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## **Introduction: Victorian Fiction and the Material Imagination**

**Victoria Mills**

How should we deal with the ‘stuff’ in books? This is the question addressed in the lead articles of the Spring 2008 issue of *19*, all of which focus on some aspect of the material in relation to Victorian fiction. Gas, rocks, jewellery, automata and the entire contents of houses are examined in essays that explore the material imagination of Dickens, Hardy, George Eliot and Thackeray, among others. Moving forward from the previous edition, which explored different types of collected object, here contributors examine how the material is brought into collision with literature. Two of the essays (David Trotter, Steven Connor) began life as papers given in March 2007 as part of the London Nineteenth-Century Studies Seminar series (view [here](#)). As one participant in the seminar put it: ‘the material imagination – what does that actually mean’? The phrase can be traced to the work of Gaston Bachelard who identifies two types of imagination, the formal and the material. Whereas the former focuses on surfaces and the visual perception of images, the latter consists of ‘this amazing need for penetration which, going beyond the attractions of the imagination of forms, thinks matter, dreams in it, lives in it, or, in other words, materializes the imaginary’.<sup>1</sup> Bachelard argues that in considering matter, ‘the beautiful solids that rest in infinite expanse before our eyes’, we should think not just about it, but in it, with it and through it and allow our imagining to become material.<sup>2</sup> As Bachelard suggests, the material imagination involves more than just a focus on the representation of objects and the contributions to this edition explore such wide ranging subjects as the gender politics of ownership, dispossession, the body as object, the politics of collecting and display and the dichotomy between the material and immaterial.

There have been a number of new developments in the field since Lyn Pykett’s 2003 survey of the ‘material turn’ in Victorian Studies, which focused on new approaches to Victorian culture and commodification.<sup>3</sup> The rise of ‘thing theory’ is perhaps the most significant. This is a term coined by Bill Brown in one of a series of articles for *Critical Inquiry* in which he explored issues around ‘complicating things with theory’ and the literary representation of objects.<sup>4</sup> In his book *A Sense of Things*:

*the Object Matter of American Literature*, Brown shifts the focus away from an emphasis on commodification and the work of consumption: 'I began to wonder whether such work had not, in a different way, left things behind, never quite asking how they become recognizable, representable, and exchangeable to begin with'. Instead Brown is moved to ask 'why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organise our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies'.<sup>5</sup> Following the publication of *A Sense of Things* in 2003, further work has been published in this area including Elaine Freedgood's *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006), discussed in this edition by Clare Pettitt; Peter Schwenger's *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*; and Isobel Armstrong's recent book *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880*, a work which reflects a long-held interest in the material.<sup>6</sup> This burgeoning interest is also marked by the number of recent and upcoming conferences with materiality as their theme: 'Victorian Materialities' (NAVSA, October 2007); 'Real Things: Matter, Materiality, Representation: 1880 to the present' (York, July 2007); 'Bric-a-brackery: Victorian Culture, Commodities and Curios' (Aberystwyth, July 2008); and 'Bodies and Things: Victorian Literature and the Matter of Culture' (Oxford, September 2008). The questions raised in this edition are therefore timely and it is hoped that the essays will contribute to ongoing dialogue in this area.

In addition, this edition features a forum on digitisation and materiality. We are particularly pleased to be able to make use of 19's digital publishing format to further debates about digital media. In the forum, five contributors respond to a series of questions about the nature of the virtual object. All five have worked or are working on nineteenth-century digitisation projects so they are uniquely placed to consider issues surrounding representation and the nature of digital space. While these short pieces have a different focus, they share a number of concerns with the lead articles such as questions about the nature of the represented object, authenticity and the relationship between subject and object.

