

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

On 1 June 1850, two months after the appearance of its first number, *Household Words* published an article by its sub-editor, W.H. Wills, marvelling at the growing ‘Appetite for News.’<sup>1</sup> Wills begins by describing the eagerness with which the ‘city clerk emerging through folding doors from bed to sitting-room, though thirsting for tea, and hungering for toast, darts upon that morning’s journal,’ while ‘[e]xactly at the same hour, his master, the M.P., crosses the hall of his mansion,’ enters the breakfast-parlour and ‘fixes his eye on the fender, where he knows his favourite damp sheet will be hung up to dry.’ Elsewhere, in like fashion, the ‘oppressed farmer’ cannot ‘handle the massive spoon for his first sip out of his sévres cup till he has read of ruin in the “Herald” or “Standard,”’ and the ‘financial reformer’ cannot ‘know breakfast-table happiness till he has digested the “Daily News,” or skimmed the “Express.”’<sup>2</sup> Wills’s description of these avid journal readers captures the ‘mass ceremony’ of simultaneous consumption identified by Benedict Anderson as a key factor forming the imagined community, across a range of social classes, that is the hallmark of modern national identity.<sup>3</sup> The extent of the nation’s immense appetite for news can be gauged, Wills writes, not only in the circulation figures suggested by the number of ‘newspaper stamps which were issued in 1848 (the latest year of which a return has been made),’ but in the ‘printed surface’ sent forth by the press, which amounted ‘in twelve months to 349,308,000 superficial feet’ in daily papers alone: ‘If to these are added all the papers printed weekly and fortnightly in London and the provinces, the whole amounts to 1,446,150,000 square feet of printed surface, which was, in 1849, placed before the comprehensive vision of John Bull.’<sup>4</sup> Not content with the abstract economic measure provided by the stamp tax, Wills’s mind-boggling statistics regarding the material substance of the periodical press emphasize its identity as a thing, as well as a commodity. They illustrate the peculiar focus upon matter, and its making into consumable objects, that characterizes *Household Words*’s engagement with mid-Victorian commodity culture.

Founded and ‘Conducted’ by Dickens from 1 March 1850 to 28 May 1859, *Household Words* was a weekly miscellany, costing twopence, which aimed to ‘instruct’ and ‘entertain’ its middle-class readers, as well as helping ‘in the discussion

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1 [W.H. Wills], ‘The Appetite for News,’ *Household Words*, 1 June 1850, 1: 238–40.

2 Ibid.: 238–9.

3 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 35.

4 [Wills], ‘The Appetite for News,’ 239.

of the most important social questions of the time.<sup>5</sup> The choice of the title 'Conductor' is singular. While the OED records two examples of its use for the management of a journal—in 1799 and 1843—both of these usages are plural, and Dickens's choice of this term when 'Editor' might more automatically suggest itself indicates not only his strong hand in the editorial selection process, but his influence upon the writing of his contributors, especially in relation to the journal's non-fiction prose. He plays upon the artistic role of a music conductor: 'the director of an orchestra or chorus, who indicates to the performers the rhythm, expression etc. of the music by motions of a baton or the hands' (OED 6.). According to Percy Fitzgerald, the youngest amongst the journal's established group of contributors, "'Conducting" was the fitting word, for, like the manager of a theatre, [Dickens] had to find and direct suitable men and characters, study his public, play upon their feelings, follow and divine their humours, amuse and divert by the agency of others, and, when that failed him, by his own."<sup>6</sup> In keeping with mid-century periodical convention, contributions were generally unsigned; but no effort was made to keep authorship secret and, as a result of the invaluable work of Anne Lohrli on the *Household Words* Office Book (to which this study is enormously indebted), most contributors have been identified.

Dickens positioned his new venture in the periodical market carefully, employing a novel combination of cheapness of form and price with respectability of content. As he had written to Forster of his plans as early as 1846, 'it should be something with a marked and distinctive and obvious difference, in its design, from any other existing periodical.'<sup>7</sup> Distinguishing *Household Words* from the villainous fare of the penny bloods on the one hand, and such 'cast iron and utilitarian' competitors as *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*<sup>8</sup> on the other, he aimed to raise the quality of the cheap press with his serialization of original fiction, poetry and informational articles on a wide range of topics. As Fitzgerald later observed, '[i]t is only when contrasting *Household Words* with its penny or three-halfpenny contemporaries that we see at once what a new and original thing it was'<sup>9</sup>; for as well as the high literary quality of its fiction—contributed by some of the most celebrated authors of the day—the journal was most significantly distinguished by its imaginative non-fiction prose, which blurred the boundary between journalism and literature with cultural effects that have yet to be properly recognized, as we shall see.

Published in the decade of the Great Exhibition of 1851, *Household Words* appeared at a key moment in the emergence of commodity culture in Victorian England. As Thomas Richards, Andrew Miller and others have argued, the Great

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5 Quoted in Anne Lohrli, *'Household Words' A Weekly Journal 1850–1859 Conducted by Charles Dickens, Table of Contents, List of Contributors and Their Contributions Based on The "Household Words" Office Book* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 4.

6 Percy Fitzgerald, *Memories of Charles Dickens*. (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1913), 105.

7 John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. A.J. Hoppé, 2 vols. (1872–74; London: Dent, 1969), 1: 443n.

8 Letter to Mrs S.C. Hall, 23 April 1844, in Madeline House, Graham Storey, and Kathleen Tillotson, eds., *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965–2002), 4: 110.

