



**Bringing the Archive Home:
The University of Manchester
Library and Elizabeth Gaskell's
House**

**Fran Baker, Archivist, The University of Manchester Library
Helen Rees Leahy, Professor of Museology, The University of
Manchester**

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65)

1810: born Elizabeth Stevenson
in London


1811: moved to Knutsford

1832: marriage and move to
Manchester

Writing career (from 1848):

- Six novels
- Two novellas
- Over 30 short stories, sketches
or articles
- *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*
- Over 1,000 (surviving!) letters





**Elizabeth Gaskell at the
University of Manchester
Library**

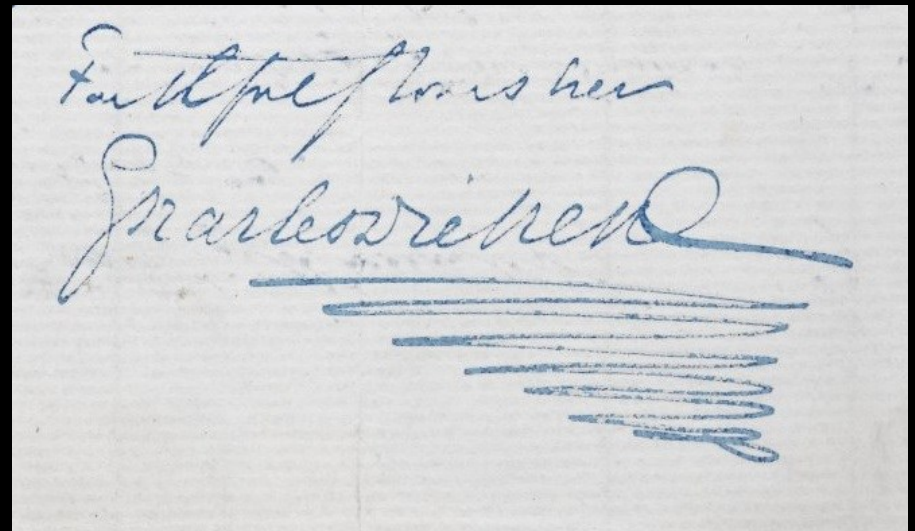
Literary manuscripts

- *Life of Charlotte Brontë*
- *Wives and Daughters*
- 'The Grey Woman'
- 'The Crooked Branch'

2
side; every part of which Molly knew, for had she not made it herself the evening before with infinite pains? and was there not a little blue bow in their quillings, the very first bit of such finery Molly had ever had the prospect of wearing? Six o'clock now! the pleasant Irish ringing of the Church bells told that, calling every one to their daily work, as they had done for hundreds of years. Up jumped Molly, and ran into her bare little feet and the room, and lifted off the handkerchief and saw once again the bonnet, the pledge of the gay bright day to come. Then to the window, and after stepping she opened the casement, and let in the sweet morning air. The dew was already off the flowers in the garden below, ^{but still} and rising from the long grass in the meadows directly beyond; at one side lay the little town of ~~Stretton~~ ^{Holly} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~road~~, into a street of which Mr. Gibson's front-door opened; and delicate columns and little puffs of smoke were already beginning to rise from many a cottage chimney when some housewife was already up, and preparing breakfast for the bread-winner of the family. Molly Gibson saw all this, but ~~she~~ ^{all the} ~~thought~~ ^{thought} ~~about~~ ^{about} it was "Oh! it will be a fine day, - I was afraid it never would come; or that if it ever came it would be a rainy day!" Five and ^{forty} ~~thirty~~ years ago children

