, smoothing with a little complaisance her scanty dark locks under her cap, "was more fit for that than yours, Kirsteen, but Robbie will like to have it all the same."
>
> Kirsteen laughed a little consciously while she proceeded with her work. She was quite willing to allow that a thread of her mother's dark hair would be better. "I will do one with yours for Robbie," she said, "and the rest with mine."
>
> "But they're all for Robbie," said the mother. (*Kirsteen* 25)

Oliphant creates a sense of community around sewing, argues Christine Bayles Kortsch, in having the female members of the Douglas household constantly attending to their plain work: knitting, mending, fetching work and wool for one another or being sent out for materials (107). Yet, if such a community exists, Kirsteen undermines its cohesion in this opening scene of the novel in creating a piece of fancywork that is intensely personal and private. Though Kirsteen embroiders these handkerchiefs as a part of an established family tradition, preparing mementos of home before each son of Drumcarro sets out into the world, doing so with her hair turns broadly familial tokens into highly individual ones. Her mother offers her hair for the embroidery since the work is for her son

but Kirsteen is evasive, intending a handkerchief worked with her own hair for Ronald Drummond, a man outside the family circle. In this way Kirsteen applies her "dual literacy" in textiles and text, in Kortsch's terms (110), to covertly communicate a personal desire, hidden amongst half a dozen identical initialled tokens. As with the hair brooch of *Phoebe, Junior*, diverting one of these handkerchiefs from its intended recipient creates a fissure in the household, hindering the gift's ostensible purpose: to manifest and engender family unity.

Kirsteen carries her work to the window, to the margins of the parlour away from her mother, as the scene is reconfigured as a breaking up of the household. She edges closer to a threshold of domestic space, suggesting her eventual exit and escape from Drumcarro and underscoring the way the evening of sewing sets her apart from rather than drawing her into her female community. Ronald's entrance, as he comes between Kirsteen and her mother and blocks the light from the window, enlarges the fissure that is already starting to show with Robbie's imminent departure.

> He came and stood over Kirsteen as she drew closer and closer to the window to end her work before the light had gone.
>
> "You are working it with your hair!" he said, suddenly, perceiving the nature of the long curling thread with which she threaded her needle.
>
> "Yes," she said, demurely, holding up her work to the light. "What did you think it was?"
>
> "I thought it was gold thread," he said. And then he took up one of the handkerchiefs already completed from the table. "R. D.," he said, "that's my name too."
>
> […] He had taken one of the handkerchiefs from the pile, and touching her sleeve with one hand to call her attention, put the little glistening letters to his lips and then placed the handkerchief carefully in the breast pocket of his coat. Standing as he did, shutting out, as she complained, all the light from Mrs Douglas, this little action was quite unseen, except by the one person who was intended to see it. Kirsteen could make no reply nor objection, for her heart was too full for speech. Her trembling hand, arrested in its work, dropped into his for a moment. (*Kirsteen* 27)

There is interruption on several levels in this exchange, which serves to single out *this* handkerchief from the set Kirsteen embroiders. Ronald physically interrupts Kirsteen at her work in order to disrupt the passing of a memento from sister to brother. The handkerchief taken by Ronald that leaves Robbie with only five is a pause in the line of production, a piece missing from Robbie's bundle and, in Ronald's taking it on Robbie's last evening at home, an interruption in the pattern of proceedings. Kirsteen's needlework is, moreover, a

process that fills and anticipates continual interruptions. Maria Damkjaer argues for domestic needlework as a metaphor for interrupted time. Because women's time in the home was a "nebulous mix of work and leisure" (61), the spare moment, the time left over from constant interruptions, became the time in which needlework could be taken up and, if needed, abandoned once again for more pressing work. It is a task to be picked up and put down, to fill an amorphous, shifting amount of free time or one that must be pursued to the end, running into the evening, occupying time beyond the more certain and demarcated hours set for other kinds of work. Ronald's interruption of Kirsteen at her embroidery, "touching her sleeve with one hand to call her attention", discreetly affirms his love but places additional pressure on her task of completing the set of handkerchiefs in time for Robbie's departure, as she hastens "to end her work before the light had gone" (*Kirsteen* 27). Kirsteen's employment as a seamstress later in the novel, sometimes "up the whole night never flagging" (258-59) to finish an order, develops this original scene and heralds one further interruption. It is while sat sewing at Miss Jean's establishment that Kirsteen receives the news of Ronald's death. Like the first emotionally-charged interruption, Kirsteen is stunned, pausing in her work a moment to listen and relaxing her hand. This time, however, Ronald is not the active, virile agent who intervenes but is reduced to a name in a newspaper story, a pathetic, distant, and dead figure. Kirsteen's work falls from her lap to the floor, rather than her hand dropping from her work into Ronald's, and it is not her embroidered hair which "upon the white cambric" shines red "like a thread of gold" (26) but "the warm tint of her hair exaggerating, if that were possible, the awful whiteness" of her face (263). These two interruptions, the second arresting her hand at work as with the first, effectively open and close the possibility of Kirsteen and Ronald's marriage. The interruption of sewing punctuates time and becomes, therefore, productive. It facilitates the brief and understated interludes of Kirsteen and Ronald's romantic trajectory, from beginning to untimely end.

