Homes and Haunts: Memorialising Romantic Writers

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School of Arts, Histories and Cultures
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<tr>
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ABSTRACT
This thesis takes an historical approach to four literary houses open to the public today, associated with writers of the Romantic Age: Abbotsford House (Sir Walter Scott), Newstead Abbey (Lord Byron), Keats House (John Keats), and the Keats-Shelley Memorial House (John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley). At the heart of this study are questions of how and why houses have had a role in understanding the lives and works of famous writers.

The different histories of these houses over the past two centuries point to a comparative framework for analysis. Fluctuations in the popularity of their associated writers are intimately connected with the manner in which they have been represented and received. For example, Scott and Byron were popular for much of the nineteenth century, with large numbers of people seeking out their homes. With Keats and Shelley their critical acclaim did not gain wide acknowledgement until the later decades of the nineteenth century. In parallel, the houses associated with their lives did not gain popular note until the twentieth century.

One of the principal aims of this thesis is to show how the post-writer histories impact on the literary houses today. Many of the works within the literary house genre highlight the significance of the link between writers and their audiences. These links are created through the establishment of the houses as sites of remembrance, as memorials, and as sensory markers. However, whereas commentators concentrate on the links being direct, this study shows that the association is based on narratives filtered through those who were subsequently responsible for the houses. Consequently, the interpretations prevalent at the houses in the twenty-first century are the result of a long history based on the writers, and on what was considered their significance by others over approximately 200 years.

This thesis also shows how visitor expectations have shaped current presentations, and how visitors’ perception of an ‘aura’ of the associated writers at these houses influenced the way they have been interpreted. ‘Aura’ is used to identify the emotional response by people to certain locations or objects where they feel a ‘spirit’ or the ‘sense’ of something from the past. Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe’s conceptualisation is used to show how ‘aura’ is not inherent in objects from the past but is activated by the reaction of an audience, and thus can migrate from originals to copies.

My research has found that each of the four houses is different in terms of its meaning to the writer, its intrinsic merit beyond the writer, its subsequent ownership and presentation history, and its funding context. Nevertheless, key similarities between them can be determined: the post-writer history still impacts today, visitor expectations over time have shaped current presentation, and visitors seek ‘aura’, whether or not there are physical remains associated with the writer. However, this aura is dependent on whether the houses in the twenty-first century can ‘speak’ to their audiences.
DECLARATION

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
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DEDICATION

IN MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
AND FOR
MARTINE
INTRODUCTION

Homes and Haunts of the Romantic Age

[This] is a work on the residences of eminent poets, including so much biographical and critical remark, as seemed necessary to the full elucidation of the subject, or of the character of particular poets...I resolved [to include]...such poets in general as my researches in the main might show had homes and haunts, and circumstances associated with them, of such a nature as should make them matters of public interest.¹

There are immediate and evident connections between this passage and the aims of this thesis: writing in 1846 William Howitt astutely recognised the role of houses in understanding the lives and works of famous writers.² A measure of the extent of this interest can be found in the success of Howitt’s two-volume publication, Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets, the first two editions of which sold out.³ Howitt was not alone in the focus of his commentary: similar observations can also be found in the works of his nineteenth century contemporaries Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Dibdin and Theodor Fontane.⁴ Collectively these Homes and Haunts commentators wrote extensively on the writers chosen as case studies for this thesis. The forty-one subjects in Howitt’s two volumes read like a Who’s Who of English literature from Geoffrey Chaucer to

² Although some of the writers who are the focus of this thesis were better known as poets, for clarity’s sake the generic term writer will be used to avoid confusion. Scott in particular became famous for his novels while Byron’s letters are of note. I should also point out that the reference to English will be used in terms of language not nationality, as Scott was Scottish and Byron is claimed as Anglo-Scottish.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson. By contrast this thesis focuses on the houses of four writers of the Romantic age, Lord Byron, John Keats, Sir Walter Scott, and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The popularity of the works of the Homes and Haunts commentators demonstrates that by the nineteenth century interest in writers’ houses was wide ranging. These publications also provide an insight into the public perceptions of the writers chosen for this thesis. However, interest in literary homes was not solely a nineteenth-century phenomenon. In the eighteenth century, as Nicola Watson notes, Shakespeare’s sites were sought out in the aftermath of David Garrick’s Jubilee in 1769, and Robert Burns’ birthplace was attracting visitors from 1799. Further afield, travellers on the eighteenth-century European Grand Tour had visited Francesco Petrarch’s house, and at the century’s end Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘haunts’ around Geneva had become a destination. Indeed, according to Harald Hendrix, Petrarch had himself re-invented literary pilgrimage in the 1340s by visiting places associated with Virgil and his works, and his own (disputed) birthplace had been protected as an important site from at least 1350. This interest in the houses of famous persons is, of course, not limited to writers. Hendrix provides us with a range of statistics first quantified in 1972 by Franz Zankl showing that there were 475 institutions across Europe dedicated to celebrated individuals, of which 145 were listed as “literary”. Since then no other in-depth analysis has been conducted which has collected reliable statistics. However, research carried out by scholars at the University of Goettingen has compiled a list of over one hundred writers’ houses in Germany. In France, the work of Georges Poisson and Carol Bugler puts the figure at

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5 Keats, Shelley and Byron are included in Howitt’s first volume with Scott joining others in Volume Two.
over 290, and in Italy of the sixty buildings regarded as writers’ houses, twenty-four have been established since 1990, such as Gabriele D’Annunzio Birthplace House in Pescara (1993), Giovanni Verga House Museum in Catania (1994), and Joyce Museum in Trieste (2004). Houses can be found dedicated to artists: Rubens in Antwerp, Rembrandt in Amsterdam; musicians such as Chopin in Warsaw; military figures, Nelson in Great Yarmouth; and scientist-explorers, Darwin in Surrey and Captain Cook in Whitby. Evidence shows that the interest in UK literary houses persists today; thus, the British Tourist Authority’s website currently features a section on literary figures, celebrating literature’s contributions to regional identities and this suggests at least ninety-three sites devoted to writers.12 In 2003 the LitHouses Group was formed, dedicated to excellence in the presentation of the great homes and museums of British literature.13

The boundaries of this survey have been dictated by its place within twenty-first century manifestations of the survival, conservation and reproduction of literary houses associated with four writers active in the early nineteenth century. Writers from the Romantic Movement make a pertinent case study because of the movement’s emphasis on individual subjectivity and the importance of place. However, this thesis is not centred on the writers per se but is based on the houses associated with their names. Each of the writers chosen for this thesis has at least one house open to the public as a museum of their life. All four of the chosen houses have undergone a major assessment of their role as a representation of the writers in the early twenty-first century. One forum for this assessment has been the LitHouses Group; each of the chosen writers has a house which is a member. In effect, the examples chosen as case studies have their origins in the nineteenth century but also are part

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11 Bugler, C ‘Desk bound: in search of writers’ houses’ [www.europe.org.uk/index/-/id/379]
of a continuing debate about the lives and works of literary figures as presented through houses associated with their names.\textsuperscript{14}

This thesis investigates four houses which are associated with the four writers and which are open to the public today: one each for Scott (Abbotsford House), Byron (Newstead Abbey) and Keats (Keats House); and one for Keats and Shelley (the Keats-Shelley Memorial House). Scott bought and developed the home he named Abbotsford House (henceforth Abbotsford) between 1811 and his death in 1832.\textsuperscript{15} Scott’s obsession with Abbotsford and its place as the vehicle of much of his literary work made it a significant literary destination during his lifetime. It has remained open to the public to the present day.\textsuperscript{16} On his death the house remained in the Scott family who promoted Abbotsford from the outset as the home as Scott had left it, including the furnishings and fittings.\textsuperscript{17} With the death of Dame Jean Maxwell-Scott in May 2004 the future of the house was in some doubt as her descendants showed little inclination to continue her work.\textsuperscript{18} However, in 2006 a Trust was formed to undertake the management of the property. Evidence, to date, suggests it will continue in the short term, at least, to be interpreted along the lines maintained by Scott’s family for many years.

\textsuperscript{14} Samuel Coleridge, who it could be argued has better credentials as a Romantic than Scott, could be justifiably included in this list in terms of chronological boundaries, literary output and by the fact that he is also included in Howitt’s 2nd volume. However, Coleridge’s house has not been party to the debate about houses since the Millennium and has not undergone a re-assessment of its presentation of Coleridge. The 2005 attempt to establish a literary destination at Boscombe House in Bournemouth, the Shelley ancestral home, has to date failed to materialise. It should be noted that this lack of an associated house, other than that shared with Keats in Rome, will be touched upon in this thesis as it is linked to discussions surrounding Shelley’s version of the Romantic ideal which is linked to nature and avoids the domesticity of home.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. pp.4-36.


\textsuperscript{18} Jacqui Wright, Executive Manager, Abbotsford Trust, interview by James Pardoe, Abbotsford House, 15\textsuperscript{th} August 2007.
An early focus for those with an interest in Byron was Newstead Abbey (henceforth Newstead). Byron came into possession of his ancestral home in 1798 (aged ten), selling it nineteen years later to his Harrow school friend, Thomas Wildman. During this time Byron, who had lived there for no more than three years, made minimal physical impact on the building, although on its sale he did leave a number of personal objects *in situ*. Despite this a number of accounts attest to the position of Newstead as *the* place to be visited because of its Byron connections. Today Newstead is considered to be an important Byron house as it contains a significant Byron collection, and certain aspects of Byron’s home as he knew it can still be accessed.

Newstead and Abbotsford have much in common; they were popular destinations during the lifetimes of their associated writers and significant collections were left *in situ* by those writers. From the time the writers left, these objects were not only incorporated into private family homes, but were set out in a form to replicate the use of these houses as they had been during the writers’ ownership. They were also recognised without rival as *the* literary homes of Byron and Scott. With the writers Keats and Shelley, however, a number of differences emerge, not least that neither has an associated property with an unrivalled claim to be *the* destination for either writer.

Unlike Byron and Scott, Keats never owned a house. He lived at Wentworth Place, Hampstead from 1818 to 1820, where he wrote some of his most critically acclaimed poems, including *Ode to a Nightingale*. This was also the house where he met his fiancée, Fanny Brawne, the elder daughter of his next door neighbour. It was from this house that, suffering

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from tuberculosis, he left to spend the winter of 1820-21 in Italy, taking up residence at Piazza di Spagna 26, where it was hoped that he would find a cure in the milder climate of Rome. All of these events established strong connections between the writer and the Hampstead house. However, these links were not celebrated for another century, with the house largely remaining out of the public gaze and in private hands until it was threatened with demolition in the 1920s. It was eventually saved by public subscription and opened to the public as a museum in 1925, since when it has been managed by various local government organisations. Although it was considered as an important location for the production of Keats’s best-known works, little physical evidence of his occupation remained.