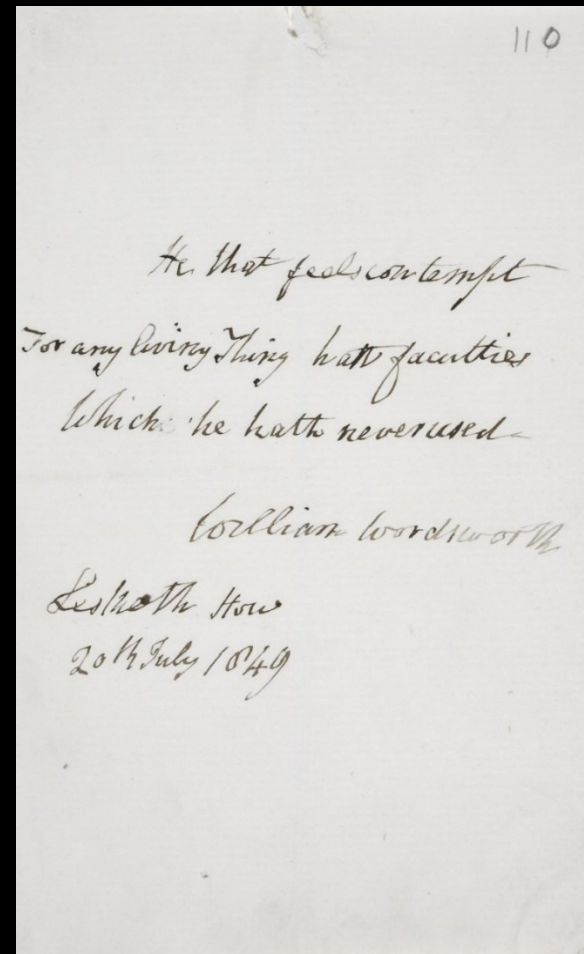
Letters

- 113 letters to Elizabeth Gaskell or her husband from a range of contemporaries – Matthew Arnold, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot, and many more...
- Charles Dickens
- Charlotte Brontë
- Patrick Brontë



Autograph collection

208 autographs,
often entire letters –
Gladstone,
Palmerston, Henry
Mayhew, Mazzini,
George Sand,
William Wilberforce
and many others



Visual material/objects



Later acquisitions

- 44 letters from Gaskell to various correspondents
- Four letters to Gaskell from others

Lt. Plymouth from
January 13th 1862.

My dear W. Norton,

I have had a letter
from a friend of ours, W.
Edward Dacey, saying that
"he is going to America to
write a book for Macmillan
on the Social State of A-
merica during the civil
war; and in consequence
I am
and he is asking all

Later acquisitions



Later acquisitions

- Papers of the Jamison Family
- Collection and Papers of John Geoffrey Sharps

JA/16/13/1865
Heathfield Dec. 3rd 65
85

My dear Sir Philip,

We were so glad to have your pleasant account of Cota & to hear that you had really gone there. Sarah Merriman seems to think that John would very likely be at Cota while you were at her house here for a day or two about that time. There have been a variety of "conventions" staying at the Merrimans lately. Miss Fletcher, Ralph D. Francis, Matthews & Emma Rodley the two latter are here still & are making a long visit. They came here to tea on Friday and we think they are both very pleasant. Henry Rodley (the eldest) has just been getting a Lays Scholarship at Cambridge of £150 a year for four years. Which is nice to say the least. Mother and Ellen went on Monday to see the Jackells. They saw Marianne & Julia, who seemed pretty well &



**JRRI Pilot Project: The Gaskells at 84
Plymouth Grove, Manchester**
(Professor Helen Rees Leahy, Curatorial Adviser to
Elizabeth Gaskell's House)

**Research and public engagement,
including:**

- **Collecting Gaskell**
- **A House and its History**
- **The Gaskell Daughters**
- **Digitizing Gaskell**

Re The late Miss M. E. GASKELL,
84,
PLYMOUTH GROVE, MANCHESTER.

CATALOGUE
OF THE
VALUABLE CONTENTS

OF THE ABOVE HOUSE, CONSISTING OF
Furniture, Linen, Glass, China, Brass, Cutlery,
Silver and Jewellery, Prints, Etchings, Engravings,
Water Colours, Drawings, &c.; and about 4000
Vols. of Books, including many rare and valuable
First Editions of the Works of Mrs. Gaskell,
Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, &c., &c. * * *

To Be Sold by Auction,
BY

Messrs. GEORGE H. LARMUTH & SONS

ON THE PREMISES AS ABOVE,
Commencing on MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9th, 1914,
and TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY,
and following MONDAY, 16th February.