The duration of sewing also has implications for the exchange between Kirsteen and Ronald, though these points relate to Robbie and his handkerchiefs too. Because Kirsteen's hairwork is a form of needlework, its temporality is twofold. There is the time given to the process of embroidering the handkerchiefs and the material, her hair, which signifies time in a more complex

way. Aislinn Hunter describes hair cut for mementos as evoking “abiding time”, by which she means it carries “ideas of lingering, remaining, expectation, encounter, dwelling, persisting, and continued existence” (144). It not only constitutes the past—the moment it was cut, worked or given—but also the present and future, in that it supposes spatial and affective dimensions to time, a desire for the possessor to dwell upon the hair and for the donor to dwell through the hair. Kirsteen’s embroidering with her hair represents the constancy of her love (familial or romantic, according to the recipient) through its capacity to endure. The process of embroidery denotes Kirsteen’s ability to wait patiently for Robbie and Ronald’s return, while her doing so with her hair is a sign that she will wait and remain unchanged in her affections for both men. Kirsteen demonstrates, then, her capacity to remain and to remember as well as her mode of waiting. As is said of Robbie, albeit to placate his despondent mother, “when we’re sitting some day working our stockings he’ll come linking in by the parlour door” (*Kirsteen* 31).

The codification of passing time as needlework is so pervasive that it comes to shape the way Kirsteen thinks about her promise to Ronald. As Wendy Jones notes, there is a clear overlap between the two narrative threads of the story, or of Kirsteen’s present and imagined future life, as she waits for Ronald’s return from India (the courtship plot) while working and gaining success as a seamstress (the hero’s progress) (178). The way this overlap is imagined in sartorial terms owes its metaphoric weight to Kirsteen’s hair embroidery. Because Kirsteen sitting and working her handkerchiefs facilitates the culmination of courtship, her secret promise to “wait” for Ronald, the two intersect in her memory as needlework becomes a form of re-enactment of that moment and promise.

> Kirsteen thought it all over again and again. He seemed to stand by her side bending a little over her with a look half smile, half tears in his eyes; and she was aware again of the flash of the sweet discovery, the gold thread of the little letters put to his lips, and then the question, “Will ye wait?” Wait! For a hundred years, for all the unfathomed depths of life, through long absence and silence, each invisible to the other. “That I will!” She said it over and over again to herself. (*Kirsteen* 38)

In a similar mode to Mat Grice in *Hide and Seek,* for whom thinking on the hair bracelet he has seen “Once more” and “once again” leads “surely and more surely” (257) to an understanding of its significance, Kirsteen imagines and

realises the significance of her hairwork by ruminating on it. Yet her repetitions of “over again and again” and “over and over again” are subtly different. They do not convey, as with Mary’s bracelet in Mat’s mind, a circularity of form and a mental retracing of one’s steps to discover connections, but instead a mental repetition and representation of the process behind the hairwork. Kirsteen’s thoughts become composed of a series of looped and crossed threads that imitate the regular alternating patterns of her “delicate little cross stitches” on the cambric (*Kirsteen* 26), as though drawn back to the embroidered handkerchief in form as well as theme. The inverse is equally true, as her embroidery carries the tenor of her promise to wait for Ronald while providing a metaphoric construct for her experience of waiting and remembering. In Plotz’s terms, the affect bound up in Kirsteen’s handkerchief is “a transferable essence” as Ronald’s words become for Kirsteen “the gold thread that should run through all the years”, imaginatively taking the form of her gift of hair embroidery (*Portable Property* 13). Kirsteen’s handkerchief in this way becomes a vehicle of greater significance, providing a locus for her mental compulsion to remember while providing a structure for that remembrance. If, as Marcia Pointon argues, the delicate and laborious ritual of hairwork as a process demonstrates a mastery over time, memory, and material (*Brilliant Effects* 310), hairwork as a product perpetuates the same senses of mastery as an object that may be returned to, contemplated, and its making reimagined. There may be a trace of trauma and repression in Kirsteen’s repetition of the moment of promise, re-emerging again and again in her mind. The affirmation that follows, however —“That I will!” (*Kirsteen* 38)—supposes the handkerchief and its memory to foster a sense of resolution and permanence, of a moment that may be relived and an object which will return, following an otherwise unresolved and evanescent meeting. To reflect on this last point, I will turn to a real example of hair embroidery which corresponds with Kirsteen’s handkerchief in manifesting a romantic tie and whose form likewise corresponds with its hair in its codification of time, identity, and affect.[33]

[33] The V&A does hold a hair-embroidered handkerchief (VAM: T.7-1962) that features the initials “CLO” in the centre with an ouroboros and cupids and flowers. But, as well as being ornate to the point of impracticality for daily use (a piece of decorative art from the height of hairwork fashion rather than a functional accessory), it is dated as being made between 1830 and 1869, a little late for the early-century needlework culture I am interested in here.