For just over three months, from 15th November 1820 to 22nd February 1821, a second floor apartment at Piazza di Spagna 26 in Rome was home to Keats. Although this was where he died, he did not produce any of his works here, and no objects remained from this brief period of his life apart from a small number of letters written from this address to Fanny Brawne. As with the situation at Keats House, the writer’s occupation of this location was not celebrated until the twentieth century. The Keats-Shelley Memorial Association bought the house and officially opened it as a museum and library on 3rd April 1909, with objects on display being drawn from a variety of donations. These objects had no direct associations with the house and the few pieces of furniture placed within the building to represent the house when it was occupied by Keats were reproductions. The motivation behind those responsible for the creation of the Keats-Shelley Memorial House (henceforth the KSMH) was both to provide a memorial to the Romantic writers in Italy, and also to establish a library, archive and study centre. Over the next one hundred years, the KSMH was

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22 Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
established as the pre-eminent centre in Rome for visitors who sought connections with both Keats and Shelley.

The historical starting point for this thesis is the early nineteenth century when each of the writers took up residence in their respective houses: 1811 at Abbotsford; 1808 at Newstead; 1818 at Keats House; and 1821 at the KSMH. My research concludes in the first decade of the twenty-first century when significant re-assessments in the interpretation of each of the houses took place: 2006 at Newstead and the KSMH; and 2007 at Abbotsford and Keats House.

The variety of houses chosen for this thesis points to a comparative framework for analysis. Their differing histories over the past two centuries mirror the fluctuations in the popularity of their associated writers and are intimately connected with the manner in which they have been represented and received over this period of time. For example, Scott and Byron were extremely popular while they were alive and their houses were well-known destinations for visitors wishing to meet, or at least catch a glimpse of, their famous owners. Also for much of the nineteenth century Scott and Byron’s fame and popularity remained high, with large numbers of people interested in the writers and their works seeking out their homes. With Keats and Shelley their popularity remained limited for a generation and their critical acclaim did not gain wide acknowledgement until the later decades of the nineteenth century. In parallel, the houses associated with their lives did not gain popular note until the twentieth century. But how and why were houses considered to be appropriate mediators of the identities of the writers? In the words of Howitt, what makes them ‘matters of public interest’?
Thesis Aims

There is an extensive literature produced on house visiting. Indeed, contemporary scholarship which addresses houses associated with famous people can be recognised across a range of disciplines, one example being literary tourism which analyses audience motivation and experience. In particular, the discussions surrounding why houses should be associated with writers to represent their lives and works is a subject which has attracted a good deal of interest across a number of disciplines. For example, Abbotsford and Newstead are the subject of studies in architecture and design,23 Victorian chivalry,24 country houses,25 biography and celebrity,26 and tourism.27 However, whereas this thesis will cover some of the ideas to be found within the literature, it will also take these themes in new directions. One of the principal aims of this thesis is to show how post-writer histories impact on the literary houses today. Post-writer in this instance identifies the histories of the houses from the point in time when the writer no longer lived there. This came about through death, as was the case of Scott at Abbotsford and Keats at the KSMH; through selling the property, as was the case

with Byron at Newstead; and through leaving the house without returning, as was the example of Keats at Keats House. This thesis also aims to show how visitor expectations have shaped the current presentations at the houses, and how visitors’ perception of an aura of the associated writers at these houses influenced the way they have been interpreted.

‘Aura’ in the context of this thesis is a term that identifies the emotional response by people to certain locations or objects where they feel a ‘spirit’ or the ‘sense’ of something from the past. The aura of the writers at all four houses will be shown to rely on prevalent narratives at the houses, and on visitor expectation.

Post-writer histories are important for a number of reasons. Many of the works within the literary house genre, such as those by Harald Hendrix, Kate Marsh and Nicola Watson, highlight the significance of the link between writers and their audiences. However, whereas these commentators concentrate on the links being direct - to them this signifies the houses’ importance and ‘authenticity’ - this study aims to show that the association is based on narratives filtered through those who are subsequently responsible for the houses. With Hendrix, although his work concentrates on the importance of direct links to the writer, he does adjust his position. As he explains, links between the writer and the audience may also involve other agents, particularly ones which are established by those who turned the houses into memorial sites. Consequently, the interpretations prevalent at the houses in the twenty-first century are the result of a long history based not solely on the writers, but on what was considered their significance by others over approximately 200 years.

The display at Abbotsford presents the house as it was left by Scott on his death. However, as this study will show, a number of changes to the house and displays have occurred and because of these changes, and the practicalities of the house being a visitor destination, those

29 Hendrix, p.5.
responsible for Abbotsford have had to adjust how they present the house in light of the intervening phases of development. A similar situation is found at Newstead. Here architectural features, rooms used by Byron and objects left by him in situ, coupled with debates over Newstead’s inspiration for Byron’s literary works, have been central to an understanding of the significance of the house. However, my research shows that the history of Newstead since Byron left has been important to its meaning and presentation in the twenty-first century. With Keats House and the KSMH, both sites’ significance in the twenty-first century are the result of narratives constructed by what Hendrix identifies as ‘other agents’ who were separated from the writers by time and by not having any physical links left in situ at the houses.

The study of post-writer histories additionally demonstrates that many of the house owners developed their interpretation practices in response to visitor expectation. For example at Abbotsford, visitors choose different routes around the house whether reflecting their interest in Scott the writer or Scott the champion of Scottish identity. At Newstead a significant number of visitors have always questioned how much of ‘Byron’ could be truly experienced there. Consequently, two competing narratives developed: that of Byron’s House narrowly defined as the house left in place by the writer or the ‘Byronic House’, that is, the house which developed in the nineteenth century incorporating a significant Byron memorial. With Keats House and the KSMH, to be able to analyse the ways in which they became recognised, adopted and adapted as representations of Keats and Shelley it is important to examine the development of the status of the two writers during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As Hendrix maintains, ‘Writers’ houses clearly depend on the image readers have constructed of their inhabitants…’

30 ‘Readers’ in this case can be taken as both those who were initially responsible for the houses and those who visit. With the former their
raison d’être for opening the houses to the public came from their own enthusiastic admiration for Keats and Shelley.

Analysis of literary houses often requires a close examination of owner-visitor interaction. This study aims to demonstrate that much of this interaction is dependent on the notion of ‘aura’ and how this is established at the houses. At Abbotsford visitor expectations were influenced by the ‘aura’ which they experienced while at the house. Some, wishing to find the literary genius in the house, such as Theodor Fontane visiting in the 1850s, came away disappointed due to a perception of having to share their experience with ‘tourists’ who were unable to appreciate Scott’s aura.\(^3\) At Newstead, visitors from Washington Irving in the early nineteenth century through to Peter Porter in the late twentieth century have commented on a wish to become more in touch with the ‘spirit of Byron’.\(^3\) For some visitors just being in spaces once occupied by Byron was enough to satisfy their need, while for others sensory markers were required to make the connection.\(^3\) With the KSMH and Keats House this study will show that since the houses opened to the public, in 1909 and 1925 respectively, for their part visitors perceived the houses as places where the aura of the writers were to be located. Consequently, both houses were considered as memorials where a sense of place was central and this has continued to the present day. Nevertheless, the evidence points to this being constructed by the owners, encouraged by visitor expectations, although based on original undeniable links.

In providing the first study of how in the twenty-first century the houses are about present needs which have developed through a history of ownership, interpretation and reception I hope to provide another perspective on the extent to which these houses are considered in the twenty-first century as material expressions of their literary figures.

\(^3\) Fontane, p.221.
\(^3\) Ibid.
Methodology and Sources

My historical approach to this subject adopts a research methodology which utilises qualitative as opposed to quantitative data. The nature of the research is of a qualitative approach due to the importance of perceptions and interpretation central to this thesis. Using a structure developed by Daengbuppha, Hemmington and Wilkes\textsuperscript{34} (incorporating ideas proposed by Decrop on ‘Triangulation in qualitative research’\textsuperscript{35}) a Triangular Research Method has been implemented. The three points of the method include the interviewing of industry professionals, conducted in an informal and exploratory manner, which allowed for a greater development of ideas and which also enabled an input from my own personal experience of visiting the house. This has been cross-referenced with the use of other primary source material including participation observations of the houses by contemporary commentators, an analysis of extant guidebooks, and an assessment of visitor books and other site documentation. This body of evidence provides us with traces of information which suggests the construction of the notion of literary houses is based on broad perceptions arrived at through interactions played out by the owners of each house over time and those visitors whose experience of the interpretations of the houses/writers can be evidenced. Central to these discussions is the concept of what constitutes the house in what is considered to be its original social and cultural context, as highlighted by Foster and Jones in Chapter One. By exploiting secondary source material with a foundation in literary house theory, architectural history based theory (country houses), heritage based theory, literary based theory, and tourism based theory the provision of a context may be formed. This affords a framework which draws upon discussions surrounding the wider issues of literary houses.


Literary house visiting involves different kinds of relations; therefore its analysis necessitates an understanding of the relationship between visitors and writers, writers and houses, and houses and visitors. The study of literary house visiting brings into question certain aspects of the interpretation and reception of the writer at the house. The comprehension of these relationships and questions requires an analysis, in the first place, of the motivations behind owners in opening the houses to the public gaze. Those which began their public lives as private homes, that is, Abbotsford and Newstead, are rich in various forms of private correspondence such as family letters and memoirs, which allow for a picture to be painted of the motivations of the owners in creating literary houses. In addition, this correspondence shows how the structures of the houses developed, in the sense of architectural variations and changes in the location of objects related to the writers. Conversely, the motivation of those who set up Keats House and the KSMH, and the period when Nottingham City Council managed Newstead, as literary destinations can be traced through official documentation held in organisational archives. For Abbotsford we can access Scott’s own motivations in building his house through his own memoirs found in his Journal and other autobiographical sources such as Reliquiae Trotcosienses, and letters sent by Scott and to him. Sources for Newstead include Byron’s extensive letters and poetical works which describe the house, activities which took place there and Byron’s own feelings towards his ancestral home. At Keats House we have official statements outlining the intentions of those who organised the purchase of the house and memorial publications, and at the KSMH diaries and memoirs exist explaining, in detail, the objectives of those responsible for opening the house to the public.

Additional primary sources included guidebooks, contemporary accounts of visits, and visitor books. Guidebooks and visitor books both provide evidence of a public record of visitor profiles and experience of visits, although the self-referencing nature of visitor books, also had to be taken into consideration. They also indicate what visitors were encouraged to like
and see; that is, what the owners emphasised as important in their collections. The archives of the various houses are incomplete in terms of the retention of past guidebooks and visitor books. For example, Abbotsford retains only a limited number of visitor books and these do not allow visitors to make comments about the experience of their visit, and there is no evidence for the existence of guidebooks for the nineteenth century. These sources are also very limited at Newstead. In the case of Keats House visitor books are very extensive and guidebooks were produced approximately once a decade. With the KSMH, although a guidebook was only published in the twenty-first century, their visitor books are wide-ranging in number and content. Additional sources were also accessed, including acquisition and disposal policies. These give an indication of what is considered to be important in terms of collecting which, in turn, highlights what aspects of the writers’ lives are the focus of displays.