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The so-called material turn in Victorian Studies has been mirrored by a figurative turn in Museum Studies, which ushered in a framework of analysis for objects and collecting based on linguistics and literary studies. Susan Pearce was among the first to explore how it is possible to take a structuralist approach to the interpretation of objects and collecting. Pearce draws on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure to show the link between the world of potential material culture (the *langue*) and the creation of a collection, its organisation into categories (the *parole*).<sup>7</sup> So is it the case that, as Jacques Lacan would have it, ‘the things of the human world are things in a universe structured by words, that language, symbolic processes, dominate and govern all’?<sup>8</sup> Pearce is keen to point out that material culture does not match language in a ‘one-in-relation-to-one-sense’ and that it is important to be aware of the ‘huge gulf between our ability to perceive material and our capacity to express what we see linguistically’, a problem also discussed by James Mussell in his contribution to the forum.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless there is a clear cross-fertilisation occurring between disciplines. To cite just a couple of further examples, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill’s work on museum communication draws on the work of Stanley Fish on hermeneutics to explore the interpretation of visual culture, Leslie Bedford has linked Jerome Bruner’s work on narrative to the space of the museum, and Mieke Bal’s work on museum exhibitions identifies parallels between narratives and collecting.<sup>10</sup>

In considering the literary depiction of a thing, it is necessary to examine the differences between words and things and take on board critical approaches to the study of objects as well as literature. Work on the interpretation of visual culture suggests sensory engagement as a key route into understanding and interpreting objects.<sup>11</sup> But since we cannot run our hands over Mrs Jarley’s waxworks or sniff the gas in the Boffins’ gasolier, it seems that an object mediated by the language of a poem or novel needs special treatment. Is such an object in fact a kind of virtual object in the sense that it is a representation and has no physical, material properties? As George Landow states in his forum contribution, the ‘properties of the material object can never literally,

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physically, enter a virtual space', whether it be cyberspace or the space of a novel.<sup>12</sup> Even if we can attempt to analyse the responses of fictional characters to objects, what is experienced is arguably not an aspect of the object itself, but an aspect of a character's subjectivity (or our own as readers). However, we should not dismiss the real, lived experience of objects and what this can bring to bear on the interpretation of things depicted in fiction. As Mussell puts it, we should be wary of 'our preference for reading about things rather than thinking about the things themselves'.<sup>13</sup> Being able to touch and utilise a real Victorian bootjack, for example, gives a greater understanding of the scene in *Great Expectations* where the unfortunate Pip's head is held by Mrs Joe 'as a boot would be held in a bootjack'.<sup>14</sup> We are better able to imagine the tightness of the grip, the coldness of the metal and thus the misery Pip experiences if we have handled a similar object ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

In most cases, objects conjured in the mind of the author have no real counterparts and thus differ from the digital referent. Gwendolen's necklace and Mrs Tulliver's teapot do not exist as tangible objects; we can't visit them in a museum. Yet the division between real and represented object is not always clear cut. As Clare Pettitt shows in her review essay, two of the objects (the little wooden midshipman and the 'Coalbeater's Arm') represented in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* and *A Tale of Two Cities* respectively are in fact based on real things seen by Dickens during his London perambulations. These things, now on display in the Dickens House Museum, were remediated by Dickens as textual objects.<sup>16</sup> Katherine Inglis also shows how the jerky movements of 'clockwork Quilp' may have been suggested by Dickens' encounter with an astronomical clock at Lyons cathedral.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the fossils described in Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and discussed here by Adelene Buckland, were likely to have been inspired by Gideon Mantell's encounters with real objects.<sup>18</sup> Even the teapot and necklace, which have no identifiable real counterparts, may have been suggested by things Eliot actually saw and figured as a result of an engagement with the material world on the part of the author. Thus, as Freedgood argues, it is valid to pay attention to

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the real contexts of such imagined objects (the Caribbean roots of the mahogany furniture in *Jane Eyre*, the history of calico in relation to *Mary Barton*) as part of a critical approach to a text. A fictional representation of an object is polysemic and in interpreting it we need to be aware of its multiple layers of meaning.

Geological layers are a central focus for Buckland, who explores Hardy and Mantell's experiences and textual representations of geological objects and collections, showing how such objects played a role in the negotiation of provincial identity. Buckland discusses how an object's manifold meanings are produced. Focusing on the geological objects depicted in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, she argues that 'the material objects of geology and natural history do not exist [...] without the contraptions and texts which house them and give them meaning. Without those texts, networks and practices, these objects would remain blank, mute and meaningless'.<sup>19</sup> According to Buckland, a novel's rendering of a real object goes part way to creating its meaning, a point also relevant to the debates on digitisation. As Laura Mandell states in her forum contribution, 'putting an object anywhere is always an act of interpreting or representing it', whether it be the digital rendering of a 'real' object on a website or the literary representation of a fossil.<sup>20</sup> In fact, as Schwenger argues, perception of an object itself can be seen as a form of representation: 'All of our knowledge of the object is only knowledge of its modes of representation – or rather of *our* modes of representation, the ways in which we set forth the object to the understanding, of which language is one'.<sup>21</sup>