9 Fitzgerald, *Memories of Charles Dickens*, 127.

Exhibition marked a watershed in the development of a specifically capitalist form of representation centring upon the spectacle of the commodity.<sup>10</sup> It was, says Richards, ‘the first outburst of the phantasmagoria of commodity culture. It inaugurated a way of seeing things that marked indelibly the cultural and commercial life of Victorian England.’<sup>11</sup> While the ‘birth of consumer society’ has been located by historians Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb in eighteenth-century Britain and its evidence of ‘a convulsion of getting and spending,’<sup>12</sup> these processes were also part of an ongoing development to which new mass production techniques, and changes in retail practices and advertising, contributed as the capitalist economy matured. By the middle of the nineteenth century, ordinary men and women were experiencing the pleasures and pains of consumer choice on a scale hitherto unknown. The widening of this new class of potential purchasers of non-essential goods is one of the features that distinguishes commodity culture in mid-Victorian Britain from its eighteenth-century origins. As Thad Logan argues, the bourgeois home became crowded with newly mass-produced objects that were ‘not primarily functional,’ but rather participated ‘in a decorative semiotic economy.’<sup>13</sup> What you owned said something not only about your disposable income, but about who you were, as the possibility of ‘communicating status or other forms of social relationship through commodities was no longer restricted to the upper classes.’<sup>14</sup>

Dickens’s fictional interest in the objectification and commodification of subjects, and his animation of objects which seem, in his novels, to take on a life of their own, have long been recognized by critics. In her influential analysis of the English novel’s form and function in 1953, Dorothy Van Ghent identified Dickens’s characteristic ‘transposition of attributes’—between, for example, Mrs Joe and her apron stuck all over with pins, or Mr Jaggery and his huge forefinger—as symptomatic of a world in which ‘the qualities of things and people were reversed’: ‘people were becoming things, and things ... were becoming more important than people.’<sup>15</sup> Critics since have often noted Dickens’s use of clothing, appurtenances, gestures, or verbal tics to establish character, and his preoccupation with animism, anthropomorphism, and reification as part of this process. J. Hillis Miller, for example, argues that the ‘metonymic reciprocity between a person and his surroundings, his clothes, furniture, house, and so on, is the basis for the metaphorical substitutions

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10 Andrew Miller, *Novels Behind Glass: Commodity Culture and Victorian Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). See also Louise Purbrick, ed., *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

11 Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, 18.

12 Neil McKendrick, ‘The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England,’ in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb (London: Europa, 1982), 9.

13 Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 26.

14 *Ibid.*, 92.

15 Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961; reprint, 1953), 128–9.

so frequent in Dickens's fiction.<sup>16</sup> Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph argue for the widespread acceptance 'that an interchange between animate human subject and inanimate object characterizes his world view.'<sup>17</sup> But as Murray Roston has shown, the development of commodity culture at mid-century may provide a more specific context for examining the interest of Dickens and his contemporaries in the changing relationship between people and things.<sup>18</sup> In *Capital*, Marx famously describes the process of reification by which commodities become 'social things': the commodity's fetishization consists in the process of mystification by which the social character of men's labour appears to them as a relation between the products of their labour. Here we see an inversion in the 'natural' relation between people and things, as objects acquire a life of their own and come to dominate those who produce them. As Roston has argued, the principle of demonic animism in Dickens's fiction can be related to the inception of a commodity culture dependent upon the taste of the consumer rather than the producer: 'It is, I suggest, that new quality of the age which Dickens grasped so shrewdly and incorporated into his fiction as a distinctive literary mode, seeing within the proprietary selection of goods a method of differentiating character.'<sup>19</sup> Thus, Dickens employs the possessions, homes, and habiliments of his characters 'as animated external emblems of their inner being.'<sup>20</sup>

The critical recognition of Dickens's peculiar treatment of subject-object relations in his fiction has fed into a growing interest in Victorian material culture over the last decade or so.<sup>21</sup> These studies have focussed upon the nineteenth-century novel and the welter of consumer goods through which its effects of realism are generated. In the most recent of them, Elaine Freedgood presents a compelling argument for the existence of 'thing culture,' a form of object relations that preceded commodity culture and was not necessarily characterized by the processes of abstraction, alienation and spectacularization associated with the commodity form.<sup>22</sup> Freedgood distinguishes between metaphoric and metonymic modes of reading the things of the Victorian novel in order to restore attention to their materiality, and to uncover the fugitive meanings hidden within such hitherto unnoticed objects as calico curtains in *Mary Barton*, or 'Negro head' tobacco in *Great Expectations*. Arguing against the critical tendency to 'conflate things and commodities,'<sup>23</sup> she works to

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16 J. Hillis Miller, 'The Fiction of Realism: *Sketches by Boz*, *Oliver Twist*, and Cruikshank's Illustrations,' in *Dickens Centennial Essays*, ed. Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 97.

17 Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph, 'Prefiguring the Posthuman: Dickens and Prosthesis,' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32 (2004): 617.

18 Murray Roston, *Victorian Contexts: Literature and the Visual Arts* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

19 *Ibid.*, 77.

20 *Ibid.*, 83.

21 See, in addition to Miller (cited above), Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Christoph Lindner, *Fictions of Commodity Culture: From the Victorian to the Postmodern* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*.

22 Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things*, 8.

23 *Ibid.*, 140.

distinguish their ‘objectness’ from the abstractness of their exchange value, noting that ‘although we are all commodity fetishists now, and our literary criticism often reflects this problem, our nineteenth-century forebears may well have maintained a more complex relationship to the goods by which they were surrounded and intrigued.’<sup>24</sup>

The materialist turn in study of the Victorian novel draws upon developments in ‘thing theory.’ A special issue of *Critical Inquiry* was devoted to the topic in 2001, where John Frow explains that

[i]t makes sense to recognize both the heterogeneity of things in the world—complexly ordered along intersecting scales running from the material to the immaterial, the simple to the complex, the functional to the non-functional, the living to the inert, the relatively immediate to the highly mediated—and the fluidity of the relations between these categories. Thingness and the kinds of thingness are not inherent in things; they are effects of recognitions and uses performed within frames of understanding (which may be markets or ad hoc negotiations of action or desire or bodily skills as much as they may be intellectual formatings or sedimented codes). And persons, too, count or can count as things. This is the real strangeness: that persons and things are kin; the world is many, not double.<sup>25</sup>