The nineteenth century saw an increase in the ‘homes and haunts’ genre of travel writing, with commentators such as Howitt, Irving, Hawthorne and Fontane all producing substantial works. However, these did not comment on all the subjects of the case studies. Although Howitt includes all four writers in his publication, he only provides detailed descriptions of Abbotsford and Newstead. Nonetheless, Howitt’s works can be used as evidence to support explanations on why Keats and Shelley’s houses were not considered worthy to visit in the nineteenth century. Fontane only comments on Abbotsford and Irving and Hawthorne describes Abbotsford and Newstead. Nevertheless, these sources were highly useful as they provided detailed accounts of the houses and their collections at different historical moments and insights into visitor expectation. They also provide evidence which can be cross-referenced with contemporary guidebooks and visitor books. The popularity of the four houses under discussion as destinations means that a number of journal articles exist for the

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later dates providing comparable information. Although with the latter it should be noted that many of these tended to be for a specialist academic market rather than more general visitor consumption.

My research is also concerned with current practice at the houses, including present practices of representation and visitor reception. For sources it was possible to draw on personal experience, collection policies at the houses and interviews which were carried out with professionals employed at the houses as curators and on-site managers. The interviews were unstructured, informal and conducted on a one-to-one basis. These were with individuals who have had the greatest impact on decisions regarding interpretation and collection practice in the early twenty-first century. In addition, a range of visual materials have been used. These include extant plans of Abbotsford, Newstead and Keats House which chart architectural changes and enable an analysis of comparisons between the houses during the writers’ occupation and the sites today. These sources are enhanced by paintings, engravings and photographs which also show developments, at all four houses, and which can be used to support contemporary textual descriptions. The visual materials in guidebooks are also accessed as these show different stages in the history of displays, including present day references. They are also sourced to provide further evidence on what the owners considered to be significant in the collections.

**Thesis Structure**

The structure of this thesis is based on three case studies each relating to a house or group of houses connected to one of the four writers. The houses chosen as the subjects of this thesis encompass an assortment of institutions which, although varying considerably in size and nature, compare generally in their central themes. Their function and meaning have been

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37 Keats and Shelley are the focus of one chapter.
subject to revision over the past two centuries as they have adapted to changing social, economic and political climates.

The subject of the first of these case studies, Abbotsford, became a major literary destination during Scott’s residence. The chapter acknowledges the models outlined by Hendrix, Marsh and Watson, whereby the communication of a writer’s legacy is presented to a visiting audience through sensory markers left in place by the writer, Scott. Thus Abbotsford’s central narrative - namely, as the house as Scott left - is analysed through an exploration of its original context, the influence of Scott’s celebrity status, and the impact of the biography of the house in creating the image of Scott at Abbotsford. How the idealisation of Scott’s legacy is portrayed through his descendants at the house, and the tensions between the house as a literary shrine and as an example of Scott’s nationalist importance in the nineteenth century, is analysed through visions of the house as identified by both owners and visitors and through the presentation of objects in the collections. Discussions continue on the issue of the interaction of public spaces within private homes and how survivals of architectural features, rooms and objects associated with the writer impact on successive interpretations, which, in turn, influenced the interactions between owners and visitors from Scott onwards. This chapter on Scott and Abbotsford serves as a guide for the whole thesis, as it supports Latour and Lowe’s view of aura – as being reproduced by visitors, and not intrinsic to objects and spaces.

The second of these case studies, Chapter Three, builds on the research carried out at Abbotsford and analyses the role of Newstead in the public construction of Byron’s identity. It also examines the evolution of a private literary house to public heritage destination. Themes within the chapter relate to how the legacy of Byron is informed by the changing ownership of the house and of owner-visitor interaction. The approach taken offers an alternative interpretation of the literary house theoretically situated to take advantage of
Hendrix, Marsh and Watson’s two-part image of homes as places of remembrance/memorialisation and sensory markers. The concept of the ‘Byron House’ - created and left by the writer - and the ‘Byronic House’ - the nineteenth-century memorialisation within a private home - and their impact on the formal local authority visitor destination, will be covered.

Chapter Four examines two houses associated with Keats, one of which is also linked to Shelley, and demonstrates how perceived proprietary rights over the two writers were constructed through the acquisition of these two houses, one in London and one in Rome. Questions over the establishment of memorials to writers are addressed, taking into consideration the prevailing narratives of Keats and Shelley and the ways in which collections were established to legitimise these perceptions. The tensions between, on the one hand, the political and economic requirements of public bodies and, on the other, visitor expectations are also analysed. This chapter is about the establishment of literary houses in contexts where they are removed from their subjects by time and space. Although the central themes are still relevant, this chapter moves away from the study of houses with direct physical legacies of associated writers in place, to interrogate houses that have undergone a major dislocation in ownership and management. Evidence of the owners’ attempts to achieve direct physical links with the writers is also discussed.

Each house has its own specific story to tell. Therefore this structure allows for an analysis of the production and consumption of the perceptions of four literary figures across a range of contrasting examples, and over a long period of history. In doing so, the impact of interactions between a variety of owners and different types of visitor and the significance of the writers at particular historical moments may be assessed.
The conclusion will set out to identify the importance of these houses in the understanding of their four associated writers. In doing so, this thesis will provide the first analysis of literary homes through a consideration of the impact of a history of interactions between owners and visitors. In demonstrating new levels of complexity associated with the original contexts, historical narratives, and present-day perceptions, this study will advance our understanding beyond that so far covered in the literature. This will in turn provide further insight into the many debates that still surround literary destinations, and perhaps facilitate further evaluations of the ‘homes and haunts’ of famous literary figures as part of our appreciation of their literature and their lives.
CHAPTER ONE  
CRITICAL CONTEXTS

The context of the writers as Romantics directs the nature of this enquiry. By analysing some of the ideals of Romanticism in literature one can identify an interaction between writer and reader which accounts for public interest in visiting the houses under discussion. The Romantic emphasis on the individual, with its poetry concerned with self-projection and self-fictionalising, led to a fascination in the personalities and private lives of writers. Romantic writing, as Catherine Parke succinctly defines, is concerned with both narratives and lyric poems written about extreme, but private feelings. Bradley and Rawes note, debate in literature in recent decades has raised questions about the experiential nature of Romantic poetry: how much is autobiographical or the imagined universes of the Romantic poets? As they claim, ‘These poems incorporate an awareness of the author’s experiential self, even as they seek to re-fashion that self into an identity that is fictional, self-begotten, aesthetic.’ In many cases this became an important part of the presentation and reception of their works, with literary texts seen as expressions of the inner selves of the writers. To know the writer, it was thought, was vital in understanding the text. Subsequently, to be able to read the text one had to read the life. This contributed to an increasing fascination with the personalities and private lives of creative artists in the early nineteenth century. As David Higgins points out, this fascination was part of a wider obsession with personal fame,

...writers and readers during the Romantic period were generally more interested in the private lives of ‘public characters’ than their eighteenth-century forebears had been. This was especially true with regard

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38 Parke, p.ix.  
40 Ibid., p.3.  
to authors, who...could become celebrities in the sense that their personalities and...their private lives, could be an integral part of the marketing and consumption of their works. The development of the [Romantic] idea of original genius...meant that literary texts were seen increasingly as expressions of the inner selves of their creators.42

The Romantic obsession with ‘genius’ encouraged readers’ interest in the lives of the writers. As Higgins also highlights, ‘Genius, it was widely believed, could be discovered and comprehended through examining the appearance, personal habits, and private manners of authors.’43 The lyric nature of many of the works of these Romantic writers involved the use of an ‘I’ and a ‘you’. There is a figure who speaks, and a figure to whom the words are spoken. This led to a direct intimate link between the two, with the audiences feeling the writer is speaking to them directly as an individual.44

Knowledge about the lives of the Romantics was disseminated through the production of memoirs while they were still alive, and after their death through biography.45 It was during the 1830s that the myth of the ‘Romantic poet’, which had little to do with the actual lives of the writers, was produced for popular consumption through the medium of biography. For example, as both Richard Holmes and Andrew Motion highlight, it was written of Keats that he was the epitome of the effete doomed poet, which evidence from his friends and acquaintances tells us was not true. In fact he was said to be robust, to have tremendous energy and zest for life.46 As Leigh Hunt observed, ‘His shoulders were very broad for his size; he had a face in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up, and eager

42 Higgins, p.46.
43 Ibid.
44 Parke, p.131.
45 An early example was, John Watkins, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Honourable Lord Byron with Anecdotes of some of his Contemporaries (London: Henry Colbourn, 1822).
46 See Holmes, Motion, A Keats (London: Faber and Faber, 1997). Also see Bennett, A Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
power checked and made patient by ill-health. Every feature was at once strong cut and delicately alive.\textsuperscript{47}

The publication of numerous biographies of the writers from the nineteenth century onwards kept interest alive in the writers and consequently impacted on the position of the houses.\textsuperscript{48} Howitt and other Homes and Haunts commentators also responded to a perceived need for works which gave intimate insights into the writers’ lives. Why were houses specifically considered to be important in telling these stories? A central part of the Romantic ideal was their use of landscapes and the importance of ‘spirit of place’ and travel in their works. As Robin Jarvis concludes, travel literature was increasingly popular to Romantic readers, ‘ Usually referred to as “philosophical travel”’ .\textsuperscript{49} The works of Byron, in particular, constructed an imaginative geography based on history and literature rather than contemporary realities.\textsuperscript{50} Interestingly one can chart an increase in the number of travel works produced during the period, for example the 1826 ten-volume series of contemporary British poets published by Giovanni Galignani was aimed specifically at travellers.\textsuperscript{51} Galignani, like Howitt two decades later, was responding to the reading public’s desire to go beyond the works of the writers. The Romantic ideal encouraged the visit of places connected to the literature, and by inference connected to the writer.

Additionally, the interest in the writers coincided with a time when visiting houses was a popular pursuit of the middle and upper classes and, as Julian North argues, the house was

\textsuperscript{47} Leigh Hunt, \textit{Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries; with recollections of the Author’s life, and his visit to Italy} (2nd edn. London: Henry Colburn, 1828), p.407.