## From Handkerchief to Pocketbook: Affect and Intimacy

A pocketbook cover held by the V&A was apparently embroidered by a woman with her own hair as a betrothal present.[34] If this is true, as with Kirsteen's handkerchief, what might appear to be simply a decorated personal possession was intended to be a gift for a loved one and a token of romantic affection. Kirsteen's handkerchief recalls the custom of sewing a strand of the bride's hair into the linens of her trousseau before her wedding for good luck, a practice recorded in the West of Scotland as well as England (Sleeman 330-31). Both the handkerchief and pocketbook cover convey a promise: Kirsteen's response to Ronald's whispered "Will ye wait for me Kirsteen, till I come back?" (*Kirsteen* 37) and the unnamed woman's betrothal. Whether part of a secret or publicly announced engagement, in concealing the hair within a pocket of sorts both objects express a desire for privacy but also facilitate intimacy: the handkerchief is slipped into Ronald's breast pocket, and the pocketbook encloses the hair on the inside of its covers. Just as Kirsteen's choice of a cambric handkerchief for her hair embroidery intensifies and subverts various aspects of the object's history and significations, the contexts to which the pocketbook connects give greater depth of meaning to its embroidered hair.

Though ostensibly a different category of object, the pocketbook cover has much in common with Kirsteen's handkerchief as an item designed to be kept on the person, close to the body, and taken out and used frequently. The scale of these two items—their portability and capacity to act as wrappings for other items—is equally important to their function as affective objects. As Ariane Fennetaux explains, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women's garments (of all classes) were not made with pockets but instead a detachable pocket, a small bag tied around the waist, was worn beneath the skirt and could be accessed through slits in the overdress ("Women's Pockets" 308). They were commonly categorised as undergarments and, while carrying women's needlework tools, were often made by their owners from fabric scraps and remnants of old clothing and then embroidered (308, 318). Pockets thus signified privacy, intimacy, and interiority, but also their maker's thrift and

[34] This is according to a handwritten note found with the pocketbook and mentioned in Margaret Sleeman's article on hair tokens (326).

creativity (311, 314). As personal spaces of concealment, inaccessible to others beneath clothing, they were "choice repositories for objects that played an important part in their owner's emotional life" (325), such as mementos and letters given by friends. The physical intimacy of carrying such objects in one's pocket reflected the emotional closeness between giver and recipient (327), while the bodily warmth imparted to the objects afforded a sensuous or erotic charge.[35] Accessories designed to be carried in pockets were therefore associated with the affective, and possibly secret, life of their owner. That Ronald covertly kisses and pockets one of Kirsteen's handkerchiefs is testament to this. Both pocketbook covers and handkerchiefs are small, light, foldable, portable, and discreet. Both items, being highly personal, were often marked if not with a name then with initials or a motif designed to record something of their giver or recipient. The pocketbook cover, however, with its inside sleeves providing extra pockets within the pocket, is designed to keep papers and possessions doubly wrapped.

For the pocketbook, the idea of the object discreetly recording something of the life of its owner is more concrete. A "pocketbook" denotes either a small notebook for memoranda carried in the pocket or a wallet for holding banknotes and papers (OED, "pocketbook"). Pocketbooks often served both purposes, with the inner sleeves of their cases serving to hold a book as well as coins, banknotes, loose papers: "texts and objects used as part of everyday discourse" (Colclough 160). This particular pocketbook cover, as its categorisation would suggest, and noting its deep inner sleeves and spine, may have held all kinds of small possessions as well as a pocket memorandum book. Popular in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, the pocketbook proper (the book kept inside the cover) was used for keeping a variety of notes and often had specific pages for keeping appointments, accounts, and ledgers (Colclough 159). Women's pocketbooks (especially from the early nineteenth century) sometimes came with the addition of fashion plates, essays, poems, riddles, and acrostics, but for men too these pocketbooks functioned as "repositories of information about the modern world, and contained spaces designed to record information that would help the owner maintain a successful social and economic life" (Colclough 177). The similar pocket diary was commonly held in a leather wallet with a flap,

[35] The pocket carried genital associations because of its shape and because women's pockets were worn at the front of the body in the pelvic area (Fennetaux, "Women's Pockets" 318). "Pocketbook" was later used as slang in the U.S. for vagina (see OED entry).

featuring ruled pages embellished with vignettes as well as information on topics such as the royal family, members of parliament, and coach fares, and sometimes poetry and short fiction, music, and puzzles, much like its antecedent, the almanac (Jung 23). The pocketbook was a means and assertion of its possessor's control over matters of business and leisure, providing an encapsulation of their time, movements, occupations, and through this a sense of their place within the world.