Frow argues against the kind of binary thinking that opposes use-value to exchange-value, matter to representation, immediacy to mediation, or, as Freedgood’s study sometimes insists, things to commodities. The strange kinship of persons and things—‘a mixing in which things and persons exchange properties and partly resemble and partly don’t resemble each other’<sup>26</sup>—is the disquieting perception of subject-object relations that emerges from *Household Words*’s engagement with commodity culture. To be sure, the Marxist concept of the commodity strictly refers not to things as such, but to the form they take when produced for exchange rather than immediate use—a form that subordinates use to exchange value, and creates a mystification in which the social character of the labour invested in production is converted into ‘an objective character of the products themselves.’<sup>27</sup> But the concept of ‘commodity culture’—a culture shaped by the production, exchange, and consumption of goods and services—is more capacious as an analytic category and remains open to the fluidity of relations between people and things remarked by Frow. Indeed, sociologists and cultural anthropologists have drawn attention to the wider range of meanings carried by goods. As Frow observes elsewhere, the narrow Marxist concept of the commodity has been destabilized by the anthropological models developed by Arjun Appadurai and others in *The Social Life of Things*, where the form is defined in terms of a *situation* of exchangeability.<sup>28</sup> Adapting my

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24 Ibid., 142.

25 John Frow, ‘A Pebble, a Camera, a Man Who Turns into a Telegraph Pole,’ *Critical Inquiry* 28/1, ‘Things’ (2001): 285.

26 Ibid.: 278.

27 Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged Edition*, ed. David McLellan, World’s Classics (1867; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 45.

28 John Frow, *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 143.

subtitle from Appadurai's book, my critical focus has been shaped by the extent to which the writers in *Household Words* anticipate his injunction 'to follow the things themselves,' for it is only through 'the analysis of [their] trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.'<sup>29</sup> Appadurai's argument 'that commodities, like persons, have social lives,'<sup>30</sup> is amply demonstrated in the representation of commodity culture in *Household Words*.

At the same time that interest in Victorian material culture has grown, scholarly attention to that most prolific and ubiquitous of Victorian commodities, the periodical, has also expanded, with specialist studies of individual titles as well as more wide-ranging analyses of the press appearing with increasing frequency.<sup>31</sup> The conjunction is not entirely coincidental, for as Margaret Beetham observes, the 'material characteristics of the periodical (quality of paper, size of the pages and lack of hard cover) have consistently been central to its meaning.'<sup>32</sup> The explosion in the nineteenth-century periodical press is described in the *Household Words* essay with which I began, as Wills observes that while for 'half a century from the days of the *Spectator*, the number of British and Irish newspapers was few,' owing to the imposition of the so-called taxes on knowledge from 1712 onwards, by 1848, 'eighty-two millions of stamps,—more than thrice as many as were paid for in 1821,' were issued for English, Irish, and Scotch newspapers.<sup>33</sup> Critical recognition of the importance of the press in satisfying the Victorians' 'Appetite for News' regarding the complex and rapidly changing world that was unfolding around them is now widespread. Surprisingly, however, no book-length study has yet been devoted to either of Dickens's weekly periodicals. Notwithstanding John Drew's excellent study of *Dickens the Journalist* (2003), discussion of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* remains tied to and, arguably, constrained by, the identity of their famous editor. As Brian Maidment lamented in 2000, '*Household Words* is still more read as something to do with Dickens than as an extremely complex assemblage of important journalism. Welcome as Michael Slater's Dent edition of Dickens's journalism is, nonetheless it continues to promote the line of thought which says that periodicals exist mainly as celebrations of their most distinguished contributors.'<sup>34</sup> To be sure, nineteenth-century journalism remains notoriously difficult to bring into critical focus. Its fractured, heterogeneous and multi-vocal form resists the protocols of traditional literary analysis (and while Dickens exercised tight editorial control and

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29 Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,' in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.

30 Ibid., 3.

31 See, for example, Andrew King, *The London Journal 1845–1883: Periodicals, Production and Gender* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), Peter Sinnema, *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the 'Illustrated London News'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

32 Margaret Beetham, 'Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre,' in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. Laurel Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 23.

33 [Wills], 'The Appetite for News,' 239.

34 Brian Maidment, 'Review of Peter W. Sinnema, *Dynamics of the Pictured Page—Representing the Nation in the 'Illustrated London News,' Journal of Victorian Culture* 5 (2000): 164.

even rewrote contributions to *Household Words*, the journal's form is nevertheless dialogic, with differing lights being cast on a given topic, and the individual voices of such writers as George Augustus Sala, Harriet Martineau, Wilkie Collins, and of course Dickens himself, readily distinguishable to the avid reader despite the policy of anonymity). While Dickens necessarily continues to be a central figure in my story, I analyze *Household Words* as 'an extremely complex assemblage of important journalism' around the subject of commodity culture, and thereby approach the question of the mediating power of this mid-nineteenth-century periodical from a direction suggested by the form and contents of the journal itself.

Dickens filled *Household Words* with articles addressing commodity culture in one way or another: biographies of raw materials; stories spun from advertisements; process articles describing visits to manufactories; tales of the flâneur; and narratives describing those residual or marginal economies in which waste is recycled. Some contributors, such as Charles Knight, famous as the publisher of the *Penny Magazine* on behalf of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, attempted to provide an explanatory theoretical framework for their descriptions of commodities. Some, like Sala, were fascinated by the life of goods on the city streets, in their shops and arcades. Some, like Harriet Martineau, sought to restore the history of the production of a commodity, as if to combat the process of its fetishization, seeing in the objects described the labour invested in their manufacture. Many articles raise wider questions as to how far society should go in permitting people to buy and sell goods and services, how far the *laissez-faire* market should extend. In both its mode and degree of responsiveness, *Household Words* reveals the ambivalence with which many mid-Victorians greeted the increasing presence of the commodity in their daily lives.