The role of objects in narrative has been discussed by a number of critics. Gerard Genette describes the difference between narration and the description of objects as an opposition between action and the suspension of time, suggesting that description cannot be part of the driving force of a plot.<sup>22</sup> George Lukács's essay 'Narrate and Describe', discussed here by David Trotter, points to the problems that occur when a text contains too much description. Lukács argues that in a narrative, 'it is reasonable to mention only those aspects of a thing which are important to its function in a specific action'.<sup>23</sup> Excessive description levels, or worse, leads to a 'reversed order of

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significance' in which objects and events are equally placed in the hierarchy of meaning.<sup>24</sup> Though recent criticism has attempted to recuperate description asserting that it, too, narrates, Trotter retains Lukács's distinction between narrative and description in his analysis of household clearances in Victorian fiction. With an emphasis on genre, Trotter's essay argues for 'the negative function of a certain kind of description: the description – itself a levelling down – of objects levelled down to matter or stuff'.<sup>25</sup> He suggests that the description of household goods often occurs at 'low points' in the narrative trajectory of the protagonist:

As the protagonists sink, so the novel sinks with them, from narrative to description. And those objects – described in detail, with full regard for physical, sensuous texture – are, more often than not, objects in a state of disrepair or decay: they have themselves been levelled.<sup>26</sup>

Trotter's essay presents a number of scenes from Victorian novels (*Vanity Fair*, *Mill on the Floss*, *Great Expectations*, *Middlemarch*) in which the contents of houses are sold off. Trotter's focus on household clearances is a focus on acts of dispossession that can be situated in opposition to acts of collecting. These are enforced acts as opposed to acts of voluntary acquisition and they pervade Victorian fiction to a surprising extent. Recent critics have been keen to embrace thing theory and what Freedgood calls 'Victorian thing culture' as a richer, more multivalent form of object relations than that suggested by 'commodity culture'.<sup>27</sup> However, Trotter urges caution, finding thing theory's focus on the subject, using objects 'to make or re-make ourselves', inadequate for tackling the kind of trajectory an object takes in a household clearance, its double reduction 'from household god to commodity; from commodity to matter'.<sup>28</sup> According to Trotter, 'we will need a way to think about objects *as they cease to be objects*', things as they are reduced to waste matter.<sup>29</sup>

Trotter questions the accent on the subject that, despite its attempts to recuperate things, seems part and parcel of thing theory ('is the 'subject [...] all there is to find "within" objects'?) and suggests that the depiction of household clearances forces us to 'conceive the indifference of a subject to objects which are already indifferent to it'.<sup>30</sup> In

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a household clearance of a different sort, Henry James tells us that he wished to downplay the role of the subject. In the *Spoils of Poynton*, Mrs Gereth is forced to relinquish her outstanding collection of fine and decorative art, the entire contents of her home, to her son. In the Preface to the New York edition James writes:

The real centre, as I say, the citadel of the interest, with the fight waged around it, *would have been* the felt beauty and value of the prize of battle, the Things, always the splendid Things, placed in the middle light, figured and constituted, with each identity made vivid, each character discriminated, and their common consciousness of their great dramatic part established (emphasis mine).<sup>31</sup>

Alive to editorial constraints, however, James concedes that such an overwhelming emphasis on the ‘things’ would be to the detriment of narrative development, dialogue and plot. Instead, the focus is shifted to the way in which the spoils mediate in the relationships between his central characters; the subjects are restored.