\textsuperscript{48} Bradley and Rawes list fifty-six major biographical works published between 1828 and 2000 on the four writers.


viewed as a representation of the intimate.\textsuperscript{52} North uses the example of Byron and notes that many of the biographies written in the first two decades after his death were written in the first person by people who had known him, supplying the public demand for more intimate visions of his life. North’s theory includes the central position of the house as an important representation of the intimate and notes detailed accounts of Newstead in the memoirs of Thomas Medwin, Leigh Hunt and other house guests.\textsuperscript{53} It was thought that by experiencing the spaces within the house where these episodes of Byron’s life took place, visitors could imagine the life of the writer in greater detail.\textsuperscript{54} In contrast, an accepted view of Shelley’s Romantic ideal is linked to nature and avoids the domesticity of home. As North notes, in Mary Shelley’s edited works of her husband she highlights that: “[Shelley] is not shown writing at home…but eager to escape out of doors to compose in the woods, and on the rivers, lakes, seas which abut his residences and for which they are chosen.”\textsuperscript{55} As Mary Shelley also points out: “[he] made his study and reading-room of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake and the waterfall…he made his home under the Pisan hills, their rootless recesses harboured him as he composed “The Witch of Atlas”, “Adonais” and “Hellas”.”\textsuperscript{56} It may be significant that, of all the case studies, Shelley is the one writer without a literary house or museum of his own.\textsuperscript{57}

Debates about literary houses tend to concentrate on the links between the writers and their audiences. These links are created through the establishment of the houses as sites of

\textsuperscript{52} North, p.4.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., pp.82-88.
\textsuperscript{54} Interestingly these accounts are central to the works of the architectural historian Rosalys Coope in her articles on reconstructing Byron’s house and to the management of Newstead in their interpretations of Byron today. See Coope, R ‘Lord Byron’s Newstead - The Abbey and its furnishings during the Poet’s ownership 1789-1817.’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 91 (1987): 133-154.
\textsuperscript{56} Mary Shelley, North, p.5 (p.134).
\textsuperscript{57} Howitt mentions Shelley’s school, home and university in a negative light and suggests that the writer has no British “home” worth visiting. See Howitt, I,(1857), pp.436-466. Also, North, pp.130-135.
remembrance, as memorials, and as sensory markers. Commentators such as Hendrix and Watson tend to use remembrance and memorial as interchangeable terms.\(^{58}\) However, there is a divergence between the concepts of remembrance and memorialisation; according to Barbara Misztal, a site of remembrance is where things have taken place - ‘a real site of memory’.\(^{59}\) Therefore Abbotsford and Keats House, as the sites where Scott and Keats wrote some of their best works, and Abbotsford and the KSMH, as sites where Scott and Keats died, are sites of remembrance as they record episodes which took place at those houses. On the other hand, a memorial is a site of memory which is, to a certain extent, detached from the place where things have occurred, but is linked by associated objects. For example, the KSMH memorialises the death of Shelley through objects taken from his cremation, and Newstead memorialises Byron’s popularity as a poet through replicating his study even though many of the objects in this room were not there during Byron’s residence and many of his works were not written at this site. So these objects, although associated with the memory, might not necessarily be originally linked to the site. In time a site of remembrance can develop into a memorial, where the latter implicitly recognises that actions, events and people are no more. Sensory markers are the physical objects and spaces which enable remembrance and memorialisation to occur.

At certain stages in their histories the houses chosen for this thesis are referred to as ‘literary museums’. Abbotsford is referred to as such after 2004 but was also considered to be a museum by writers, such as Hawthorne, in the 1850s. Newstead became part of a museum service in 1931, and Keats House, although owned by Hampstead Borough Council, was not officially called a museum until 1934. The KSMH was referred to as a museum from 1909.

\(^{58}\) Hendrix, pp.1-10, Watson (2009), pp.1-11.
For the purpose of this study the designation ‘museum’ will relate to circumstances in which the house was ‘officially’ curated. Collection policies were devised and developed, and groups of people organised themselves into bodies with the aim of protection and display. These were, what Susan Pearce terms, ‘systematic collections’ with their intention being, ‘the creation of the context’.\(^{60}\) This occurred when the houses were adopted by official bodies and, as Russell Belk notes, ‘institutionally memorialised.’\(^{62}\) The presentation of Newstead pre-1930s and Abbotsford while in the ownership of the Scott family began with private owners making conscious decisions to establish displays of possessions left in situ by the writers, and created to be viewed by a visiting public. Therefore at these stages of their histories they were not considered as ‘literary museums’.

Whether these houses were officially curated or not, many owners and visitors described the collections as ‘relics’ and the houses as ‘shrines’. David Sox has surmised that relics - objects sanctified by association to the person - and shrines - a place hallowed by association - not only have historical associations and encourage remembrance but take on a quasi-religious mystique.\(^{63}\) However, this was often dependent on whether the visitors considered themselves, or were considered by others, as ‘pilgrims’ or ‘tourists’. David Herbert’s article ‘Literary places, tourism and the heritage experience’ focuses on visitors’ prior awareness of sites and what they hope to derive from a visit: on this basis he makes a distinction between ‘literary pilgrims’ and ‘general tourists’.\(^{64}\) Herbert’s work distinguishes between a ‘pilgrim’, as someone with an in-depth knowledge and fascination with a person or subject and for which a visit to a literary site is more than a leisure activity, and a ‘tourist’ for whom a visit to a literary site is recreational. Whether a visitor is designated as a ‘pilgrim’ or a ‘tourist’

\(^{63}\) Sox, D Relics and Shrines (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985).
will impact on their reaction to a site. For example, to a ‘tourist’ a lock of Shelley’s hair may be the focus of nothing more than morbid curiosity, but to someone who considers themselves a ‘pilgrim’ this could be a relic which has the power to bring him or her in touch with the writer. For some, just the space once occupied by the writer is enough for the link to occur, but for others the space - the shrine - requires physical links in the form of relics - objects associated with the writer.

There are many ways in which literary houses have been approached. Hendrix concentrates on the idea of the house as a link to the writer in the form of a memorial and/or a site of remembrance. In his view they act as a communication between readers and writers which is mediated through the house and objects it contains, which in turn act as sensory markers. Hendrix has accepted that these links may also involve other agents. As he claims ‘As a medium of remembrance, writers’ houses not only recall the poets and novelists who dwelt in them, but also the ideologies of those who turned them into memorial sites.’ However, Hendrix’s reflections are guided by a narrow definition of literary houses as solely constituting associations with writers and influences on them, particularly with reference to the production and consumption of their works. Watson agrees with Hendrix’s basic ideas and she also focuses on the literary associations of the houses, particularly as sites for production and as sites to enable an understanding of the text in the landscape. As Watson summarises:

*literary tourism...is about the ways in which reading, at least for a noticeable and mainstream category of literature’s consumers, becomes progressively and differentially locked in place...the practice of visiting places associated with particular books in order to savour text, place and their interrelations.*

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65 Hendrix, p.5.
Unlike Hendrix, Watson concentrates on how associated objects and spaces create a direct link to the writer. Both Hendrix and Watson borrow from Marsh. Marsh’s focus is on the houses as sensory markers, both as spaces and as containers of objects related to the writers, which create direct portals to the writers for their audiences. These markers, in Marsh’s view, go beyond just the literary and can include any association with the writer, be it to their literature and/or their lives. As Marsh maintains:

...sensory markers evoke strong imitations of the writer’s personality and life...A deeper bond with the writer is established when we realise that we are seeing the same view or garden that the writer saw daily, that we are feeling a similar sense of space or confinement in his study or drawing-room...We walk in our writers’ footsteps and see through their eyes when we enter these spaces.\(^{67}\)

This thesis engages the findings of Hendrix, Marsh and Watson, all of whom use Abbotsford and Newstead to discuss the relevance of literary destinations. Anne Rigney concentrates on Abbotsford as a point of reference to show that the link between reader and writer is maintained in two ways: first, as the backdrop to Scott’s literary production, and second, through Scott’s creation of Abbotsford. According to Rigney, for the reader Abbotsford is both an inspiration for Scott’s literary works and a site for their production.\(^{68}\)

However, Rigney’s reflections are guided by a narrow definition of what constitutes a literary house; her emphasis is on the work of Scott: that is, the text is all important. My approach is broader as I take account of any association, however tentative, with some aspect of the life and/or work of a writer. These associations may include a place of birth or death, a place of residence, a place which has (or may have) influenced the work of the writer, a place which is the theme of the writer’s work, or a place which has an established collection of objects connected to a writer.\(^{69}\) Abbotsford can be seen to include all of the above, apart from the

\(^{67}\) Marsh, K. p.xiv.
\(^{68}\) Anne Rigney ‘Abbotsford: Dislocation and Cultural Remembrance’, in Hendrix, pp.75-91.
\(^{69}\) Marsh, K.
place of Scott’s birth. Andrew Wilson notes that a number of sensory markers have been conserved at Abbotsford which enable visitors to get in touch with Scott. For example Wilson claims:

_The house [therefore] reflects the range (and quirkiness) of Scott’s imagination and, by virtue of its existence, it celebrates his commercial good fortune in being a best-seller...We enter the library, the finest room in the house and every last detail to which Scott planned or designed himself, and we find that it is both a repository of magnificent old books and furniture, and a treasure-house of ‘relics’._

My research further shows that the survival of these markers was due to the recognition of their significance by subsequent owners of Abbotsford, as well as by visitors. Building on the work of Hendrix, Rigney, Marsh and Wilson my intention is to show the importance of each house’s history of ownership in these combined processes of interpretation and memorialisation.

Watson also identifies Abbotsford’s importance as a site where both a writer’s texts can be placed within the landscape and as a site for the production of literary works. As she argues:

...it [Abbotsford] was the first house consciously designed by a writer to display the income and status derived from authorship, to exemplify and epitomise his writing, to act as a fitting frame for the personae and literary achievements...and to be visited by admirers from the outset.

This is the monument to the writer’s creative genius, organised to be visited; in effect, Scott himself created a tourism destination. Consequently, as Watson notes, ‘Abbotsford became a national shrine where it was possible to pay homage to that prodigy of production.’

However, by concentrating on the literary reputation of Abbotsford, Watson only considers the history of the house during the height of Scott’s fame in the nineteenth century. But, as

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72 Ibid. p.91.
73 Ibid. p.100.
research for this thesis indicates, to understand Abbotsford and Scott in the twenty-first century an in-depth analysis of a much longer chronology is necessary.

Hendrix, Watson and Marsh all note that, as a memorial device, Newstead not only contained direct physical and literary links to Byron but also could be used as a source of various interpretations of the writer which have developed since Byron sold the house in 1817. Hendrix has accepted that links between the writer and the audience may also involve other agents, particularly links established by those who turned the houses into memorial sites.\textsuperscript{74} The analysis of Newstead in this thesis will highlight how Hendrix’s position has evolved in practice.

At Keats House, spaces are created so that visitors can experience the house as lived in by Keats, thereby recalling Hendrix’s ideas of the house as a portal of communication between the writer and his audience. In addition, the impact of Keats’s occupancy on his literary output is highlighted; again evoking emphasis on the house as a site of literary production. However, not only do these two themes merge, they are also afforded different degrees of importance by successive owners throughout the history of the house.

With the KSMH, the models suggested by Hendrix and Watson are only partially helpful. The museum has become two things: a shrine to Keats and a celebration of literature including, but not confined to, that of the two writers (Keats and Shelley). However, these literary associations have been created through the establishment of a library and at no point is there a suggestion that the literary interpretation of the house has any historical connections to the writers. The establishment of the KSMH is therefore an entirely new creation by its owners since 1909. The work of Samantha Matthews is relevant here.\textsuperscript{75} Her focus on literary

\textsuperscript{74} Hendrix, p.5.

destinations suggests that readers sought the physical presence of their writers by visiting the site of their mortal remains which paradoxically was assisted by the death of the writer. Matthews highlights an interest in the physical appearance of writers which gives power to immediate material relics, including death masks and physical remains of the writers such as locks of hair. Matthews is a useful starting point in understanding visitor motivations and reception of houses as sites of death; my contention is that visitors also sought out the physical presence of the writer at houses more generally, including material remains with biographical attachments and other relics.