The periodical, as Hilary Fraser and Daniel Brown observe, was an urban form—sharing the scale, diversity, fragmentation, and anonymity of the metropolis—whose nineteenth-century development 'correlates with the demographic movement to the cities.'<sup>35</sup> A key factor in its growth was the way in which it helped members of the new mass reading public to acquire the cultural capital that might enable them to be upwardly mobile or to 'consolidate middle-class status.'<sup>36</sup> The flexible mode of the periodical essay lent itself to this task, fulfilling the demand 'for organized information delivered in a manageable length and pleasing variety.'<sup>37</sup> The form had its immediate antecedents in the early-nineteenth-century contributions to such journals as the *London Magazine*, *New Monthly Magazine*, and *Examiner*, of Hazlitt, Lamb, Hunt, and De Quincey, who themselves looked back to the writings of Addison and Steele. Characterized by a winning combination of metropolitanism, wit, and a humanitarian impulse, the *Spectator* became the most popular model for English prose composition. As Graham Smith argues, 'Dickens clearly adored its

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35 Hilary Fraser and Daniel Brown, *English Prose of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1997), 5.

36 *Ibid.*, 9.

37 Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 102.

miscellaneous character, the variety embodied in its range of material from grave to gay, from delight in popular amusements to social satire.<sup>38</sup> Forster quotes Dickens, saying of his plans for what became *Household Words*, 'I strongly incline to the notion of a kind of *Spectator* (Addison's)—very cheap and pretty frequent.'<sup>39</sup>

Recommending his paper to 'the Fraternity of Spectators who live in the World without having any thing to do in it; and either by the Affluence of their Fortunes, or Laziness of their Dispositions, have no other business with the rest of Mankind, but to look upon them,' Addison presents himself in number 10 as an early flâneur.<sup>40</sup> As Dana Brand argues, Addison and Steele were not the 'first to deal with such staples of later urban spectatorial literature as the incongruity of London signs, the absurdity of London dress, the cacophony and human variety of London streets and marketplaces, and the fascination and profusion of London types,' but they changed 'the way in which London was being represented for literary consumption.'<sup>41</sup> Steele's essay 454 on the 'Hours of the Day and Night' in London, for example, revels in the social diversity of the city, and offers a vision of spatial and temporal mobility that continued to attract later writers on the metropolitan scene: the 'Hours,' writes Steele, 'are taken up in the Cities of *London* and *Westminster* by People as different from each other as those who are Born in different Centuries. Men of Six-a-Clock give way to those of Nine, they of Nine to the Generation of Twelve, and they of Twelve disappear, and make Room for the fashionable World, who have made Two-a-Clock the Noon of the Day.'<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Addison's essay 69 on the Royal Exchange seems to anticipate some of the characteristic strategies of *Household Words*'s writing on the city as commodity spectacle in its description of the 'Metropolis [as] a kind of *Emporium* for the whole earth':

Almost every *Degree* produces something peculiar to it. The Food often grows in one Country, and the Sauce in another. The Fruits of *Portugal* are corrected by the Products of *Barbadoes*: The Infusion of a *China* Plant sweetned with the Pith of an *Indian* Cane. The *Philippick* Islands give a Flavour to our *European* Bowls. The single Dress of a Woman of Quality is often the Product of an Hundred Climates. The Muff and the Fan come together from the different Ends of the Earth. The Scarf is sent from the Torrid Zone, and the Tippet from beneath the Pole. The Brocade Petticoat rises out of the Mines of *Peru*, and the Diamond Necklace out of the Bowels of *Indostan*.<sup>43</sup>

The effect of a cornucopia created by the catalogue of worldly goods anticipates the breathless listing of commodities in *Household Words*. The animation attributed to the 'Muff and the Fan,' or the 'Brocade Petticoat,' prefigures the lively goods depicted in Dickens's journal. *Household Words*'s interest in rediscovering provenance may

38 Graham Smith, *Charles Dickens: A Literary Life* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1996), 61.

39 Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 1: 443n.

40 [Addison], No. 10, 12 March 1711, *The Spectator*, ed. Gregory Smith, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1945) 1: 32.

41 Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31–2.

42 [Steele], No. 454, 11 August 1712, *The Spectator*, 3: 402.

43 [Addison], No. 69, 19 May 1711, *The Spectator*, 1: 213.

also be glimpsed in Addison's global survey. However, there is a quality of urbanity about the detached stance of Mr Spectator, and a balance and patterning evident in the style of his inventorying—like the artful catalogue of the contents on Belinda's dressing-table in the *Rape of the Lock*—that contrast with the 'streetiness' of a flâneur like Sala and his lists of goods which imitate in their unruliness the teeming thoroughfares of the mid-nineteenth-century metropolis. As Brand argues, while the city depicted by Addison and Steele is fluid and discontinuous, they 'suggest the possibility of a spectator who is able to impose order, continuity, and coherence *in the act of watching* what appears to be chaotic.'<sup>44</sup> Such narrative control and reassurance contrast with the aesthetic of fragmentation and disconnection that so often characterizes *Household Words*'s visions of the metropolis.

Walter Benjamin's studies of the Paris of the Second Empire, together with Georg Simmel's essays on metropolitan modernity, provide important models for the theorization of nineteenth-century commodity culture and inform my study throughout. But their perspective upon the city had its antecedents in nineteenth-century commentary on the periodical press. In his 1855 essay on 'The First Edinburgh Reviewers,' for example, Walter Bagehot anticipates later accounts of metropolitan life in remarking 'the casual character of modern literature. Everything about it is temporary and fragmentary.'<sup>45</sup> Identifying the role of the review essay in facilitating the historical shift, he characterizes the 'difference between the books of this age, and those of a more laborious age,' as that which 'we feel between the lecture of a professor and the talk of the man of the world':

— the former profound, systematic, suggesting all arguments, analysing all difficulties, discussing all doubts, ... —the latter, the talk of the manifold talker, glancing lightly from topic to topic, suggesting deep things in a jest, unfolding unanswerable arguments in an absurd illustration, expounding nothing, completing nothing, exhausting nothing, yet really suggesting the lessons of a wider experience. ... —fragmentary yet imparting what he says, allusive yet explaining what he intends, disconnected yet impressing what he maintains. This is the very model of our modern writing.<sup>46</sup>