Stuart Sherman argues that because the pocketbook began to replace the almanac and provided space for its owner's inscriptions, it was not only an object of retrospection and record (accounts and memoranda) but of anticipation (171). It recorded its owner's movements within time while looking forward to appointments and events. The hair-embroidered pocketbook cover takes this further as a betrothal gift. It anticipates married life and its social and economic responsibilities, marking a new beginning and the materialising of a relationship in its crafting and exchange. Rebecca Elisabeth Connor notes that though the format of many pocketbooks appears prescriptive, with content similar to that of popular female conduct books, the books' blank pages are "waiting to be written rather than read" (14). In this way, the function and potential of the pocketbook are similar to the handkerchief. In both cases, embroidering with hair amplifies meanings and possibilities that are already latent in the objects: identity and individuation, the desire to personalise, to record, and to preserve. These objects might enclose other personal possessions and in so doing curate the identity, desires, and prospects of their owners. There is the expectation of inscription, personalisation, and social occasion. Ronald brings identity, desire and marital prospects together in response to the handkerchief when he sends Kirsteen his small bible (sufficiently pocketbook-like) with their intertwined initials inscribed on the flyleaf. A handkerchief, pocketbook or bible, initialled and given in gift with affection, signals lives brought together and the anticipation of a shared future.

The design of the pocketbook cover is still more evocative of these tropes (see fig. 5.vi). The brightly coloured external beadwork, with a border of alternating red, blue, yellow, and pink flowers enclosing blooms in each corner and a polka dot centre, forms a brash exterior. There is something here of Mrs Tozer's admiration for "bright-looking" decoration, as she advises Phoebe to opt for a blue or bright green dress (*Phoebe, Junior* 170), and her brooch's vibrant

pink and gold framing of its hairs in the cover's stylised primary colour flowers, which look even more gaudy and simplistic against the hairwork enclosed. It appears both skill and taste have developed from cover to sleeve through this extension of needlework along other avenues. In shades of brown and blonde, natural and neutral, the hair embroidered on the inside sleeves is at once more elaborate and more subtle than the outer beadwork covers, which are embroidered in back and satin stitches and french knots. The wavy line of the border makes the design feel improvised, but artfully so. Because the initials "CF" are composed of flowers, their shape becomes hazy when viewed up close. The cover must be held away a little for them to be clearly seen, distance encoded in the design.


Fig. 5.vi — Pocket book cover embroidered on the inside with hair, circa 1836. VAM: T.272-1960. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Image cropped.

The exact affective meaning of the pocketbook cover is, accordingly, difficult to ascertain despite its personalisation: whose hair is worked into these initials (the woman's hair, her fiancé's)? Should it be assumed that this was a betrothal present passed between the engaged couple, or could it be a family

member or friend's congratulatory gift? The cover supports these possibilities in its ambiguous hair embroidery. It is as though there is more than one person's hair worked here—a dark brown, an auburn, and a mousy light brown—as each shade is intensified in the satin stitch leaves. The varying strands of ashy hair in the embroidery are not necessarily from multiple donors (if the handwritten note is to be believed), but the impression is, nonetheless, multi-tonal. As the brown hues have faded and bleached over the years, time has been revealed, made manifest, its effects worn into the material. The marks, spots, and discolouration on the fabric might also tell of use, circulation, its being carried, touched, perhaps passed on, taken in and out of pockets. It serves as a material token of not only a betrothal but a life: social, romantic, familial, economic.

Kirsteen's handkerchief likewise reflects her and Ronald's trajectories when it is returned to her by his mother, stained with blood and with "traces of his dead fingers where he had grasped it" but Kirsteen's "thread of gold shining undimmed" (*Kirsteen* 277). Again, the small bible initialled by Ronald that Kirsteen tucks away with it fulfils something of the pocketbook's function of inscription, to personalise and to realise the possessor's desires and intentions, while the piece of faded silk wrapped around the handkerchief protects, like the pocketbook cover, the hairs enclosed. Ronald's death is starkly exhibited on the cambric, and in this his side of the commitment made with Kirsteen is vindicated. The trace of his fingers effectively eulogises his dying moment, recording his attempt to touch this memento and so reaffirms his affection for and fidelity to Kirsteen. Returned to her, it offers Kirsteen a means of reconnecting with Ronald via distant touch, temporally as well as spatially, a delayed but reciprocated reverence for the token of their betrothal.

## Conclusion

Ladies' pocketbooks carried over into the nineteenth century but, much like hair embroidery and other early nineteenth-century styles such as sepia, became an outmoded medium for memoranda by the mid-century and developed into new Victorian versions of the diary, notebook, and gift book. The pocketbook cover, circa 1836, is a product of a dwindling pocketbook culture, just as Kirsteen's handkerchief records and represents a moment in time, a romanticised past, ever receding from the present. Both speak to a culture of

amateur hairwork from earlier in the century, and one so anchored in personal feelings and affairs that its decline with the passing of time seems inevitable. In *Phoebe, Junior*, hairwork is equally shown to be so personal, its worth so subjective, that given a little time and distance it loses its capacity to function effectively as a portable repository of affect or wealth. It is not that those outside of its network cannot recognise its sentimental import, but that they cannot carry the craft forwards without renewed attachment. As the hairwork made decades since goes out of fashion, the craft goes out of practice, the younger generation cease to give their hair over for this purpose or participate in the culture, and its donors and recipients are forgotten, its affects and value cease with it.