Whether the houses of literary figures are replicated, conserved in situ, and/or used to initiate a sense of place, they all show the past in the present. Evidence of original context contributes to the perceived ‘authenticity’ of what is being shown and makes plausible links to the writer. This plausibility is sustained through physical objects and spaces, both of which form sensory markers. The concept of what is ‘original’ therefore warrants further consideration. The work of Sally M. Foster and Sian Jones in their chapter on the biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish cross slab in 2008 is helpful in establishing the notion of originality. Foster and Jones define the past as being what they call ‘the original or primary social and historical context’. However, according to Foster and Jones, even though objects may be based within their original contexts, questions of subsequent processes need to be aired and the later biography given recognition. Only by identifying all these linked and overlapping phases (the original context, later biography, and these relationships to, and with, the present) can a thorough analysis of the object be made.

76 Hendrix, pp.1-10, Marsh, K, pp. i-xvix.
Any investigation into the histories of the houses lends itself, in part, to a biographical approach to the houses and their collections. Here, like many others, I draw on the ideas of the cultural biography of objects developed by Igor Kopytoff. The value of this perspective is how it demonstrates that ‘specific things’ move through different hands, contexts, and uses, thereby accumulating a biography, or set of biographies. Kopytoff’s theorisation is developed by Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall who assert that objects can only be fully understood if the whole process of their biography as ‘an accumulated history’ is taken into account. This has a particular resonance as this context of the accumulation of history has a significant impact on present contexts and meanings of each of the houses today.

One example which illustrates the applicability of this approach is the ‘Byron Urn’ at Abbotsford. One way that Scott’s construction of Abbotsford as portraying his literary significance was articulated was through the silver urn given to Scott by Lord Byron in 1811. This ‘Byron Urn’, as it has become known, is now housed in a display cabinet in the drawing room. A number of significant points about this object may be noted. The historical circumstance of the initial donation of the gift by Byron to Scott was that of a very personal act representing mutual respect and understanding between the two writers. For Scott, the urn’s significance was emblematic of him as one of the leading literary figures of the English language. This was symbolised by its prominent display with other literary objects in the Library during his lifetime; the Library along with the Study being the literary centres of the house. After Scott’s death the urn continued initially to be prominently displayed with other literary objects in the library where it had been during the writer’s lifetime; Howitt’s

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80 Ibid. p.34.
description of Abbotsford in 1847, fifteen years after the death of Scott, makes special note of this.\textsuperscript{84} However, later in the nineteenth century, the parts of Abbotsford central to the literary tradition of the house, that is the Library and the Study, were transformed completely into areas of public display and with this came a subtle yet significant shift in the presentation of the image of the house. In effect, the house was no longer as Scott had left it, as symbols and references to other figures were removed from these areas.\textsuperscript{85} The urn, with its Byron associations, was first moved, at some time after 1867, to a vault in a bank in Melrose and then, before 1954, to a sideboard in the Dining Room used by the Scott family.\textsuperscript{86} It was therefore taken away from public view and no longer represented Scott as a leading literary figure. Instead it became a private family heirloom, no longer for public consumption and too precious for public display. It was eventually, at some point prior to 2002, placed in a display cabinet in the Drawing Room for protection.\textsuperscript{87} The biography of the urn changed as its significance for Scott and the links to Byron were at first no longer the associations central to the owners’ interpretation of Scott’s Abbotsford, as they saw it, but eventually emphasis was placed upon it again.

Walter Benjamin’s influential essay, \textit{The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction}, postulated that original works of art have an aura that mechanical reproductions lack.\textsuperscript{88} Aura, for Benjamin, represented the originality and authenticity of a work of art that has not been reproduced. An original painting has an aura while a reproduction does not; the reproduction is an image of an image while the painting remains original and authentic. As Benjamin wrote:

\textsuperscript{84} Howitt, (1857) II, p.187.
\textsuperscript{87} Maxwell-Scott, W \textit{Abbotsford} (Abbotsford: Bordernet and Meigle revised ed by J. Corson n.d.)
...that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership...The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity...  

Benjamin also suggested that the removal of authenticity within the original work of art infers a loss of authority which has an impact on its reception:

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from the substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.  

Cornelius Holtorf and Troy Lovata have applied and discussed Benjamin’s ideas in an archaeological context where, they argue, ideas of aura and originality are more context-dependent than Benjamin suggested was the case for art. They recognise the importance of reception, suggesting the aura of an object is created or fixed during its production, but changes according to where and when it is observed. As Lovata claims, ‘Contrary to Walter Benjamin’s view, people’s judgments… are context dependent to such a degree that people can find aura even in reproductions of artifacts.’ In effect, ‘aura’ is not inherent in objects from the past but is activated by the reaction of an audience; for example, Holtorf, gives several examples of museum-goers who do not realise they are seeing replicas or copies and nonetheless experience the kind of aura generated by ‘original’ objects. Similarly Bruno

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90 Ibid.
91 Holtorf, C From Stonehenge to Las Vegas: Archaeology as Popular Culture (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira, 2005), Lovata, T Inauthentic Archaeologies - Public Uses and Abuses of the Past (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007).
92 Lovata, p.17.
Latour and Adam Lowe’s conceptualisation of the production and transmission of ‘aura’ is also valuable. Latour and Lowe show how ‘aura’ migrates from originals to copies. All the houses chosen as case studies here are reproductions to a greater or lesser extent and the spirit of the writers is an important element in the manipulation of understanding who they are. ‘Aura’ will vary unpredictably based on several factors, one of which is their prior knowledge and expectations. For example, Nathaniel Hawthorne complained in 1857 that a visit to Abbotsford was, ‘[as] little more than going to a museum’, and a twenty-first century visitor to KSMH explained how he was awestruck by what he thought was Keats’s last view. On the one hand, conscious that this was a reproduced Abbotsford, Hawthorne failed to find an ‘aura’ of Scott, whereas, on the other hand, the twenty-first century visitor, content that the bedroom replicated Keats’s final hours, was able to experience his ‘aura’ therein.

Latour and Lowe analyse the reaction of a visitor who is much more enthusiastic about the copy of Veronese’s Nozze di Cana in Palladio’s refectory on the island of San Giorgio, in Venice, than the original in the Louvre. In this case the visitor’s knowledge of the context of where the painting was first housed, and for which it was first commissioned, in Venice was significant. In Venice the reproduction was displayed in its historical setting: at the right height, the light in the room was relevant to the painting’s subject, as was the juxtaposition of the architecture of the room and the architecture of the painting. To this visitor the spatial context gave the copy an ‘aura’ which the original no longer had; in effect, ‘the aura of the

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93 Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, ‘The migration of the aura or how to explore the original through its facsimiles’, a chapter prepared for Thomas Bartscherer (ed) Switching Codes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
94 *Hawthorne, Stewart, R*, p.540. Hawthorne did not approve of much in Britain.
95 Author’s informal conversation with visitor during preliminary tour to public areas of Keats House, London July 2005.
96 Latour and Lowe, pp. 1-3.
original had migrated from Le Louvre to San Giorgio… Similarly, my contention is that the aura in the writer’s house is visitor-produced and dependent on the visitor’s prior knowledge and expectations. Latour and Lowe’s notion also recognise the significance of reception in the production of aura.

The issue of visitor reception and questions of who visits, and why, are analysed by, among others, scholars researching in the field of tourism studies. Here the relationship between visitor and owner/institution is a significant theme in the development of the houses as tourist destinations. Richard Butler suggests four general reasons for visiting literary houses: the sites of literary production, the setting of the work, areas which appealed to the literary figures and tourists influenced by the literature. This thesis shows examples of Butler’s reasons: displays at Abbotsford, Newstead and Keats House include objects, such as writing desks, pens and inkwells, which demonstrate these were places where literary works were created, and at Newstead displays of Byron’s original poems, such as The Dome of My Sires, inform visitors of the significance of the house as a setting for Byron’s work.

Other tourism specialists, such as Graham Busby and Julia Klug, and Alastair Durie consider travel writing and utilise the re-interpretation of places by others not originally associated with the houses during the writer’s period of occupation: work which relates to Hendrix’s ideas on the influence of additional agents. The theories of Birgit Trauer and Chris Ryan, who address questions surrounding the nature of the tourist experience relating to

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97 Ibid. p.3.
100 Durie, Seaton, A, pp. 494-499.
place, have a direct impact on my research. They propose that travel is changing and that people, when acting as tourists, engage in a broad spectrum of activities which embrace emotional and spiritual experiences in addition to knowledge acquisition. These experiences are influenced by a ‘sense of place’ and, therefore, are relevant to issues on aura. Clare Fawcett and Patricia Cormack’s article on authenticity at literary tourism sites also provides a useful reference point for analysing the impact of owner views on how the houses should be used to inform visitors about their associated literary figure. As Fawcett and Cormack point out, ‘…site guardians argue for the authenticity of their particular site by making various truth claims and excluding rival claims.’ This is useful when considering how the houses were established as the sites associated with their writers. For example Abbotsford has been continually referred to by its owners as the site left, untouched, by Scott and Wildman claimed that Byron wrote Childe Harold at a table left in place at Newstead. In both cases evidence shows these claims to be untrue.

Research in social and architectural history also looks at the relationship between house owners and visitors, often those owned by the gentry and aristocracy. Particularly relevant to my research is The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home by Peter Mandler which examines the motivations of visitors to the private homes of the gentry during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the motivations of the owners for opening up their houses to the public. Whereas studies in literary tourism tend to concentrate on the economic reasons for opening

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houses to visitors, Mandler introduces what he calls, ‘…a cultural and political gesture…’\(^{104}\):
an interaction between owners and visitors whereby owners saw it as their duty and also in
their interests to open their residences

CHAPTER TWO

ABBOTSFORD HOUSE

Introduction

*Yet to save Abbotsford I would attempt all that was possible. My heart clings to the place I have created.*

(Sir Walter Scott, Edinburgh, 18\textsuperscript{th} December 1825)\textsuperscript{105}

Abbotsford House, Melrose in the Scottish Borders, began life when the writer Sir Walter Scott bought a small run-down farm in 1811. Over the next twenty-one years Scott transformed the farm into a substantial home fit for a member of the gentry. In the ‘creation’ of Abbotsford Scott used the building as a public statement of his position both as a landowner and a writer. In response to Scott’s invention, Abbotsford became valued as a symbol of the writer, a place to witness his genius, a repository of his collections, and a part of Scotland’s national heritage. This established a role for Abbotsford as a literary destination which has continued unbroken to the present day. This chapter will examine the central narrative of Abbotsford, promoted from the outset as the home created and left by Scott, through the collections left in place by the writer and which were subsequently set out in the form of domestic constructs. Although these were subsequently incorporated into the Scott family home, they were also specifically related to the use of the spaces within the house during the writer’s lifetime.

Central to this case study is the contribution that Scott made to the cultural identity of Abbotsford, and how this sense of identity moulded past and present perceptions of the house. Through his transformation of his house, Scott devised a distinctive vision of what he stood for, which continues to influence how the house has been perceived by owners and visitors alike. Accordingly, this chapter also aims to examine the role of Scott’s descendants in shaping the meaning and identity of Abbotsford, and creating a hybrid combining family

home and a memorial. It also analyses the emotional investment and expectations that visitors have brought to the house and how these have shaped their responses to it.