As Fraser and Brown remark, Bagehot's 'man of the world' resembles the flâneur, that nineteenth-century connoisseur of the city streets: 'The flâneur and the historically self-conscious periodical essayist work in the economic marketplace, both studying and commenting upon this modern world and deriving their livelihood from it.'<sup>47</sup> The archetypal modern subject, the flâneur is the passive but passionate spectator open to all that is ephemeral, fugitive, and fragmented in the metropolis. In Benjamin's account, his perceptive style—physiognomic and impressionistic—is crucially linked to journalism. He captures modernity, not only as the poet and 'painter' of the city described by Baudelaire, but as the writer of the *feuilleton* section of the Parisian newspapers and as author of the 'modest-looking, paperbound,

44 Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, 33.

45 [Walter Bagehot], 'The First Edinburgh Reviewers,' *National Review*, October 1855, 1: 254.

46 Ibid : 256.

47 Fraser and Brown, *English Prose of the Nineteenth Century*, 15.

pocket-size volumes called “physiologies.”<sup>48</sup> ‘The physiologies were the first booty taken from the marketplace by the flâneur—who, so to speak, went botanizing on the asphalt,’<sup>49</sup> writes Benjamin, and they helped shape the phantasmagoria of Parisian life by making the city legible, ordering its potentially disorienting diversity in the definition of visible types. Quoting Simmel, Benjamin remarks their function in assuaging the peculiar uneasiness felt by dwellers in big cities, where ‘interpersonal relationships ... are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear.’<sup>50</sup> As Judith Wechsler explains in her study of physiognomy and caricature in nineteenth-century Paris, as well as social types, ‘there were also physiologies of neighbourhoods and institutions, such as the press, the cafés, the balls.’<sup>51</sup> Selling half a million copies during its vogue in the 1840s, this popular literature, together with such physiognomic analyses as those found in Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*, made manageable the anxieties associated with a constantly growing and increasingly disorienting urban environment of strangers.

The desire to impose order, to codify urban types, and to derive inward character from the fixed forms of outward appearance was felt in London too, as the urban sketch writers of *Household Words* demonstrate.<sup>52</sup> Contributors like Dickens, Sala, William Blanchard Jerrold, Dudley Costello, and Andrew Wynter relish the urban crowd, with its sheer size, kaleidoscopic variety, and striking contrasts. A particularly piquant example of the city sketch is provided in ‘Passing Faces,’ published on 14 April 1855, where Eliza Lynn’s cross-dressing as flâneur raises questions about the encoding of gender in the article’s situation of address.<sup>53</sup> ‘We have no need to go abroad to study ethnology,’ Lynn begins. ‘A walk through the streets of London will show us specimens of every human variety known.’<sup>54</sup> As Mary Cowling remarks in her brilliant study of type and character in Victorian art, it was ‘a favourable pastime for those with a physiognomical interest to seek out in the streets for evidence to

48 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), 35.

49 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 372.

50 Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, 38.

51 Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 34.

52 On the genre of the urban sketch see, in addition to Brand, Carol L. Bernstein, *The Celebration of Scandal: Toward the Sublime in Victorian Urban Fiction* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); Kristie Hamilton, *America’s Sketchbook: The Cultural Life of a Nineteenth-Century Literary Genre* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998); Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

53 Until her marriage to William James Linton in 1858, Eliza Lynn published under her maiden name. As Lynda Nead notes of this article, Lynn’s voice as flâneur begins ‘to reveal the tensions between official and private responses to the city and the range of behaviour and personae from which women drew in their occupation of the mid-nineteenth-century streets.’ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 79.

54 [Eliza Lynn], ‘Passing Faces,’ *Household Words*, 14 April 1855, 11: 261.

support their physiognomical theories about the social classes; and to the expectant, not to say prejudiced, eye, the evidence was not difficult to find.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Lynn is assured of being able to ‘read’ ‘nature’s evidence, printed in unmistakeable type’ on the passing faces in the street.<sup>56</sup> The metaphor of printing gives way to the notion of ‘type’ as a species as Lynn develops an analogy between animal and human physiognomy in describing the variety of birds and beasts encountered, from the bull-dog in the brown suit with bandy legs and heavy shoulders to the ‘cow-faced woman, generally of phlegmatic temperament and melancholy disposition, given to pious books and teetotalism.’ Lynn’s caricatures resemble the anthropomorphic fantasies of the French illustrator, Grandville, who, as Judith Wechsler argues, while drawing upon a long tradition of animal fables used to represent moral concerns, greatly extended the ‘range of characterological traits associated with animals.’<sup>57</sup> Like other tales of the flâneur in *Household Words*, Lynn’s sketch produces what Lyn Pykett has called a ‘curiously fictive form of knowledge,’<sup>58</sup> involving as it does the construction of speculative narratives and histories about the ‘passing faces’ in order to make sense of the ever-changing urban scene:

Look at that pale woman, with red eyes, sunken cheeks, and that painful thinness of the shabby genteel [writes Lynn]. She is the wife of a gambler, once an honourable and a wealthy man, now sunk to the lowest depths of moral deprecation—fast sinking to the lowest depths of social poverty as well. He came home last night, half mad. The broad bruise on her shoulder beneath that flimsy shawl would tell its own tale, if you saw it.<sup>59</sup>

Lynn’s fictive account of the shabby-genteel woman is typical of the imaginative handling of so-called non-fictional prose in the journal. Raising questions about the boundaries between the factual and fanciful, between journalism and literature, Lynn’s testing of these generic borders is complicated further by the gender transgression involved in her guise as flâneur: a guise that is secured not only by the way in which her reading of the faces passed on the street is typical of the anthropological interest shown by other (male) urban sketchers in *Household Words*, but by the assumption—encouraged by the practice of anonymity—that articles by other contributors were written by Dickens himself.<sup>60</sup> She demonstrates the mid-Victorian ubiquity of the idea that different social types were physiognomically distinguishable, even as she defies such stereotyping herself in her guise as flâneur. The limits of physiognomic interpretability may be glimpsed as she turns finally to observe a beguilingly demure young woman in the street:

The sweet-looking girl walking alone, and dressed all in dove-colour, is an authoress; and the man with bright eyes and black hair, who has just lifted his hat to her and walks on,

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55 Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 122.