Katherine Inglis’s essay explores the porous boundaries between subjects and objects and what she describes as the ‘tragic human propensity to become object-like’.<sup>32</sup> In her discussion of automata in Dickens’s *Old Curiosity Shop* and *Our Mutual Friend* she shows how the idea of the automaton becomes ‘a symbol of the destabilization of personal agency’.<sup>33</sup> In exploring the links between contemporary factory literature and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Inglis discusses the ‘automatous potential’ of Little Nell, evident in her tendency to take on the properties of objects with which she comes into contact; the moving waxwork nun and the furnace-tender at a steel foundry.<sup>34</sup> Whereas Nell manages to escape an automatous existence, Daniel Quilp seems to relish his mechanical qualities, his habit of darting in and out of corners ‘like a figure in a Dutch clock’, his repetitious hand-rubbing and blank expression.<sup>35</sup> With *Our Mutual Friend*, Inglis focuses on the ‘discreet automaton’ who provides the music at the Podsnaps’ carpet dance and the unfortunate Mr Dolls forever in need of ‘winding up’, both of whom show how it is possible ‘for a human to be mistaken for, or indeed to become, an automaton’.<sup>36</sup>

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The automata described by Inglis hint at a pre-digital history of virtuality; Mrs Jarley's waxworks ('calm and classical' as she describes them) are representations of real people and things and can be seen as part of a trajectory that was later to include the plaster casts on display in the cast courts at the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>37</sup> The latter in particular confront the boundary between original and copy. The cast of Trajan's column, for example, like the computer-scanned replicas of Inuit sculpture described by Landow, retains many features now lost to the original which, due to adverse environmental conditions, has deteriorated greatly in the last 150 years.

Inglis's discussion of the waxwork nun also raises questions about the gendered nature of the body as object. Deborah Wynne's essay takes the objectification of the female body as one of its main themes, focusing on the role of women's property in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Wynne follows Brown in eschewing the interpretation of things in books as evidence of 'the market as usual' and instead foregrounds 'how the object world can aid the expression of a social identity'.<sup>38</sup> Wynne focuses on personal property, on possession, which Walter Benjamin describes as 'the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects'.<sup>39</sup> Benjamin suggests that objects have the power to control, to possess the possessor, 'not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them'.<sup>40</sup> With Gwendolen's acceptance of the diamonds that had once belonged to Grandcourt's mistress, Lydia Glasher, possession takes on the sinister connotations of control by a supernatural force: 'Truly here were poisoned gems, and the poison had entered into this poor young creature [...]. In some form or other the Furies had crossed [Grandcourt's] threshold'.<sup>41</sup> Wynne argues that both Lydia and Gwendolen are objectified by Grandcourt and, in her exploration of female ownership in the context of contemporary property laws, she shows how Eliot's representation of things 'often signals the ambiguities of the female condition' as women themselves become 'equivocal objects'.<sup>42</sup>

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Before the advent of thing theory, Steven Connor's work on cultural phenomenology proposed that we pay more attention to objects in a way reminiscent of Bachelard. 'I wanted to imagine a way of writing about objects that would attend to their peculiar and changeable life in our lives. I dreamed of a way of thinking through things rather than thinking them through'.<sup>43</sup> His contribution to *19* thinks through gas as it appeared, smelt, felt and evolved in the nineteenth century. Connor traces a history of gas heating and lighting and goes on to show how gas is imagined in an assortment of Victorian fiction, Wilkie Collins's *Basil*, Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, among others. He discusses how in fiction, gaslight suggests 'a kind of flashbulb vision' and 'provides sudden revelations and reversals of perception, abrupt transformations'.<sup>44</sup> Gas has the power to both amplify and emaciate and it has a mediating potential which Connor explores in relation to Dickens's *Bleak House*.

Connor also identifies links between the form of the novel and the properties of gas:

Perhaps the novel was another such confection of the material and the immaterial. Bulky and ponderous in its physical form, the nineteenth-century novel projected human relationships in terms of the flows and networks of matter that were becoming indispensable in the organisation of social life. There was no more representative flow, no more immaterial thing, than gas.<sup>45</sup>

This is suggestive. Eliot's *Middlemarch* is 'bulky and ponderous in its physical form' and its well-documented use of web and stream metaphors recalls Connor's 'flows and networks'.<sup>46</sup> Connor hints at the ways in which materiality can have an impact on literary form. Henry James' assertion in relation to novel writing that 'Life' is 'all inclusion and confusion' whereas art is 'all discrimination and selection' evokes the techniques of the collector and similarly implies such connections.<sup>47</sup> Indeed it could be argued that the novelist is in many ways akin to the collector. Like the collector's assembling of objects, the novelist must gather together characters, events, subjects, themes and arrange them in a discursive space. Both writing and collecting are accretive