Beginning with Abbotsford during the writer’s lifetime, Scott himself was very much concerned with how the image of the house would reflect his own public image and status. And still today, despite changes in contents and structure, Abbotsford exists in a form that allows visitors to imagine its appearance in Scott’s time. A central question therefore is whether, and how, changes in both ownership of Abbotsford and changes in the reputation of Scott have affected both the physical appearance of Abbotsford and its reception by a visiting public. The theme of this chapter, therefore, is of how the image of Scott has been represented through the medium of Abbotsford. My discussion focuses on how that image has been projected by those responsible for the house, and how both the image of Scott and Abbotsford have been viewed by visitors. Abbotsford was and is, above all, the setting for Scott’s self-fashioned public persona.

I first address Scott’s association with the Borders and the history of Abbotsford from 1811 when he bought it, until 1832 when Scott died: these are the years when Abbotsford can be described as the ‘Scott House’. I then consider the period 1832-2004, which was devoted to the memorialisation of Scott when, the building called here, ‘Waverley in Stone - Scott’s Memorial’, was a private house owned by the writer’s descendants, and presented as the house frozen in time at the point of Scott’s death. An analysis will then be made of how Abbotsford and Scott were viewed in the ‘Trust’ period of 2004 to 2007. Throughout this long history, the survival of architectural features, rooms and objects associated with Scott is evidence of continuity in the perception and meaning of the house, notwithstanding changes in ownership and management.
Scott’s House: Scott, The Borders & Abbotsford 1773-1832

Walter Scott was born in the Old Town of Edinburgh on 15th August 1771, the son of a successful solicitor. In the winter of 1772-73 the child contracted polio, and his maternal grandfather, professor of physiology at the University of Edinburgh, advised that he should be sent to stay with his paternal grandfather, a successful sheep farmer in the Scottish Borders, so as to benefit from country air. For the next ten years, Scott would spend extended periods of time on this farm, due to recurring ill health. This experience of living in the Borders was to have a profound effect on Scott’s writing and eventually led him to move to the area.106

From 1783 Scott attended the University of Edinburgh and trained as a solicitor in his father’s practice. He passed the Scots law examination in 1792, and spent the next five years as a moderately successful advocate, and in 1797 met and married Margaret Charlotte Carpenter (Charlotte) the daughter of French émigrés.107 Also during this period he made a number of journeys around Scotland, but mainly through the Borders area.108 After his marriage Scott and his wife set up home in Edinburgh, initially living off a modest income from his advocacy work, until in 1799 he was made sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire, in the Borders region. He continued to hold this post until his death in 1832. Scott began writing in earnest in 1797, writing poetry from 1802. However, from 1804 onwards he produced some of his most popular works, starting with The Lay of the Last Minstrel (written in 1804,

106 Lockhart, J Life of Scott , first published as Narrative of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, in 2 volumes, 1848 (New York: Macmillan, 1875 ed.).
published in 1805) and *Marmion* (1805).\(^{109}\) On being reminded that a sheriff should have a residence in the area for which he was responsible, Scott rented Ashestiel, a house near Galashiels in Selkirkshire.\(^{110}\) The lease on this house expired in 1811 and Scott opened negotiations for the purchase of the future Abbotsford: Newarthaugh, a modest five-room farmhouse, on the banks of the River Tweed near Melrose.\(^{111}\) (Figure 1) Within a few years, Scott began to transform the farm into a substantial home in the Scottish baronial style. (Figure 2)

Scott renamed the farm ‘Abbotsford House’, reviving its historical links to the nearby Melrose Abbey. The estate originally comprised 110 acres, but by 1825 the estate had grown to ten times that size after Scott bought up neighbouring properties.\(^{112}\) The house also gradually increased in size with the first building phase from 1816 to 1818 including a tower, armoury, dining room and study. In 1818 Scott was raised to a baronetcy and, in keeping with his elevated position, three years later a further phase of work began: the old farmhouse was demolished and a second part of the new house was completed. The present day entrance hall, Scott’s study, the library, and the sitting-room were all completed by 1825. Externally the structure resembled a sixteenth-century Scottish fortified house. Historical references continued inside, which was filled with objects both of Scottish national history and of the history of Scott’s family.\(^{113}\)

Scott’s initial outlay of £4,200 on the house and estate, and the building projects thereafter, were funded against his future earnings.\(^{114}\) By 1826, Scott was in debt to the sum of £120,000


\(^{110}\) Hewitt, p.18.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., p.22.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., p.27, Wright, J (2007), pp.5-6.


and he took advances from his publisher Archibald Constable for a number of volumes on which he had yet to begin work. As Iain Brown points out: ‘From the very outset…Abbotsford was tied to literary production and the financial risk of heavy borrowing against future intellectual property.’ Scott’s obsession with the house and Abbotsford’s place as the vehicle of much of his work brought it to public attention, making it a fashionable visitor destination during his own lifetime. For example, it is known that Scott welcomed the Royal Princes Leopold and Gustavus in 1819. Such was the popularity of Scott and Abbotsford that the Scottish poet and dramatist, Joanna Baillie, warned Scott repeatedly that travellers would abuse his hospitality. By 1825 Scott, too, had reason to complain, as he noted in his Journal ‘…Abbotsford it begins to be haunted by too much company of every kind.’ A substantial number of these visitors came from overseas, mainly Europe, but by the 1830s Alastair Durie suggests as many as a hundred a year were also arriving from the United States of America.

In building Abbotsford, Scott not only created a comfortable family home but also a stage for the fashioning of his self-image as a great writer, and an advocate of Scottish history and antiquarianism. A central part of this self-conscious projection was Scott’s willingness to open Abbotsford to visitors, albeit those who would recognise his status as a writer and public figure. By visiting, people would perpetuate Scott’s own interpretation of the house and his persona. As a result, before he died in 1832, Scott had effectively laid the foundation for Abbotsford as public monument and a private family home. At this stage of Abbotsford’s history, this duality was mobilised when certain parts of the house were opened to the public.

117 See Ibid., pp.4-36.
119 Ibid., pp.22-23.
121 Durie, p.495.
at certain times: it was only later that these divisions were concretised in the building itself.

(Figure 3)

During the nineteenth century Abbotsford was both a testimony to Scott’s status as a writer but also to his significance to Scottish history and antiquarianism: he regarded the house as a memorial to ancient Scottish architecture and design, and filled it with significant artefacts. As Graeme Morton points out, the idea that Scott was only a writer and Abbotsford merely a literary house is too simplistic: instead he identifies ‘four distinct versions’ that inform our contemporary understanding of Scott. These four themes are: the ‘genius author’; the great British literary figure; the universal man; and the great chronicler of Scotland’s past who instigated pride in the Scottish nation.

Reflecting these diverse personae of Scott, even during his lifetime there were a number of antiquarian features throughout the house, that demonstrate his intense interest in Scottish history and culture. For example, the Entrance Hall was designed to be imposing, a room for show and an indicator of the social standing of the householder. Scott deliberately arranged this room to accommodate a display of ancient artefacts, many relating to Scottish history, such as: cannon balls from the siege of Roxburgh Castle in 1460; the original keys of ‘The Heart of Midlothian’ or old Tollbooth of Edinburgh; and two Highland back-swords found on the Field of Culloden. He also included pieces belonging to historical figures, such as a clock that belonged to Marie Antoinette; a grate said to have belonged to Archbishop Sharp, murdered in 1679; and a model of the skull of Robert the Bruce. (Figure 4) The purpose of this room was to lead the visitor, both metaphorically and physically, into the world of his writing. Those familiar with his writing and able to decipher the symbols would recognise the

122 MacInnes, R; Glendinning, M & MacKechnie, A Building a Nation: The Story of Scotland’s Architecture (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999), pp.74-76.
themes on display. But, equally, it was from this space that the visitor moved into the space where he wrote: his Study, which could be seen from the Hall. (Figure 4)

Scott’s input into this element of the design of the house gives Abbotsford a critical importance in the study of literary tourism. It has been recognised as the first home in the UK to have been shown as the site of a writer’s work. As Watson suggests, it was the model for many subsequent displays of writers’ houses, particularly those organised by the writer himself.124 Abbotsford became a representation of a writer at work in an environment of his own creation: a material link between the house and his literature, and also a portrait of the writer as a figure in, and a writer of, Scotland’s history. Much of the evidence for this is based on Scott’s own thoughts on the subject. *Reliquiae Trotcosienses*, one of Scott’s last works, although written as a work of fiction, contains detailed descriptions of Abbotsford and its collections, and, in effect, became a catalogue of both.125 In this work Scott links both his interest in Scotland’s history and antiquarianism, and his literature to the building, its collections and their combined meanings. For example, he begins with a description of the Entrance Hall: ‘The entrance opens into the hall through a stone porch flanked by two towers, and to compare small things with great, the plan of which has been taken from the entrance of Linlithgow palace…’126 Further historical references are made:

*The walls from the floor to the height of eight or ten feet are panelled with black oak, which was once the panelling of the pews belonging to the church of Dunfermline, celebrated as containing the sepulchre of the Scottish hero-monarch Robert Bruce.*127

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125 Carruthers, G & Lumsden, A (eds) *Walter Scott - Reliquiae Trotcosienses* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). This work was suppressed on Scott’s death and although extracts were published in 1889 and 1905, it was not until 2004 that a complete edition was published after the original manuscript was located in the library at Abbotsford.
126 Ibid., p.29.
127 Ibid.
He also makes reference to his own ancestry: ‘There is also a large range of shields running east and west along the top of the hall, understood to be the various escutcheons belonging to the proprietor,…’ The significance of his furniture is also noted:

*The furniture of the drawing room...consists of curious ebony chairs, and an antique cabinet bought at Linlithgow, and said to have been part of the furniture which found its way out of the palace when burnt the night after the Battle of Falkirk, and verifying by its appearance its alleged antiquity.*

Scott’s imaginative construction of Abbotsford as a reflection of his own literary significance can be detected in the position of the silver urn given to Scott by Lord Byron in 1811. (Figure 5) The ‘Byron Urn’, is a solid silver vase in the shape of a Classical Greek urn and is now housed in a display cabinet in the drawing room. A number of significant points about this object may be noted. The historical circumstance of the initial donation of the gift by Byron to Scott was intended as a very personal act representing mutual respect and understanding between the two writers. Bones, reputedly from an ancient tomb in the Piraeus, encased in the urn, served as a metaphor for Scott placing his own works within the great literary classics of Homeric tradition. For Scott, the urn was emblematic of his position as one of the leading literary figures of the English language, and was symbolised by its prominent display with other literary objects in his Library. Scott refers to the urn on a number of occasions:

> Like the heroes in Homer, we exchanged gifts. I gave Byron a beautiful dagger mounted with gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey. But I was to play the part of Diomed in the Iliad, for Byron sent me, sometime after, a large sepulchral vase of silver. It was full of dead men’s bones, and had inscriptions on two sides of the base.