Sale to commence at 12 o'clock prompt each day.
May be Viewed on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the 3rd,
4th, 5th, and 6th February, from 10 o'clock to 4 o'clock.

CATALOGUE, ONE SHILLING (admitting two persons), may be had
from the AUCTIONEERS, 10, St. Ann's Square, Manchester; and
Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire. (Tel., 2096 City.)

- Lor
367 Old Oak Table with Turned Legs, Two Drawers,
5 ft. x 3 ft. 6 in.
368 Window box ottoman
369 Two plush foot buffets
370 Two ditto ditto
371 Persian mat
371A
371B
372 Pair of tapestry curtains
373 Ditto ditto
374 Ditto ditto
375 Portiere rod and curtain
376 Rare Linen Tablecloth, depicting Portraits of Ludwig
and Maria Theresa
377 *Esquisse Paisley Shawl.*
378
379
380

DINING ROOM.

- 381 Turkey carpet, 18 ft. x 11 ft.
382 Handsome Pierced Brass Fender
383 Brass fire appliances, three pieces
384 Oak coal box on castors, upholstered in leather
385 Rosewood bannerette, turned base
386 4 ft. mahogany sideboard, with cupboard and gardevin
387 Fine Mahogany Bureau, 3 ft. 6 in., Three Drawers
388 Ditto ditto 3 ft. 6 in. three drawers
389 One oak bureau, 3 ft. 6 in., four drawers
390 Ditto 3 ft. 6 in., five ditto
391 Oak boot cupboard, 3 ft. 6 in.
392 Black oak occasional table, carved
393 Old Oak Table, with turned legs, one drawer, 2 ft. 9 in. x
1 ft. 10 in.
394 Ditto, one drawer, 2 ft. 6 in. x 1 ft. 6 in.
395 Handsomely Carved oak corner chair
396 Ditto ditto loose seat, upholstered
in tapestry
397 Old Oak Table, 2 ft. 8 in. x 1 ft. 10 in., one drawer







The Harpers



The Harpers



Chronicle

Mr. Gaskell's Chron. Story

Not many years after the beginning of this century an
worthy couple of the name of Heston occupied a small
farm in the North Riding of Yorkshire. They had married
late in life, although they were very young when they first
began the "Knap Conspiracy" with each other. Nathan Heston
had been farm-servant to Hester Pook's father,
and had made up to her at a time when her parents
thought the match do better; and so, without need
of consultation of her feelings, they had married Nathan
in somewhat cavalier fashion. He had drifted far away
from his former connections, when an uncle of his died,
leaving Nathan, - by this time upwards of forty years
of age, enough money to stock a small farm, and yet
to have something more to put in the bank against bad
times, and one of the consequences of their bargain was
that Nathan was looking out for a wife and household
in a kind of discreet and businessy way, unless he now
may be said that his old love, Hester, was - not married
and flourishing as he had always supposed her to be,
but a poor maid-of-all-work in the town of Ripon. For
her father had had a succession of misfortunes, which
had brought him in his old age to the work house; her
mother was dead; her only brother struggling to bring up
a large family; and Hester herself, a hard-working, kindly
looking (at 21) thirty-seven) servant. Nathan had a kind
of growing dissatisfaction, which only settled for a moment
in his own mind, in hearing of these things of Hester's school.

sued the phantom; never with this man's stride of mine to come up with it, never with these man's hands of mine to touch it, never more to this man's heart of mine to hold it in its purity. And here you see me working

out, as cheerfully and thankfully as I may, my doom of shaving in the glass a constant change of customers, and of lying down and rising up with the skeleton allotted to me for my mortal companion.

THE GHOST IN THE GARDEN ROOM.