56 [Lynn], ‘Passing Faces,’ 261–2.

57 Wechsler, *A Human Comedy*, 100.

58 Lyn Pykett, *Charles Dickens, Critical Issues* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 34.

59 [Lynn], ‘Passing Faces,’ 264.

60 See the discussion in Chapter 2, p. 22.

with a certain slouch in his shoulders that belongs to a man of business, is an author, and an editor; a pope, a Jupiter, a czar in his own domain, against whose fiat there is neither redress nor appeal. No despotism is equal to the despotism of an editor.<sup>61</sup>

The hint of knowingness in this account is the only clue to the irony with which Lynn's modest yet flattering self-representation belies her identity as a rather emancipated Englishwoman, the first to draw a regular salary as a journalist, and showing a tendency, Dickens wrote to Wills, to get 'so near the sexual side of things as to be a little dangerous at times.'<sup>62</sup>

Representing and participating in mid-Victorian commodity culture themselves by rendering the city as a spectacle for consumption in *Household Words*, writers like Lynn build upon Boz's anthropological sketches of London from two decades earlier. To be sure, the flâneurs who record their metropolitan perambulations in Dickens's journal often show an aesthetic of engagement—as in Lynn's account of the shabby-genteel woman—that distinguishes their perspective from that of the detached consumer of urban novelty and spectacle critiqued by Benjamin. While the Parisian flâneur is a kind of aristocrat (in stance if not necessarily in class terms), midway chronologically between the dandies of the early nineteenth century and the Wildean aesthetes of the fin-de-siècle and standing apart from the crowd, the *Household Words* flâneur is much more of a participant-observer, an eyewitness reporter assiduously engaged in the accumulation of facts and impressions—the commodities in which he or she deals. The best of them infuse their physiognomical categorization of city types with a strong sense of individualized particularity.

Notwithstanding his difference from the Parisian type, the flâneur remains a handy figure for the journal's writers. Like him, and like Bagehot's modern periodical essayist—the 'man of the world' or 'manifold talker'—who was criticized by some for writing that is fragmentary, allusive, superficial and subjective,<sup>63</sup> the *Household Words* writer is typically a non-specialist. From this position, he broaches a range of disparate topics upon the basis of his wide general experience, and familiarizes his readers with contemporary debates in a conveniently digestible form. Eschewing the systematic study of the professor, a flâneur like Sala, for example, presents himself as one of nature's connoisseurs, one whose experience of the world has enabled him to pick up a lot of miscellaneous learning without ever falling into the pedantry of specialist knowledge.<sup>64</sup> He offers what Kate Campbell distinguishes as 'aesthetic cognition' in place of 'intellectual cognition' as a way of knowing the modern world.<sup>65</sup> He suggests a beguiling role-model for socially-aspirant readers who need reassurance that their own lack of expert information is not a handicap to

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61 Ibid.

62 Quoted by Lohrli, *'Household Words' A Weekly Journal 1850–1859 Conducted by Charles Dickens*, 344.

63 Fraser and Brown, *English Prose of the Nineteenth Century*, 15.

64 My discussion of Sala here is deeply indebted to the insights shared by my colleague, Robert Dingley.

65 Kate Campbell, 'Journalistic Discourses and Constructions of Modern Knowledge,' in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 44.

their making the right consumer choices. Responding to the anxieties of those new, upwardly mobile middle-class readers with disposable income in this way, he points to the distinctive social conjunctures at mid-century that the journal was addressing in its representation of commodity culture.

Setting store by experience rather than hide-bound authority, by the university of life, rather than by the arid doctrines of the schools, Sala's eschewal of 'elite' values and knowledges earned the censure of cultural commentators like Matthew Arnold. In Letter XII from 'A YOUNG LION' (of the *Daily Telegraph*) dated 26 November 1870, Arnold satirizes Sala for having 'studied in the book of the world even more than in the world of books': 'But his career and genius have given him somehow the secret of a literary mixture novel and fascinating in the last degree: he blends the airy epicureanism of the *salons* of Augustus with the full-bodied gaiety of our English Cider-cellar.'<sup>66</sup> Acknowledging this popular 'mixture' as 'the very thing to go down,' Arnold derides its vulgar commercialism. But his criticism of Sala helps us to pinpoint a key feature of *Household Words*'s non-fiction prose. For Sala's journalese, developed as a contributor to *Household Words*, reveals the extent to which the journal's idiom is often indistinguishable from that of the commercial world it was attempting to critique. As a mass-circulation weekly, averaging sales of around 40,000 copies per week,<sup>67</sup> *Household Words* was itself a popular commodity. Dickens's requirement that articles for his journal must be 'imaginative' had marketability clearly in view.<sup>68</sup> While 'carelessness about facts' could be 'damaging,' Dickens wrote to Wills, 'dullness' was 'hideous.'<sup>69</sup> The journal's fanciful house style can be seen particularly vividly in its many 'biographies' of commodities—'What There Is in a Button,' 'All about Pigs,' 'Done to a Jelly' and so on—where goods seem to take on a life of their own.<sup>70</sup>

Such liveliness is sometimes achieved through the narrative of a thing, as in Sidney Laman Blanchard's 'Biography of a Bad Shilling,' which describes the career of a counterfeit coin. This peculiar treatment of subject-object relations has antecedents in the eighteenth-century narrative device of the speaking object, found in such works as Charles Gildon's *The Golden Spy* (1709) or Charles Johnstone's *Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea* (1760), as well as what might be called 'alien observer' satires, such as Montesquieu's Persian letters or Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*. Both genres shared the strategy of defamiliarization that finds its way into much of *Household Words*'s reportage. Christopher Flint argues that the appearance and popularity of the eighteenth-century it-narratives was not just an

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66 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy, with Friendship's Garland and Some Literary Essays*, ed. R.H. Super, Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965) 5: 350.