Kirsteen twice arrests the familial circulation of the handkerchief to claim for herself its personal and romantic significance. In the first instance, the family memento is diverted from Robbie to Ronald and what would have been a family memento becomes a romantic token. Then, following Ronald's death, it is given to his mother, perhaps to be passed to his sister, Agnes, but is redirected by Kirsteen once again as she emphatically claims it from a reluctant Mrs Drummond: "'there's nobody has a right to touch it—for it is mine!'" (*Kirsteen* 272). The way Kirsteen takes possession of, enshrines, and watches over the handkerchief indicates her anxiety over its capacity to forge new connections in another's hands, threatening her distinction by it, or, perhaps worse, for its historic romantic significations to be negated by reuse:

> [Kirsteen] unfolded the little "napkin" to take from it once, like a sacrament, the touch of his dying lips. There was the mark, with her thread of gold shining undimmed, and there, touching the little letters, the stain—and even traces of his dead fingers where he had grasped it. She folded it up again in his mother's cover and put with it the little blue Testament with the intertwined initials. The silver casket stood in Kirsteen's room during her whole life within reach of her hand. But I do not think she opened it often. Why should she? She could not see them more clearly than she did with the eyes of her mind had they been in her hands night and day. And she did not profane her sacred things by touch; they were there—that was enough. (277-78)

The handkerchief recedes into history. Kirsteen's decision to preserve it in a kind of reliquary explicitly frames her hairwork as a remote artefact. It takes on a ghostly aspect as an impression of Ronald's touch from the past which manifests through the sign of their promise made many years ago. That Kirsteen does not wish to "profane her sacred things by touch", more so than

with her mental repetitions of the handkerchief's creation, places this undisturbed relic as a manifestation of trauma. The bloodied handkerchief is hidden away, not to be touched and, perhaps, its connection revived. While it remains a reminder of the promise which impresses itself on Kirsteen's present and ever unfulfilled future, the encased handkerchief resumes its role as an imagined object which without contact fades in her memory into "a beautiful dream of the past, of which she was not always sure that it had ever been" (386). The desire to preserve the memento, and to enact the burial of Ronald's absent body through this surrogate, leads to its entombment in Kirsteen's memory as well as in actuality. Though Kirsteen is sustained by the handkerchief in one sense, affirming its presence by keeping it presently by her, it arrests her in another, binding her to the past. The handkerchief may have been a memento of family and home for its original intended recipient (Robbie), or a source of comfort to a grieving mother (Mrs Drummond), but it is ultimately shown to be an object that will have no life after Kirsteen.

*Kirsteen* signals the end of hairwork as a practice and a product of a bygone era that cannot survive because those that would possess and treasure it pass without passing it on. Kirsteen's hair-embroidered handkerchief marks her promise to wait "For a hundred years, for all the unfathomed depths of life, through long absence and silence, each invisible to the other" (38), and in so doing recalls Speight's idea of the lock of hair as holding the power to recall "the dear face never more to be seen, scenes never again to be revisited, and incidents long held by the past among its own" (*Lock of Hair* 83). Yet Speight's caution and call for revival, that "these links which connect us to the past" turn up all too often "neglected and forgotten" (*Lock of Hair* 83-84), goes unheeded. As for the Tozer brooch in *Phoebe, Junior*, it is not that the hairwork in question cannot circulate, but that its circulation is impeded. In both novels, what may have been passed on for several generations as a family memento returns to its original possessor, closing the chain of owners and denying the latent purpose of "these links which connect us with the past" (*Lock of Hair* 83). Kirsteen does not wish to extend the connective potential of hairwork beyond herself, just as Phoebe does not wish to have it extended to her. Despite hairwork's capacity to circulate across distance, through time, and to be passed on from one generation to the next, its passage may be interrupted such that it inadvertently remains with those that made and first owned it.

Hairwork manifests familial and romantic ties in a material and aesthetic form which may be circulated and in so doing consolidate an affective network, a lineage or “link”. *Phoebe, Junior* and *Kirsteen* complicate this dimension of hairwork in portraying their eponymous heroines as caught between the demands of familial and romantic ties, entwining individual and collective identities, the past and future. Hairwork serves to craft and maintain associations that were never without tension. Phoebe rejects her family hair brooch to set herself apart and keep to her own desired trajectory, while Kirsteen produces hairwork, in a way that likewise goes against her family tradition, to express her individual desires and attempt to secure the future she hopes for. Though Phoebe and Kirsteen, a few decades apart, have a very different relationship with hairwork, both realise its impending decline as part of the culture, fashion, and sentiments of a past time.