My friend and solicitor rubbed his bald forehead—which is quite Shakespearian—with his hand, after a manner he has when I consult him professionally, and took a very large pinch of snuff. “My bedroom,” said he, “has been haunted by the Ghost of a Judge.”

“Of a Judge?” said all the company.

“Of a Judge. In his wig and robes as he sits upon the Bench, at Assize-time. As I have lingered in the great white chair at the side of my fire, when we have all retired for the night to our respective rooms, I have seen and heard him. I never shall forget the description he gave me, and I never have forgotten it since I first heard it.”

“Then you have seen and heard him before, Mr. Undery?” said my sister.

“Often.”

“Consequently, he is not peculiar to this house?”

“By no means. He returns to me in many intervals of quiet leisure, and his story haunts me.”

We one and all called for the story, that it might haunt us likewise.

“It fell within the range of his judicial experience,” said my friend and solicitor, “and this was the Judge’s manner of summing it up.”

Those words did not apply, of course, to the great pinch of snuff that followed them, but to the words that followed the great pinch of snuff. They were these:

Not many years after the beginning of this century, a worthy couple of the name of Huntroyd occupied a small farm in the North Riding of Yorkshire. They had married late in life, although they were very young when they first began to “keep company” with each other. Nathan Huntroyd had been farm-servant to Hester Rose’s father, and had made up to her at a time when her parents thought she might do better; and so, without much consultation of her feelings, they had dismissed Nathan in somewhat cavalier fashion. He had drifted far away from his former connexions, when an uncle of his died, leaving Nathan—by this time upwards of forty years of age—enough money to stock a small farm, and yet to have something over to put in the bank against bad times. One of the consequences of this bequest was that Nathan was looking out for a wife and house-keeper in a kind of discreet and leisurely way, when, one day, he heard that his old love, Hester, was—not married and flourishing, as he had always supposed her to be—but a poor maid-of-all-work, in the town of Ripon. For her father had had a succession of misfortunes, which had brought him in his old age to the workhouse; her mother was dead; her only brother struggling to bring up a large family; and Hester herself, a hard-working, homely-looking (at thirty-seven) servant. Nathan had a kind of growling satisfaction (which only lasted for a minute or two, however) in hearing of these turns of Fortune’s wheel. He did not make many intelligible remarks to his informant, and to no one else did he say a word. But, a few days afterwards, he presented himself, dressed in his Sunday best, at Mrs. Thompson’s back door in Ripon.

Hester stood there in answer to the good sound knock his good sound oak stick made; she with the light full upon her, he in shadow. For a moment there was silence. He was scanning the face and figure of his old love, for twenty years unseem. The comely beauty of youth had faded away entirely; she was, as I have said, homely-looking, plain-featured, but with a clean skin, and pleasant, frank eyes. Her figure was no longer round, but tidily draped in a blue and white bedgown, tied round her waist by her white apron-strings, and her short red linsey petticoat showed her tidy feet and ankles. Her former lover fell into no ecstasies. He simply said to himself, “She’ll do;” and forthwith began upon his business.

“Hester, thou dost not mind me. I am Nathan, as thy father turned off at a minute’s notice, for thinking of thee for a wife, twenty year come Michaelmas next. I have not thought much upon matrimony since. But Uncle Ben has died, leaving me a small matter in the bank; and I have taken Nab-end Farm, and put in a bit of stock, and shall want a missus to see after it. Wilt like to come? I’ll not mislead thee. It’s dairy, and it might have been arable. But arable takes more horses than it suited me to buy, and I’d the offer of a tidy lot of kine. That’s all. If thou’lt have me, I’ll come for thee as soon as the hay is gotten in.”

Hester only said, “Come in, and sit thee down.”

He came in, and sat down. For a time she took no more notice of him than of his stick, bustling about to get dinner ready for the family whom she served. He meanwhile watched her brisk, sharp movements, and repeated to himself,

In The Haunted House, All the Year Round extra Christmas number, 1859

THE CROOKED BRANCH.