67 Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900*, Second ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 394.

68 Letter to W.H. Wills, 17 November 1853, in House, Storey, and Tillotson, eds., *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7: 200.

69 Quoted in Lohrli, 'Household Words,' 11.

70 [George Dodd], 'All About Pigs,' *Household Words*, 31 July 1852, 5: 471–4; [George Dodd], 'Done to a Jelly,' *Household Words*, 24 June 1854, 9: 438–40; [Harriet Martineau], 'What There Is in a Button,' *Household Words*, 17 April 1852, 5: 106–12.

attempt to spark interest through the striking proposition of an inanimate narrator, but, more importantly, was linked to concerns about the alienation of authorship in a modern print economy, as text was transmuted from manuscript to book to commodity: 'As principal narrators that represent authorship, speaking objects symbolized the promiscuous movement of text, the commodification of stories, the international entanglements in the book trade, and the loss of narrative identity and authority that stem from circulation in the social sphere.'<sup>71</sup> The genre was revived by Douglas Jerrold in his first novel, *The Story of a Feather*, which was serialized in *Punch* during 1843. As Michael Slater notes, the novel was very popular and the 'bizarre device' of 'having the story narrated by an ostrich-feather' enabled Jerrold 'to make a link between the highest and the lowest echelons of society' in his vigorous attack upon social injustice and the plight of the poor.<sup>72</sup> Forster records that Dickens 'derived much enjoyment'<sup>73</sup> from reading *The Story of a Feather* in *Punch*, and when Jerrold sent him a copy of the revised volume publication in May 1844, he was equally enthusiastic in his response.<sup>74</sup> Slater observes that Dickens derived a repentant-prostitute scene from it for *The Chimes*;<sup>75</sup> but what has not been noted is the extent to which Jerrold's it-narrative anticipates the interchange between people and things so often involved in the journalism of *Household Words*. As the feather, finding itself amongst 'the cast-off finery which formed the stock in trade of Madame Spanneu,' warns the 'gentle reader':

Never, ... so long as you have a stitch about your anatomy, believe yourself alone. If thoughtless people could only know what their left-off clothes say about them, sure I am, they would resolve upon one of two things: either to reform their lives, or to go naked. Let no man harbour a black spot in his breast, and believe that his waistcoat is wholly ignorant of the stain. Let no man drop an ill-gotten guinea into his pocket, and think the poke unconscious of the wrong. His very glove shall babble of the bribe that has burnt his hand. His cravat shall tighten about his throat, if that throat be seared with daily lies.<sup>76</sup>

As the feather proceeds to recount the biography of one of his companions—a scarlet-heeled shoe—the device anticipates the peculiar extrapolation of story from second-hand clothing by contributors like Sala in *Household Words*.

Like Jerrold's feather, and like the eighteenth-century speaking object, Blanchard's coin begins his picaresque narrative in *Household Words* with an account of his pedigree:

My parents were respectable, notwithstanding that one belonged to the law—being the zinc door-plate of a solicitor. The other, was a pewter flagon residing at a very excellent hotel, and moving in distinguished society; for it assisted almost daily at convivial parties

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71 Christopher Flint, 'Speaking Objects: The Circulation of Stories in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction,' *PMLA* 113 (1998): 224.

72 Michael Slater, *Douglas Jerrold 1803–1857* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 133.

73 Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 1: 329.

74 Slater, *Douglas Jerrold 1803–1857*, 137.

75 *Ibid.*, 175.

76 Douglas Jerrold, *The Story of a Feather* (London: Bradbury, Evans and Co., 1867), 85–6.

in the Temple. It fell victim at last to a person belonging to the lower orders, who seized it, one fine morning, while hanging upon some railings to dry, and conveyed it to a Jew, who—I blush to record the insult offered to a respected member of my family—melted it down.<sup>77</sup>

Also like its predecessors, the bad shilling's narrative is a hybrid combination of satire, allegory, biography, and moral tale. It exposes a venal world in which, says the shilling, 'habitual intercourse with the best society has relieved me from the embarrassing appendage of a conscience.... [A]nd, like the counterfeits of humanity, whose lead may be seen emulating silver at every turn, my only desire is—not to be worthy of passing, but simply—to pass.'<sup>78</sup> More common in *Household Words* than Blanchard's use of the eighteenth-century form, however, are object narratives devoted to detailing the processes of industrial manufacture or to recovering the provenance of imported raw materials, as Chapters 6 and 7 will show.

While some of the devices used by *Household Words* to enliven its non-fiction prose were more successful than others, critics have too readily dismissed its characteristic style as exaggerated or fanciful flourish—something superadded in accordance with Dickens's injunction, cited above, to keep the journal 'imaginative,' or what Mrs Gaskell, herself a contributor, disparaged as a requirement to be 'Dickensy.'<sup>79</sup> Reviewing Sala in 1859 as a representative of what it calls the 'mannerist school of prose' employed by *Household Words*, the *Saturday Review* sniffed: 'Nowhere else is to be found in such purity that style, cultivated by Mr Dickens and his followers, the leading characteristic of which is a subordination of matter to manner.'<sup>80</sup> Another regular *Household Words* contributor, John Hollingshead, later expressed embarrassment at the superficiality of some of the articles he wrote for the journal, blaming the Conductor: 'He wanted "readable" papers. "Let Hollingshead do it," he said, more than once. "He's the most ignorant man on the staff, but he'll cram up the facts, and won't give us an encyclopædical article."<sup>81</sup> Even 'the driest subjects,' wrote Hollingshead, were to be infused with 'some degree of fancy and imagination.'<sup>82</sup> While the style of writing no doubt contributed to the imaginative effect, the specific techniques employed to achieve this I think themselves contribute to the cultural significance of the representation of commodities in the journal. The breathless listing of randomly juxtaposed goods is an important topos in this regard. Like a miniature Great Exhibition, these exuberant catalogues encapsulate a central point in my argument about the paradoxical nature of commodification, for they simultaneously enhance the exciting variety of the things listed, and seek to suppress

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77 [Sidney Laman Blanchard], 'A Biography of a Bad Shilling,' *Household Words*, 25 January 1851, 2: 420.