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128 Ibid., p.30.
129 Ibid., p.40.
Some years later, in 1829, he again refers to the urn, in the context of a theft:

\[\text{I made a grearch yesterday and today for letters of Lord Byron to send to Tom Moore but I could only find two. I had several others and am shocked at missing them. The one which he sent me with a silver cup I regret particularly. It was stolen [out] of the Cup itself by some vile inhospitable scoundrel for a servant would not have thought such a theft worthwhile. Monday 12th January 1829}\]

Others noted the value Scott placed on it:

\[\text{Lord Byron sent to Sir Walter Scott from Greece a silver urn, containing ashes which he had dug up at Thermopylae. In the urn were verses commemorative of the place and the persons associated with the gift. These verses were stolen by some visitor to the library at Abbotsford…Well I remember the indignation with which Sir Walter denounced “the felons who could never exhibit his prize without proclaiming his infamy.”}\]

\[\text{John Bowring}\]

\[\text{Claremont, Exeter, Sept. 19, 1867}\]

A similar indicator of Scott’s position within the literary pantheon was also found in the Library: a bust of Shakespeare was placed in a prominent position on a pedestal in a niche on the east wall. (Figure 6)

Through his activities at Abbotsford, Scott did much to bring the house to the attention of the public. Visitors to the house were both commonplace and expected; as Mandler demonstrates it was not unusual at this time for visitors to turn up uninvited to country houses, expecting to see round the interior or simply to wander around the grounds.\[135\] This was part of a two-way process in society, a part of what Mandler calls a cultural and political gesture, whereby country house owners attempted to maintain their influence in nineteenth-century culture and

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133 Scott, Anderson, W, 12th January 1829, p.564. Anderson suggests ‘grearch’ was a slip by Scott who actually meant ‘great search’, see note 3, p.564.


135 Mandler (1997).
society. However, Scott was extremely active in encouraging knowledge of Abbotsford and in inviting visitors, styling himself as a ‘Laird’, with Abbotsford at the centre of his estate and therefore as a place which would expect visitors. For example in 1817, Irving commented on Scott’s impact on tourism and visits to Abbotsford:

*I told him he had a great deal to answer for on that head, since it was the romantic associations he had thrown by his writings...that had brought in the influx of curious travellers. Scott laughed, and said he believed I might be in some measure right...*136

He continued to play an active role in Abbotsford’s presentation and in doing so increased the number of visitors. In January 1828, Scott noted in his *Journal*: ‘4 Friday Visited by Mr. Stewart of Dalguize who came to collect materials for a description of Abbotsford to be given with a drawing in a large work, ‘Views of Gentlemen’s Seats’.’137 His *Journal* entry for 5 September 1830 also recorded that, amongst his many callers at Abbotsford, ‘We have had the usual number of travelling Counts and Countesses, Yankees, male and female, and a Yankee Doodle-dandy into the bargain, a smart young Virginia man.’138 On the same theme, Thomas Carlyle commented that it was not unusual for as many as sixteen parties to descend upon Abbotsford in one day,

That Abbotsford became infested to a great degree with tourists, wonder-hunters, and all that fatal species of people, may be supposed. Solitary Ettrick saw itself populous: all paths were beaten with feet and hooves of an endless miscellany of pilgrims.139

Abbotsford was visited by many of Scott’s followers and admirers while he was alive, including William Wordsworth, Thomas Moore and Washington Irving.140

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136 Irving, pp.34-35.
138 Ibid., 5th September 1830, p.60.
Many early descriptions concentrate on the literary references surrounding Scott and Abbotsford. Indeed, Irving’s observations, from his visit in 1817, show evidence of an acceptance by visitors of the interpretation of Abbotsford presented by Scott, namely that of the site which offered a physical manifestation of his own importance as a writer.\textsuperscript{141} Irving is a useful source to concentrate on as he was on intimate terms with Scott and he wrote extensively on his experience of visiting Abbotsford. Others, such as Baillie and Carlyle whose views I call upon, only make passing reference to the situation at Abbotsford. Therefore, they are used here to support the detailed views expressed by Irving and Scott himself. The focus may have been upon a literary destination but writers such as Irving noted that many of Scott’s works were interwoven into his own life and that his conversation almost mirrored his literature, focussing on Scottish history, myths and legends. He notes that, ‘…incidents and feelings that had appeared in his writings were apt to be mingled up in his conversation, for they had been taken from what he had witnessed and felt in real life, and were connected with those scenes among which he lived, and moved, and had his being.’\textsuperscript{142}

Few of the objects left after Scott’s death related to his own life but formed part of his mythological and antiquarian collections. Irving’s observations appear to support the view that although Scott was a great writer, what he found at Abbotsford was a symbol of all the elements of Scott’s self-fashioned image.\textsuperscript{143} He describes a number of mythological and antiquarian objects that would have surrounded Scott as he worked:

\textit{After dinner we adjourned to the drawing-room, which served also for study and library. Against the wall on one side was a long writing-table, with drawers, surmounted by a small cabinet of polished wood, with folding-doors richly studded with brass ornaments, within which...}

\textsuperscript{141} Irving.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., pp.36-37.
\textsuperscript{143} Irving visited Abbotsford on 30th August 1817. At this point Scott was part way through his first building phase, so references made by Irving would not have included the present Entrance Hall, Study (Scott’s study at this time would have been the present day breakfast parlour), the Library and the Sitting-room.
Scott kept his most valuable papers. Above the cabinet, in a kind of niche, was a complete corslet of glittering steel, with a closed helmet, and flanked by gauntlets and battleaxes. Around were hung trophies and relics of various kinds: a cimeter of Tippo Saib; a Highland broadsword from Flodden Field; a pair of Rippon spurs from Bannockburn; and above all, a gun which had belonged to Rob Roy, and bore his initials, R.M.G., - an object of peculiar interest to me at the time, as it was understood Scott was actually engaged in printing a novel founded on the story of that famous outlaw.\footnote{Irving, pp.18-19. Three volumes of Rob Roy were published in 1818.}

This highlights Abbotsford’s importance as a site of Scott’s literary production, not least in the eyes of those who visited it.

Scott’s projection of his self-image always anticipated public access, and, in turn, Abbotsford’s popularity resulted in his redesigning parts of the house in order to manage the competing pressures of display and privacy. During the early stages of his building works, Scott attempted to maintain an architectural separation between those parts of the building open to visitors and those reserved for his Study, although, through flexible planning, he built his final Study in the 1820s wing as a site of simultaneous display and retreat. Located in the southeast corner of the new wing, the Study communicated with the private upstairs quarters via a staircase.\footnote{Scott’s projection of his self-image always anticipated public access, and, in turn, Abbotsford’s popularity resulted in his redesigning parts of the house in order to manage the competing pressures of display and privacy. During the early stages of his building works, Scott attempted to maintain an architectural separation between those parts of the building open to visitors and those reserved for his Study, although, through flexible planning, he built his final Study in the 1820s wing as a site of simultaneous display and retreat. Located in the southeast corner of the new wing, the Study communicated with the private upstairs quarters via a staircase.}\footnote{Figure 7} With the doors to his Study closed, Scott could work uninterrupted, moving between it and the upstairs without entering the public areas of the house.\footnote{Figure 8}

When the Study doors were open, however, a visitor might look through the stairwell hall directly to Scott’s desk.\footnote{Figure 9} This architectural arrangement acknowledged that Scott and his writing process were primary attractions at Abbotsford. As Scott was to state:

\begin{quote}
...a private apartment 16 feet high...a small gallery filled up with oaken shelves running round three sides of the Study and resting upon small projecting beams of oak. The gallery and its contents are accessible by a small stair...a small door encloses a staircase which leads about seven paces higher...and lands in the proprietor’s dressing room. The inhabitant of the Study therefore if unwilling to be surprised...\end{quote}
by visitors, may make his retreat unobserved by means of this gallery to his private staircase.\textsuperscript{145}

The design of the Study indicates increased recognition of popular interest in Scott as both a celebrity and a writer and is another example of an exhibition space within the house. Scott himself referred to the number of visitors in his Journal:

\begin{quote}
Talking of Abbotsford it begins to be haunted by too much company of every kind. But especially foreigners. I do not like them. I hate fine waistcoats and breast pins upon dirty shirts. I detest the impudence that pays a stranger compliments and harangues about his works in the Author’s house, which is usually ill breeding. Moreover they are seldom long of making it evident that they know nothing about what they are talking of excepting having seen the ‘Lady of the Lake’ at the Opera.\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

The juxtaposition of the Entrance Hall and Study was part of the process and progress of the narrative of the house in respect to Scott’s image. But, although both were exhibition spaces, flexibility of the planning of the Study meant it could serve as an isolated work space or as exhibition site. Here is an example of the duality of Abbotsford at work; a duality which allowed for a public stage within a private house, in response to the demands of the visiting public.

The dual role of Abbotsford during Scott’s time was not entirely fixed in the sense that, display on the one hand and privacy on the other, were dependent on Scott allowing or denying visitor access by the simple expedient of keeping the Study door open or closed. There were few distinctions during this period between those parts of the house set aside for display and those purely for private use. Moreover, the opening of the house paid homage to his role as local ‘Laird’ and to the house being an administrative centre of a neo-feudal estate, in the long tradition of the lord’s public ‘hall’ being a communal space.\textsuperscript{147} Abbotsford was

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[145]{Wright, J (2007), p.33.}
\footnotetext[146]{Scott, Anderson, W, 23rd November 1825, p.13.}
\end{footnotes}
Scott’s private domestic space but a space, nevertheless, with and for a public persona. This role for Abbotsford was similarly manifest in the layout of the house and the display of objects therein. These could be seen in their original context, the context where Scott placed them. In particular, the public areas of Scott’s layout, where Scott’s literary production and the influences on his work could be experienced, were intended to be easily recognised by visitors and commentators. This allowed for a reception of a clear image of the literary house and enabled elements of memorialisation to be constructed once Scott was dead. This image of Abbotsford was considered to be have been guided by Scott, both in his Journal and later through the published extracts of Reliquiae Trotcosienses, and became the one which was sought out subsequently by visitors. Scott’s own image of Abbotsford in turn impacted on how the house and Scott were to be interpreted by those subsequently responsible for the house. Scott’s influence on the establishment of Abbotsford as a destination is profound, and at a level not witnessed at any of the other houses under discussion.

‘Waverley in Stone’: Scott’s Memorial 1832-2004

On the death of Scott in 1832, Abbotsford was left to his son, Walter, and officially opened for public visits, although it continued to be a family home. By this time Abbotsford had become a focus for tourists, attracting considerable numbers to see the house and its many antiquarian curios. Abbotsford remained the property of Scott’s descendants for the next 172 years, until the death of Dame Jean Maxwell-Scott in 2004. From 1832 onwards parts of the house were increasingly viewed by some visitors as a shrine to Scott’s memory, with these admirers considering themselves, or being considered by others, as ‘pilgrims’. ‘There was no literary shrine ever so bepilgrimed’ declared Carlyle in 1839. At the same time, commentators recognised that Abbotsford was also a destination where other aspects of

148 Hewitt, p.32. See also Scott, W Scott on Himself - Association for Scottish Literary Studies, No.10, ed. by David Hewitt) (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press Ltd, 1982).

149 Carlyle, p.324.
Scott’s legacy could be experienced. Indeed, The Scotsman reported in December 1832 that there was no more appropriate memorial to Scott than the permanent preservation of the house and the conservation of the library and of the multitude of national antiquities that he had accumulated over the years. All the while, it still had to function as a family home.