## Conclusion

The focal texts of this study—from *The Search After Hapiness* to *Kirsteen*—each represent hairwork as expressing conflicting ideas or even attempting to resolve incompatible ones. A loved one's hair worked into a fitting form supplies something of their presence in their absence; carries a record of the past into the present, preserving it for the future; remains as in life in the death of its donor; makes an object of bodily material; and may serve fashion while expressing sentiment. What carries through these representations of hairwork is thus a negotiation and assertion of self: a working out of one's identity, relationships, and affects. Each of the preceding chapters has explored a set of oppositions and conflicts that came to the fore in different texts, kinds of hairwork, and at different stages in its history to demonstrate how tension was ubiquitous in and characteristic of Victorian hairwork, whether real or represented. I have argued accordingly that the form hairwork takes—whether a simple curled lock or an intricately woven band of hair—directly relates to the tensions and meanings that come bound up in it. This study has thereby sought, in the absence of sustained criticism, to address the processes of hairwork as the means by which its forms and consequent meanings were produced. The way hairs must be separated into strands, pulled taut, crossed over, coiled round, and tied or gummed and pressed in hairwork realises and communicates complex and often contrary ideas and identities: it is a process and product of the desire to relate and interrelate, and visualise and materialise the complexity of social life.

The kind of relationship hairwork commemorates and negotiates is crucial to its meaning, and this thesis has explored a range: from a locket entwining the hairs of husband and brother to an as yet unworked lock promising betrothal; and from a mourning bracelet reworked with the hair of a jilting lover to a brooch asserting the bonds between members of an extended family. In each case, the narrative represented by the hairwork is not so straightforward as might be presumed. The tensions that exist between donor, worker/commissioner and recipient are not necessarily resolved or abated by hairwork, but made tangible and cohesive in its material and form. Hairwork articulates the time and space separating the donor and recipient, making absence present, time visible, and affect material. In this way, hairwork reflects

a desire for clearly defined and sustained relationships—romantic fidelity, family harmony, close friendships, and a tight-knit community—even if it cannot guarantee their actuality.

What has also become clear in the course of these chapters is that, while there was a pattern and sense of progression in the kinds of hairwork made and worn across the Victorian era, there was no clear corresponding shift or turning point in hairwork represented in fiction, at least between the writings of the Brontës and Oliphant. Texts written and published at either end of the period represent palette work (Catherine's locket and Mrs Tozer's brooch) and various borrowed forms of hairwork (Paulina's plait and Kirsteen's embroidery). The exception is Collins's *Hide in Seek* which situates hairwork as a part of its contemporary discourse of desire and anxiety in representing a table work bracelet, at the height of its actual popularity, as so crucial in a plot of love, abandonment, death, and lost identity. Oliphant's representation of hairwork in *Phoebe, Junior* also corresponds with its contemporary moment, though this is through the mild anachronism of the brooch. These texts reveal, instead, several commonalities in hairwork and its representation across the period. While Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetically-worked locks of hair may appear very different from Collins's representation of a professionally-made bracelet, both concern romantic ties and their proper expression: whether to demonstrate or disguise passionate feelings. Reticence about disclosing affection in this way carries into Kirsteen's shy, indirect proffer of her hairwork to Ronald which, though arguably the earliest example of hairwork (in terms of the novel's setting), as the last represented and published supposes the desires and anxieties engendered by hairwork to have remained consistent.

Kirsteen, like *Villette*'s Paulina, *Hide and Seek*'s Mary, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's speakers, turns to hairwork to articulate deeply felt affects (a sense of love tinged with loss), to aestheticise a relationship (with a family member and a partner), and to materialise a personal, relational identity. Within these attempts to create such a richly signifying object, there is a drive for hairwork to mean and achieve still more—to unite people and relationships in a composite form, such as in Catherine's locket of a brother and husband's curls or Mrs Tozer's multi-lock heirloom brooch (or even Porphyria's lover's hair asphyxiation-affixing of her body to theirs). The notable difference is not in the

form hairwork takes—for Paulina and Mary make composite hairwork, too—but who makes and who appraises it. The heroines of these texts recognise the nuances of hairwork in a way that other characters fail to. Phoebe Beecham, for instance, does not appreciate her grandmother's brooch *because* she is cognisant of its outdated and provincial form and the associations of its hairs, while her aunt desires it simply for being large, bold, and well known in the town. Indeed, Oliphant's novels, in looking retrospectively on hairwork in different ways, bring together the main threads of the preceding chapters: family and connection, romance and expression, identity and materiality.

My research, in taking stock of the variety of forms and purposes of hairwork, has revealed a different picture of hairwork in the period from several prior studies that focus on its place within mourning culture—notably Lutz's and Pointon's "mourning" and "death" titles—and which have contributed to the false impression that hairwork was associated almost exclusively with a morbid fascination with the dead body, a desire to commune with the departed, and an unwillingness to let go of the past.[1] Far from uncovering brooch after brooch containing fuzzy coils of the hair of the dead, I have found that in both real surviving instances of hairwork and in fiction there was just as much commemoration of the hair of the living along with more celebratory, decorative ways to work and display their hair, which resulted in more diverse and complex meanings for the hairwork produced than has hitherto been emphasised. I have shown the variety of romantic, familial, and friendly relationships memorialised by hairwork, not only as the preserve of the bereaved, but as a manifestation of current, evolving, and forward-looking relationships. This study of hairwork therefore invites the reappraisal of other cultural phenomena that have hitherto been considered only within particular contexts, such as within mourning practices or middle-class consumer culture, in order to look beyond the too-narrow parameters in which they have been classified.