78 *Ibid.*: 421.

79 Quoted by, 'Household Words' *A Weekly Journal 1850–1859 Conducted by Charles Dickens*, 10.

80 'Mr Sala on Life in London,' *Saturday Review*, 3 December 1859: 677.

81 John Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co, 1895), 1: 190.

82 John Hollingshead, 'Preface,' in *Under Bow Bells: A City Book for All Readers* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1860), v.

it by implying their interchangeability or exchangeability. Another significant device used is the animation of commodities. For example, in giving an account of the process of paper-making told from the perspective of the raw materials used in 'A Paper Mill,' or describing the way in which advertisements turn London into a city of streets that speak as pavements are 'made eloquent by lamp-black lithograph' in 'Bill-Sticking,' or personifying the cast-off clothes to be found in Mrs Brummus's shop in 'Fashion,'<sup>83</sup> *Household Words* reveals a fascination with changing relationships between people and things that distinguishes its attempt to come to terms with the mid-nineteenth-century development of commodity culture.

Arguably, it is the fluidity of the boundary between informational and imaginative writing that makes *Household Words*'s non-fictional prose its most distinctive and significant feature. Certainly, Wills seemed to think so. Comparing it with 'other publications of its class,' he wrote to Dickens in 1851, it is 'universally acknowledged that subjects of an uninviting nature are treated—as a rule—in *Household Words* in a more playful, ingenious, and readable manner than similar subjects have been hitherto presented in other weekly periodicals.'<sup>84</sup> While there has been much discussion of the fiction published in its pages, including studies considering the ways in which the instalments of a serialized novel, like *Hard Times*, relate to what is going on around them in the same issue,<sup>85</sup> scant critical attention has been given to the journalism of contributors other than Dickens himself. This neglect impels my focus on *Household Words*'s non-fiction prose in the chapters that follow, which are organized around some recurring themes in the journal's engagement with commodity culture. Contextualizing my discussion with reference to other contemporary miscellanies, I attempt to address the extent of the journal's distinctiveness in responding to the increasingly ubiquitous presence of the commodity in daily life. I begin, in Chapter 2, with *Household Words*'s keen interest in advertising. While not carrying any advertisements beyond the few referring to its own publications and those appearing inside the wrappers of the monthly reissues, a number of articles use newspaper advertisements to 'reconstruct' the biographies of those whom they solicit. Although critical of puffery's omnipresence, these narratives never quite manage to obtain the critical purchase on it that they seek because of the journal's simultaneous complicity with the discourse of advertising. Chapter 3 moves from the impostures of puffery and publicity to the more general problem of authenticity in an age of mechanical reproduction and mass consumption. It considers the fraudulent goods and services associated with spiritualism, adulteration, and quackery, together with the anxieties about authenticity found in the journal's treatment of travel and tourism. The figure of the flâneur reappears in Chapter 4, as I examine the ways in which *Household Words* renders the city as commodity spectacle. The metropolitan travel writing of

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83 [Charles Dickens and Mark Lemon], 'A Paper-Mill,' *Household Words*, 31 August 1850, 1: 529–31; [Charles Dickens], 'Bill-Sticking,' *Household Words*, 22 March 1851, 2: 601–6; [George A. Sala], 'Fashion,' *Household Words*, 29 October 1853, 8: 193–6.

84 R.C. Lehmann, ed., *Charles Dickens as Editor, Being Letters Written by Him to William Henry Wills His Sub-Editor* (New York: Haskell House, 1972), 74.

85 See, for example, Joseph Butwin, 'Hard Times: The News and the Novel,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 166–87.

contributors like Dickens, Sala, Lynn, Hollingshead, and Henry Morley shows a level of social engagement that links it with the rise of investigative journalism. At the same time, however, together with the journal's attention to the commodification of urban leisure found in the shows of London, and its descriptions of window-shopping, these tales of urban rambling turn visual experience into commodity forms. Chapter 5 examines the 'process article,' a form of industrial tourist tale which held the promise of demystifying the commodity and restoring awareness of the labour involved in its production. While some contributors, like Harriet Martineau, extol the virtues of industrialism and political economy, others like Dickens and Morley register unease about the material confusions of worker and machine in factory production. Raw materials for Britain's factories came from all corners of the empire, and Chapter 6 surveys the journal's representation of foreign goods, its interest in the trajectories of objects within a global market. Chapters 7 and 8 focus upon two areas of trade in which the journal showed a recurring interest: death and second-hand clothing. Dickens filled *Household Words* with articles about the paraphernalia of mortality, many of which show instances of conflict about the commodity status of the object described and an ambivalent response to the idea of 'trading in death.' 'Fashion in Undress' explores the journal's fascination with cast-off clothes and considers what happens when goods are recycled, when the cultural meaning of their selection by consumers is complicated by second-hand purchase. As the many writers in *Household Words* who republished their contributions later in book form clearly knew, goods have a use and an exchange value that extends beyond the first cycle of consumption. Second-hand goods complicate the journal's efforts to ensure that commodities continue to speak about their origins, and about the social relations invested in their production, to those who buy them. They question the privilege accorded to production within accounts of commodity-chains, as Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe argue.<sup>86</sup> And as their biographies extend indefinitely in time and space, and as the vestiges of the labour that originally produced them are overlaid by the imagined histories of their subsequent owners, they provide the potential for new understandings of the relationship between people and things.

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86 Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe, *Second-Hand Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 5.