NOT many years after the beginning of this century, a worthy couple of the name of Huntroyd occupied a small farm in the North Riding of Yorkshire. They had married late in life, although they were very young when they first began to "keep company" with each other. Nathan Huntroyd had been farm servant to Hester Rose's father, and had made up to her at a time when her parents thought she might do better; and so, without much consultation of her feelings, they had dismissed Nathan in somewhat cavalier fashion. He had drifted far away from his former connections, when an uncle of his died, leaving Nathan—by this time upwards of forty years of age—enough money to stock a small farm, and yet have something over to put in the bank against bad times. One of the consequences of this bequest was, that Nathan was

W. H. Mills Esq.
All the Year Round Office

Wellington Street North
Strand W.C.
London.



Post paid
November 22nd 53

38.

the last thing at night he asked Vopsy to go into town, and hold the lantern while he looked at an ailing cow; and when they were fairly out of ear-shot of the house, he pulled out a little shop-parcel, and said to her John/2

"Woult' you put that on me ~~that~~ Sunday hat, woult' you caps? It'll be a bit on a comfort to me; for I know my lad's dead & gone, though I dunn't speak on it for fear o' grieving the 'old woman and ye'."

65

who were present will never forget it to their dying day.
A few heard before night that the old woman, the
mother was stricken with paralysis and lay on her
death-bed. Mary hurried away from that scene of
unaccustomed horror and crime, and tried to forget
that pitiful face, on a rack more terrible than any
physical bed of torture.
Put the ~~broken~~ ^{broken}-hearted to home, to be comforted of God.

RIGHT AT LAST,

AND OTHER TALES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Mary Barton," "Life of Charlotte Brontë," "Round the Sofa,"
&c. &c.

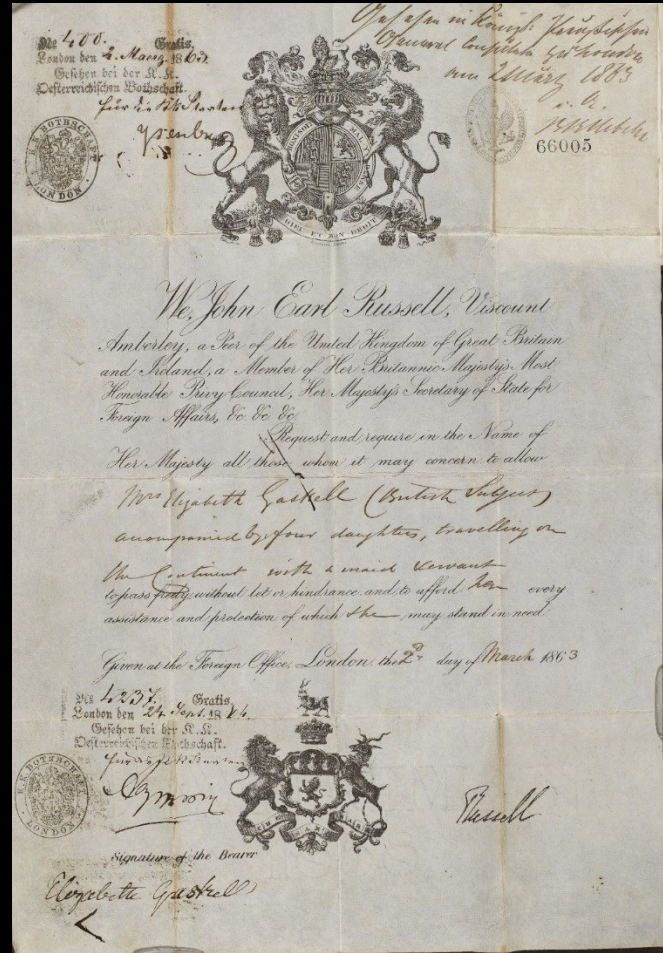
LONDON :

SAMPSON LOW, SON & CO., 47 LUDGATE HILL.

1860.