Carolyn Steedman's *Dust* (2001) has heightened my awareness of archival research as not purely about the information gathered but the process and experience of gathering information. An emphasis on process and experience is still more pertinent to hairwork as an artefact than for text-based research. Hairwork was made to be viewed from many angles, handled and

[1] Chapters Two and Five discussed this register of hairwork through the figures of Heathcliff and Kirsteen, but I have shown how their relationship with the hair of the departed is represented as dysfunctional or excessive.

touched, worn and displayed, and pondered upon. In terms of my methodology, then, and what has been gained by engaging more tangibly in these ways with hairwork artefacts, I concur with Vivienne Richmond who, summing up what she learned in studying clothes in the Girls' Friendly Society archive, writes: "I learned comparatively little [information] directly from the drawers and sampler alone, but without them I would have learned nothing" (101). For my study, there is relatively little by way of factual information that I have been able to confirm or elaborate on by analysing articles of hairwork. Museum collections have generally supported my hypothesis that hairwork wasn't predominantly made as mourning jewellery, and the occasional piece labelled as worked by a named jeweller has endorsed the idea that London hairworkers dominated the trade. Yet these artefacts have opened up and given cogency to many of the more intangible, elusive aspects that come through in its literary representations: its affective dimensions, the role of touch, the significations of wear and breakage, its obscuring of identities, and the kind of representation constituted by manipulating bodily matter into a particular form. For literary scholars, this study therefore encourages a more liberal way of thinking about representation. To consider an object represented in a text is to think about not only *how* it is represented, as is the form-based thrust of close reading, but still *what* is represented—how does form relate back to matter, as matter is transfigured into form? To think through hairwork in this way is to understand the craft as a process which itself seeks to represent by fashioning a suggestive matter into a fitting aesthetic form. Still, were I to have researched hairwork through literary depictions alone, I would not have "learned nothing". In fact, novels and poems that portray hairwork have contributed most considerably to gaps in our understanding of the craft because they draw upon its existing cultural significations while they explore and expand its latent meanings through narrative and poetic representation.

The most productive avenues in this study have been the meetings of material and textual analysis. The splinters and broken components of the Brontës' hairwork make sense of its representation in their work, while their representations in turn make sense of what I perceive in their hairwork. The reciprocity between material and textually represented hairwork has substantiated and expanded the kinds of knowledge that do not come through in existing accounts of its history. Some pieces of hairwork I have examined

have been so elaborate and in so pristine a condition that they suggest that, for some, hairwork was too precious or meaningful to wear and was put away, out of sight, never to be touched—like Mary's bracelet in *Hide and Seek*, kept safe in Valentine Blyth's writing bureau. Equally, some aspects of hairwork represented in literature—such as the use of several people's hair in one piece (as in *Villette*, *Wuthering Heights, Hide and Seek*, and *Phoebe, Junior*)—do not appear nearly so frequently in museum collections of hairwork. On this difference, perhaps the deployment of multi-donor hairwork in a text was utilised as a device through which to signal the mediation of relationships, to manifest their tensions or harmoniousness, as opposed to its more common use in commemorating one individual. My methodology offers, then, a way to think about the intersections between objects and texts that acknowledges their different formal purposes while looking to the aims of their common subject. Again, for literary and cultural scholars, in particular, this mode of research demonstrates that if we engage with the material dimensions of an object of study—the process of its making, its material, the examples that survive and how they look and feel—the picture that emerges from the literature is not necessarily of that object simply as a represented object, but as a material means of representation in itself. As such, the study of hairwork has greater cultural significance as a test case for the reciprocity between real and represented phenomena. I have shown that the processes, ideas, desires, and anxieties surrounding an object may well be latent in its contemporaneous literary depictions, and we may better understand such objects if we engage with *both* their material and literary lives.