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and selective, involving the sequential arrangement of ideas and things, and both tread the line between accumulation and classification. Like those who work on digitisation projects, Eliot had to deal with a mass of information gathered in her various notebooks and shape it into a coherent form in order to avoid the ‘data deluge’ that Mandell describes.<sup>48</sup>

Such shaping was crucial to Eliot’s mass appeal and is similarly vital for the success of the democratising efforts of digitisation. Being able to exclude is important for the shaping of information. It is also important, however, that we attend to what is in danger of being excluded from the ‘material turn’. Despite sporadic attempts to theorise working-class things, there is an inclination to focus on the representation of middle-class experience and exclude the working classes who simply don’t have as much stuff.<sup>49</sup> What can we do with the stark interiors of George Gissing’s *The Nether World* (1889), for example? Are the poor denied the kind of affective relationship with objects that Brown explores? According to Lukács, when working-class struggle is depicted in literature ‘the still lives of descriptive mannerism vanish’.<sup>50</sup> But the stuff, however mundane (the ‘tin pans’ and ‘brown pitchers’ of *Adam Bede*, for example), is still there if we choose to look for it. In that novel, Eliot demands ‘let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things – men who see beauty in these commonplace things’.<sup>51</sup> Yet it is the tendency of such things to disappear into the background, as Connor suggests, ‘that makes it imperative to find ways of restoring them to articulation’.<sup>52</sup> Some of the contributions to this edition of *19* attempt such a restoration, not of working class possessions as such but of other objects in danger of being overlooked; gas, rocks and fossils, wardrobes and mattresses. Others ask us to think in new ways about objects that by their very nature stand out in the text (dazzling jewels) or about automata, things that aren’t really things at all but the ‘quasi-objects and quasi-subjects’ of Latour’s formulation.<sup>53</sup> The material concerns of Victorian fiction are wide-ranging and the scope for new work appears infinite, what Freedgood calls ‘an interpretative open end of dizzying potential’.<sup>54</sup>

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## Endnotes:

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- 1 Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les songes* quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, ed. and trans. by Colette Gaudin (Putnam, Connecticut: Spring Publications INC., 2005), p. 37.
- 2 Gaston Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay On the Imagination of Matter* trans. by Kenneth Haltam (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 2002), p. 1. Many of the essays in this edition seem to coincide with Bachelard's interests. For example he discusses rocks and precious stones in *Earth and Reveries of Will* and the contents of houses in *The Poetics of Space*.
- 3 Lyn Pykett, 'The Material Turn in Victorian Studies', *Literature Compass*, 1 (2004), 1-5.
- 4 See Bill Brown, 'Thing theory', *Critical Inquiry* 28 (Autumn 2001), 1-18; and 'How to do things with things – a toy story', *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1998), 935-64.
- 5 Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), p. 4.
- 6 See Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Isobel Armstrong *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For a discussion of some of Armstrong's work in relation to the concept of the material imagination see Steven Connor, 'Isobel Armstrong's Material Imagination', at [www.stevenconnor.com/isobel/](http://www.stevenconnor.com/isobel/).
- 7 Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections* (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 26-7.
- 8 *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 45. I have been using 'thing' and 'object' as interchangeable terms thus glossing over phenomenological debates about what these terms actually mean, most notably Lacan's discussion of the differences between 'das Ding', and 'die Sache' which can be followed in the above-cited text, pp. 43-70.
- 9 Pearce, *Museums, Objects, Collections*, pp. 22-23; James Mussell, 'Digital Culture, Materiality and Nineteenth-Century Studies', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 3.
- 10 Eilean Hooper Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000); Leslie Bedford, 'Storytelling: The Real Work of Museums', *Curator* 44 (2001), pp. 27-34; Mieke