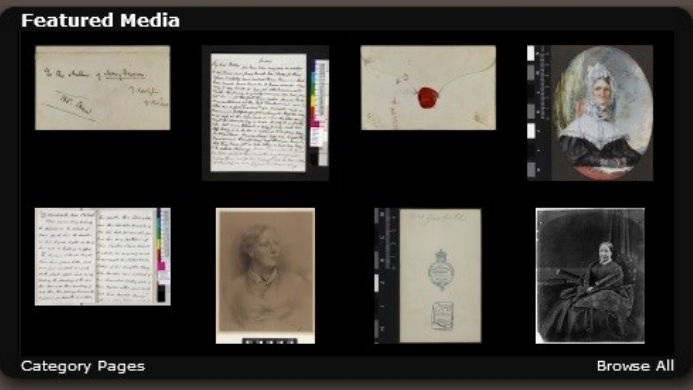
[The right of Translation is reserved.]

Items from the Gaskell Family Collection



Browse Elizabeth Gaskell Collection

- Collection Selection**
- All Collections (68,590)
 - University of Manchester Collections
 - Elizabeth Gaskell Collection**
 - Exhibition Collection
 - Maps Collection
 - Mary Hamilton Papers
 - Rylands Collection
 - Rylands Genizah
 - Rylands Medieval Collection
 - Rylands Non-conformist Collection
 - Rylands Papyri
 - The John Rylands Library
 - University of Manchester Archives Collection



The Library holds the world's most important collection of literary manuscripts by Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), including the only complete manuscript of one of her novels (*Wives and Daughters*) and her celebrated biography of her friend Charlotte Brontë. Her archive also contains nearly 400 letters from notable figures – including Brontë, Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot, John Ruskin and many more – some of which were sent to Gaskell herself and some which she acquired for her own autograph collection. In addition there are artefacts (such as Gaskell's inkstand) and famous portraits. Two related collections also contain significant Gaskelliana: the Jamison Family Archive, and the papers of Gaskell scholar and collector J.G. Sharps. Material from all of these collections has been digitised, along with some



**Elizabeth Gaskell's
House**



Elizabeth Gaskell's House, 84 Plymouth Grove, Ardwick

The Restoration Project, 2011-2014



Primary Sources

- The historic fabric of the house (paint, wallpaper &c)
- Elizabeth's novels and stories, and published letters
- House Sale Catalogue, 1914
- Maps, newspapers &c 1850s Manchester
- Archives:
 - UoM/John Rylands Library
 - Manchester Archives & Local Studies
 - Cheshire Archives & Local Studies
 - Portico Library
 - Manchester Art Gallery



Elizabeth Gaskell, 1864

Curatorial Principles

- Use objects tell stories; not relics in a writer's shrine
- Use Gaskells' own words to narrate their lives, work, house and city ('authentic voices')
- Houses are spaces of imagination and for day-dreaming (Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 1958)
- Sensory/intellectual/cultural access is as important as displaying 'the original'



MANCHESTER AND ITS ENVIRONS



ICE CREAM PALACE



Elizabeth Gaskell and her family

For over 100 years this house has been associated with the novel writer the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, who lived here from 1852 to 1865.

Elizabeth Gaskell (Elizabeth) was much of her best work done in this house. She wrote *Mary Barton* (1832), *North and South* (1855), *Wives and Daughters* (1866) and *London and the North* (1867).

As well as Elizabeth and her husband, William, there were four daughters: Rebecca, Margaret Brown, and Anne, and three sons: Charles, William, and Edward.

The Gaskells spent their childhood in the house with William's mother, Mrs. Mary Gaskell, and in 1813, the house was bought by the Gaskells. The house was used as a school for the Gaskells in 1813 and 1814.

The Gaskells at Plymouth Grove

The house was built in about 1838 on the outer edge of Manchester, as part of a new development of houses by the architect, Richard Lenoir. Plymouth Grove was built within easy reach of the city centre, but away from the noise and pollution of the factories and mills.