This thesis also makes a case for studying phenomena that may seem like trivial peculiarities of their time—foibles of Victorian sentimentality and morbidity or otherwise. In studying hairwork, and gaining a greater sense of its cultural import and complexity, I have shown that something that has become so alien that it has been deemed "strange" (Laver 145), "macabre" (Rahm 70), and one of history's "aberrations of taste" (Bradford 12), may fruitfully be reexamined. It may come as no surprise to scholars of Victorian studies that a practice such as hairwork was misunderstood by twentieth-century writers, and has remained so until the present on the grounds of distaste. Yet the links established between hairwork and mourning culture, women's amateur handicrafts, and high-Victorian fashion, along with its being made from a bodily

material, have not won it many enthusiasts even among Victorianists. This makes it all the more important that it is recognised that hairwork had a rich history and culture beyond these established associations. Hairwork expressed much more than straightforward sentiment; was not merely another product of a burgeoning consumer culture; it equally was not at all exclusively an amateur craft; and Victorian writers engaged with and developed the tensions and complexities of hairwork. My study of hairwork supports the revision of Victorian handicrafts (and feminine tastes and pursuits more broadly) as being sentimental, frivolous, and almost purely decorative by showing that the craft constituted an original and elaborate means of fashioning and communicating identity—not only for women, and not only for the wealthy middle classes.[2] For fashion historians, the value that may be derived from reassessing novel and ephemeral trends may be already apparent. My study underscores, however, the richness of narrative that comes from seeing such fashions through their associated print cultures: be it craft manuals, advertisements, newspaper and periodical articles, trade cards, or novels and poems. Cultural objects and practices looked back upon with condescension, passed over as weird or gross, or deemed uncommunicative in themselves, find a new way of emerging and being understood if one engages with them with a greater curiosity: the products *and* processes, objects *and* representations.

Indeed, though the author of "Hair-Device Workers" heralded the demise of hairwork 150 years ago, it lives defiantly on. Though its heyday has long since passed, and much Victorian-era hairwork has been dismantled or destroyed, the craft and the ideas it captures and frames have had an afterlife. Several contemporary artists and practitioners have drawn from and even directly responded to hairwork by creating pieces inspired by its techniques and themes.[3] Many of these artists—almost exclusively women exploring issues of identity, the body, and trauma—use hair in their work in a way that captures

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[2] Scholarship that has also sought to reassess Victorian feminine handicrafts, against their being deemed "shallow, sentimental, pedantic, and mundane" (Zakreski, *Representing Female Artistic Labour* 9), includes Christine Bayles Kortsch's *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles and Activism* (2009), Talia Schaffer's *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2011), and Patricia Zakreski's *Representing Female Artistic Labour 1848-1890: Refining Work for the Middle-Class Woman* (2006).

[3] Hair artist Courtney Lane of "Never Forgotten", based in Kansas City, Missouri, works hair using Victorian techniques such as gimp and palette work and even, on occasion, uses deceased Victorians' hair bought at auction. Leila Cohoon, of Leila's Hair Museum in Independence, Missouri, reverse-engineers some pieces of Victorian hairwork to learn its techniques (Wildgoose, "*Beyond All Price*" 706)

tension and ambivalence, much as I have argued was the purpose of Victorian hairwork.[4] Some have taken the craft in new directions, dealing with abjection—such as Mona Hatoum's "Hair necklace (wood)" (2013), reminiscent of hair pulled from a drain and balled up—or emphasising the organic nature of hair—like Jenine Shereos's vein-like "Leaf Series" (2011-present)—qualities which are latent but rarely explicit in Victorian hairwork. Others have dealt directly with the Victorian culture and associations of hairwork. Serena Partridge's "Mourning Shoes" were exhibited at the Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth (1 February 2016 - 1 January 2017), and falsely labelled as having been embroidered by Charlotte in 1850 with the hair of her recently deceased sister, Emily, leaving some visitors (purposefully) confused as to the fact and fiction of the hairwork.[5] Partridge's hair embroidery reimagines, recreates, and revivifies not only Victorians and their lives, but Victorian writers and their relationships (with each other and with hairwork) as both a representation and a fiction. The tensions between the authentic and the artificial, living and dead, presence and absence, past and future that hairwork expresses are amplified by these inspired material fictions of contemporary artists working in hair.

To return to my initial research questions—why was hair worked, what did this achieve, and how?—I have found that hair alone was not always sufficient to signify the complex affects, relationships, and identities that participants in Victorian hairwork culture sought to negotiate and memorialise. Working hair offered a way to memorialise a loved one in a way that was affective and aesthetic, personal and public, nostalgic and forward-looking in form as well as matter. Hairwork carries the tenor of its donors and worker/wearer's purpose in its process and form, while its bodily material renders it unique, lasting, and suggestively intimate: it materialises the immaterial and freezes the mutable. In this way, hairwork did not serve only to record and materialise an individual and their sentiments through its matter, but its working was a means through which to negotiate and frame tension, to resolve

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[4] Contemporary artists and designers who have worked with human hair include Jane Wildgoose, Melanie Bilenker, Antonin Mongin, Liyen Chong, Jane Hoodless, Julia Reindell, Sanne Visser, Loren Schwerd, Alice Maher, Agustina Woodgate, Tsai Shiou-ying, and Bharti Parmar.

[5] A post on Twitter by @bookwitchsara fuelled this common misunderstanding of the exhibition: "No matter how goth you think you are, you aren't Charlotte 'I repaired my mourning shoes with the hair of my dead siblings' Bronte" (Sara, 30 November 2016). The tweet was liked 28,000 times and reposted on various news and media websites.

conflicting drives and desires, and to bring what might otherwise be inherently unstable into a unified whole.

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