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- Bal, 'Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting', in *The Culture of Collecting*, ed. by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1994), pp. 97-115.
- 11 Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, pp. 12-13
- 12 George P. Landow, 'Material Object: Virtual Spaces', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 1.
- 13 Mussell, 'Digital Culture, Materiality and Nineteenth-Century Studies', p. 3.
- 14 Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational, 1993), p.10.
- 15 I draw this example from a series of workshops for GCSE English literature pupils at the Geffrye Museum, East London in 1998. Titled 'Writers and Rooms', these workshops used the period room displays and handling collections at the museum as a 'way in' to some Victorian novels. The materiality of the objects provoked an immediate response among the pupils; one wrote that 'hearing Robert's group strike the flint from the tinderbox made me realise how loud the noise would have sounded to Pip in the dead of night and why he would have been afraid to use it'.
- 16 Clare Pettitt, 'On Stuff', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 3.
- 17 Katherine Inglis, 'Becoming Automatous: Automata in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Our Mutual Friend*', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 15.
- 18 Adelene Buckland, 'Thomas Hardy, Provincial Geology and the Material Imagination', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 6.
- 19 Buckland, 'Thomas Hardy, Provincial Geology and the Material Imagination', p. 14
- 20 Laura Mandell, 'Encoded Matter', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 2.
- 21 Schwenger, *The Tears of Things*, p. 22.
- 22 Gerard Genette, 'Frontieres du recit', *Communications*, 8 (1966), 152-63 (pp. 58-9).
- 23 Georg Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe?' in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Arthur Kahn (London: Merlin Press, 1970), pp. 110-48 (pp. 130, 131).
- 24 Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe', p. 145.
- 25 David Trotter, 'Household Clearances in Victorian Fiction', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 9.
- 26 Trotter, 'Household Clearances in Victorian Fiction', p. 7.
- 27 Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things*, p. 8.
- 28 Trotter, 'Household Clearances in Victorian Fiction', p. 15.

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- 29 Trotter, 'Household Clearances in Victorian Fiction', p. 16. See also David Trotter, *Cooking with Mud: The Idea of Mess in Nineteenth-Century Art and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 30 Trotter, 'Household Clearances in Victorian Fiction', p. 9. See also his review of Bill Brown's work, David Trotter, 'McTeague's Tooth', *London Review of Books* 25 (22), (2003).
- 31 Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. xlvi.
- 32 Inglis, 'Becoming Automatous', p.22.
- 33 Inglis, 'Becoming Automatous', p. 19.
- 34 Inglis, 'Becoming Automatous', p. 14.
- 35 Inglis, 'Becoming Automatous', p. 15.
- 36 Inglis, 'Becoming Automatous', pp. 20; 27; 20.
- 37 Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 207
- 38 Deborah Wynne, 'Equivocal Objects: The Problem of Women's Property in *Daniel Deronda*', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 6.
- 39 Walter Benjamin, 'Unpacking my Library', in *Illuminations*, ed. by H. Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 69.
- 40 Benjamin, 'Unpacking My Library', p. 69.
- 41 Wynne, 'Equivocal Objects', p.13.
- 42 Wynne, 'Equivocal Objects', p.2.
- 43 Steven Connor, 'Making an Issue of Cultural Phenomenology' (2002) [Hwww.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/cp/incipit2.htm](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/cp/incipit2.htm)H. See also 'A Dim Capacity for Wings: Angels, Flies and the Material Imagination' (2004) at [Hwww.stevenconnor.com/dim/H](http://www.stevenconnor.com/dim/H). Connor writes: 'imagination is itself always implicated in the world that it attempts to imagine, made up of what it makes out. [...] Imagine a muddy field, or a clear sky. Is it possible not to imagine such things in a muscular fashion, in terms of the resistance or release that we would feel in encountering them, in other words in terms of the theories of the nature of such material forms that are embodied in our habitual or learned compartments towards them and our likely or possible bodily interactions with them?'
- 44 Steven Connor, 'Gasworks', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (April 2008), p. 7.
- 45 Connor, 'Gasworks', p. 3.
- 46 J. Hillis Miller, 'Narrative and History', *English Literary History*, 41 (1974), pp. 455-73.
- 47 Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, p. xxxix.
- 48 Mandell, 'Encoded Matter', p. 9.

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**19:** *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 6 (2008) [www.19.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk)

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49 See for example Carolyn Steedman, 'What a Rag Rug Means', in *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, ed. by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 18-39.

50 Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe', p. 145.

51 George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 178.

52 Connor, 'Gasworks', p. 5.

53 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, quoted in Connor, 'Gasworks', p. 19.

54 Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things*, p.14.

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