The Gaskells moved into the house during the spring of 1852, paying £250 a year in rent - a lot of money for the time. Elizabeth loved the new house but felt that it was 'wasteful' to spend so much while so many are without a roof. She resolved to 'make the house go for as much as possible to others as I can'.

Soon the large house was filled with family actors, writers of novels, students and colleagues called William's study, and Elizabeth's friends, including Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Dickens and John Ruskin, visited or stayed here.

Turning the Pages

Elizabeth Gaskell In Her Own Hand

The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, holds the world's most important collection of literary manuscripts by Elizabeth Gaskell. A selection of these has been digitised in partnership with Elizabeth Gaskell's House, so that everyone can read Elizabeth's work in her own hand.



Manuscript of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*
See how William helped Elizabeth to edit *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*



Manuscript of *Wives and Daughters*
Read the last, unfinished pages of *Wives and Daughters*



The Ghost in the Garden Room/The Crooked Branch
Find out how the short story *The Ghost in the Garden Room* became *The Crooked Branch*

— *The Ghost in the Garden Room*
Manuscript



— *The Ghost in the Garden Room*
published in *All the Year Round* (1859)



— *The Crooked Branch*
published in *Right at Last: And Other Tales &c* (1860)



With thanks to the John Rylands Research Institute and the Centre for Heritage Imaging and Collection Care, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester for creating this resource.

William Gaskell's Study



Experiencing Authenticity

'When we look at how people experience and negotiate authenticity through objects, it is the networks of relationships between people, places and things that appear to be central, not the things in themselves.'

Sian Jones, 'Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves', 2010.

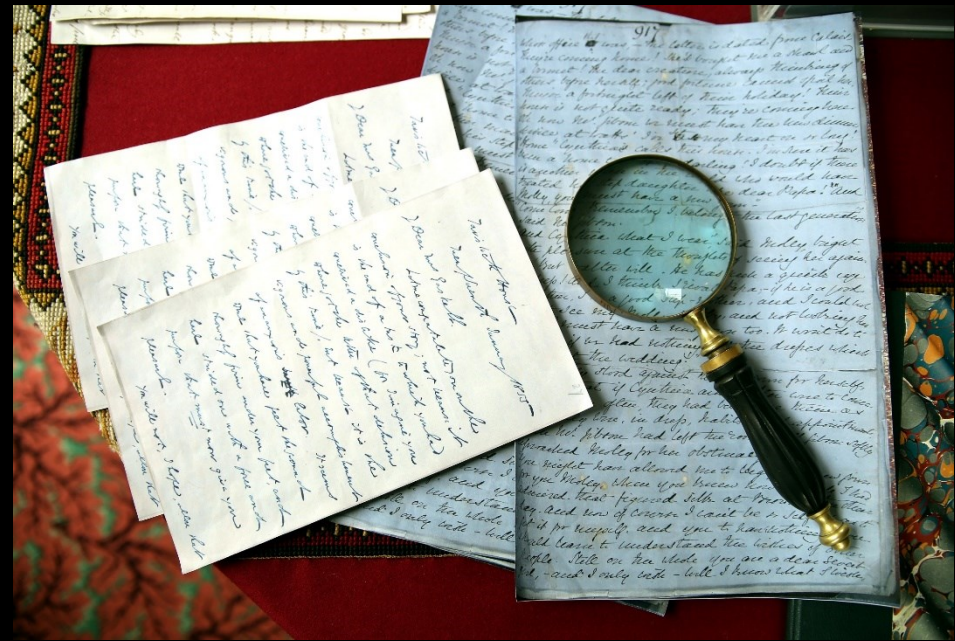




Dining Room

Biographical objects

Objects that are invested in the relationship between subject and object; and that signify the life of the owner.



Elizabeth Gaskell's Writing Table







Questions?

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Elizabeth Gaskell's House: <http://www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk/>

University of Manchester Library's Digital Gaskell Collection:
<http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/Gaskell2~91~1>