There was now a marked distinction between the public parts of the house and the family rooms. The bulk of Scott’s house, as described by Irving and Scott, remained intact even though significant changes to the fabric occurred and the display of objects was adapted. The duality of Abbotsford continued, and for many visitors there would be little discernible difference in the presentation and function of the house through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, from 1855 a subtle change may be perceived in how Abbotsford functioned. The house was divided spatially, with some parts designated as public (the ‘shrine areas’) and others as private family areas, which remained outside the public gaze. (Figure 10) During the nineteenth century, although changes to the fabric of the house occurred and objects were placed in different locations from those identified in Scott’s time, the collections at Abbotsford remained intact. Nonetheless, the family asserted that Abbotsford largely remained in the state in which Scott left it. In doing so they maintained Scott’s physical associations with the house. By the 1850s Abbotsford was open to the public six days a week, from 10am till 6pm during the summer, with more restricted times during the rest of the year. There was little need to publicise the house, since the foundations for Abbotsford as a literary and historical destination had already been laid by Scott himself through his novels and poetry. (Figure 11) However, this is not to say that the house did not benefit from any promotion whatsoever. In 1844 Fox Talbot photographed the house for a book entitled Sun Pictures in Scotland which was dedicated to subjects associated with Scott

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150 The Scotsman, 1st December 1832.

and his novels.\textsuperscript{152} The vast majority of guidebooks relating to the area included a note of the house, and the North British railway company showed shrewd business acumen in naming the Edinburgh-Carlisle line the ‘Waverley’, after Scott’s most famous works. The railway historian James Thomas described the naming of the Waverley line in 1862 as a ‘stroke of genius’.\textsuperscript{153}

The middle of the nineteenth century saw a major change in the biography of the house when a substantial physical adjustment occurred to the structure of the building, including the building of an entrance lodge and the addition of a west wing housing a chapel, kitchen and domestic offices.\textsuperscript{154} In fact this new wing was built in 1855 for family rooms as the rest of the house was inundated with visitors.\textsuperscript{155} This emphasised the duality of the house as these changes came about as a direct result of this increase in visitors. By now Abbotsford was a significant tourist destination undertaking major commercial activity.

The restructured Abbotsford continued to attract a steady number of visitors until the 1890s. As sample pages from visitor books in the 1860s show, around 7,000 entries per annum were made. Overall visitor figures would have been higher still as it is presumed that not all visitors would have signed the books: quite often only one entry would be made per party. For example on the 12\textsuperscript{th} September 1864, a single entry was made for a group of pupils from Past Villa School in Darlington.\textsuperscript{156} These books also show that Scott’s appeal was worldwide. In September 1864, entries to the visitor book show visitors from France, Spain, the

\textsuperscript{152} MacInnes, R; Glendinning, M & MacKechnie, pp.74-76. This was the second photographic book ever to be published.
\textsuperscript{153} Durie, p.51.
\textsuperscript{154} Maxwell-Scott, W Abbotsford (Abbotsford: Bordernet and Meigle revised ed by J. Corson n.d.) pp.8-9
\textsuperscript{155} Comment made by Jacqui Wright, Executive Manager, Abbotsford House, 4th Annual LitHouses Conference, Abbotsford, Melrose 9th November 2007.
\textsuperscript{156} Visitor Book, September 12th 1864 - July 13th 1867, Abbotsford House, Melrose, comment dated 12th September 1864.
Bahamas, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and United States of America. In October 1864, entries were also made from Holland, Italy, (what is now) Germany, Austria, the West Indies and India. The following year, visits are additionally recorded from Portugal, Brazil, Cuba and Switzerland. A high proportion of these entries came from USA, for example 228 out of 700 in June 1867 and by the mid-1870s over 2,000 Americans alone were visiting Abbotsford per year. Sometimes overseas entries made up almost 50% of those recorded, although during the autumn and winter months they dropped as low as 10%. Visitor books also show that, despite a fall in Scott’s popularity as a writer, visitors in the early years of the twentieth century remained constant: in the years up to 1913, around 7,000 entries were made, similar to figures from the 1860s.

Extant guidebooks from the twentieth century demonstrate that Abbotsford continued to be presented along the lines of the domestic settings of the nineteenth century. The content of the guidebook pre-dating 1954 (it was written by Major-General Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott, who died in that year), which lists the collections of Abbotsford, shows similarities to the descriptions of nineteenth-century *Homes and Haunts* commentators such as Irving, Dibdin, Howitt, Hawthorne and Fontane. It would appear that Scott’s family kept Abbotsford in a state to perpetuate its standing as a literary memorial dedicated to their ancestor despite his diminishing popularity as a writer. It also shows a continuation of the spatial duality in place since the changes of the 1850s. On the death of Major-General Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott in 1954, Abbotsford passed into the hands of his two daughters, first Patricia Maxwell-Scott and

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157 Visitor Book, September 12th 1864 - July 13th 1867, Abbotsford House, Melrose.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 These figures are reflected in the origins of the *Homes and Haunts* commentators with both Irving and Hawthorne being from America and Fontane from Germany.
then her sister Dame Jean. The guidebooks from this period were largely based on the one by Major-General Sir Walter and the evidence suggests that although still a family home, the family strove to perpetuate the portrayal of Scott within the literary shrine they had inherited. Indeed the sisters very much saw their role as custodians of Scott’s literary shrine. But what sort of memorial to Scott had Abbotsford become: Scott the literary figure, or Scott the historian and antiquarian?

The approach of Scott’s descendants to the presentation of Abbotsford was essentially based on continuity and preservation. Abbotsford was shown as the house as left by Scott; a memorial almost frozen in time. Part of this memorialisation came in the name of Scott itself. Scott’s sons both died without issue in 1841 and 1847 respectively, and Abbotsford passed to his grand-daughter (Scott’s daughter’s only child), Charlotte. When she inherited, Charlotte took the name Lockhart-Scott (her father was John Gibson Lockhart, Scott’s biographer). Charlotte married James Robert Hope and their daughter, who inherited Abbotsford on the death of her father in 1873, dropped the Lockhart part of her name and became Mary Monica Hope-Scott. Mary Monica, in turn, married the Hon. Joseph Constable Maxwell and their son, Walter Joseph, took the surname Maxwell-Scott. On his death in 1954 Sir Walter’s eldest daughter, Patricia Mary Maxwell-Scott, took possession of Abbotsford until her death in 1998, when his second daughter, Dame Jean Mary Monica Maxwell-Scott, became the last ‘Scott’ owner from 1998 until her death in 2004. The Scott name was thus retained by the owners of Abbotsford despite passing through a number of generations of the female line.

As there are no extant nineteenth-century guidebooks to Abbotsford - in fact, there is nothing to suggest any were published on behalf of the family - much of the evidence for the way in

\[163\] Ibid., p.5.
\[165\] This was the Major General Sir Walter Joseph Maxwell-Scott who wrote the 20th century guidebooks.
which the Scott descendants memorialised their illustrious ancestor comes from the published comments of visitors. According to these sources, the preferred method of presentation was the guided tour, to which the *Homes and Haunts* commentators Dibdin, Howitt, Hawthorne and Fontane all refer to and, therefore, an analysis of these reflections give us an insight into the type of image that the owners of the house wished to depict. The popularity of Abbotsford led to a number of commentators publishing and making known their own experiences of a visit to the site. Dibdin’s observations (formulated after a visit in the 1830s) encapsulate an image of Abbotsford which must have been held by many visitors. Within his short description, Scott is portrayed with reverence not only for his intellectual abilities but through his comments on the everyday tools of his trade and personal belongings still seen at Abbotsford.

*The hall-door opened - and here breathed, and for a while lived, the greatest intellectual mortals in this country, after Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, and Newton. You walk into Sir Walter’s study, sit in his chair, gaze upon the motley furniture, and hard by, in a boudoir, behold his straw hat, jacket, waistcoat, trousers, high shoes, and walking stick - in all which he was wont to be arrayed - hanging upon a couple of nails. You cannot fail to be sensibly affected.*

Such was the importance of Abbotsford to Dibdin that he became one in a long line of observers moved to write and publish his experiences of his visit. To him, and many others, Abbotsford held a special significance which resulted from it being the place where Scott and his literature could be experienced. It demonstrates Watson’s view that Abbotsford was considered important for being a site of literary production, and thus was to remain one of the main themes of public understanding of Abbotsford throughout the period under discussion.

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*Dibdin, T, II, pp.1008-1012.*
This view is echoed by Howitt,\(^{168}\) whose 1846 descriptions of the interiors match those of Irving’s experiences in 1817.\(^{169}\) The image of Abbotsford as Scott’s unaltered home - the ‘Scott House’ - was emphasised by both owners’ and writers’ focus on objects in Scott’s collection. The Byron Urn continued to be prominently displayed with other literary objects in the Library where it had been during the writer’s lifetime. Howitt’s description of Abbotsford fourteen years after the death of Scott makes special note of this: ‘There is a tall silver urn, standing on a porphyry table, filled with bones from the Piraeus, and inscribed as the gift of Lord Byron.’\(^{170}\) Other examples of the continuities with the Scott House include comments that the Study was maintained just as it had been when Scott wrote his novels there, in particular the views of Hawthorne and Fontane writing a decade later in the 1850s.\(^{171}\)

Many of those with an interest in the house appeared to accept that Abbotsford was fundamentally unaltered since Scott’s lifetime. The motivations behind this acceptance appear to be the result of a co-production by the owners and visitors both of whom wanted to see it this way. Not only do these comments give an insight into the presentation of Abbotsford in the nineteenth century, but also by cross-referencing these commentators’ observations with the twentieth century guidebooks, a continuity in presentation methods in the twentieth century can be identified. However, the image that Scott himself wished to project at Abbotsford incorporated not only his standing as a great literary figure, but also as an advocate of Scottish history and antiquarianism. This is where a tension appears in the years after his death. Scott’s House had incorporated both the literary and the antiquarian aspects of his life: however, from 1832 onwards it was presented and promoted primarily as a literary destination. A tension also emerges between those visitors who saw Abbotsford as

\(^{168}\) Howitt, II (1857), pp.183-195.
\(^{169}\) Irving, pp.18-30.
\(^{171}\) Fontane, p.201, *Hawthorne, Stewart, R.*
almost exclusively a literary shrine and those tourists whose interests were in the wider Scott, which incorporated his impact on Scottish history and his significant antiquarian collections.

I will therefore consider Abbotsford first as a literary destination and second as a house which prompted Scott’s wider interests as an important Scottish historian and antiquarian collector. To analyse visitor perceptions a reliance on published commentators’ views has to be made as the format of the Abbotsford visitor books did not encourage the leaving of comments - space only being given for the visitor’s name, address and date of visit.

Immediately after Scott’s death, Abbotsford was referred to as a shrine and a number of visitors evidently considered themselves as pilgrims. As mentioned earlier, Carlyle declared in 1839, ‘There was no literary shrine ever so bepilgrimed.’¹⁷² This idea was encouraged by Scott’s family, and articulated by some visitors - albeit not always enthusiastically - notably those who continued to publish works in a similar vein to Irving. For example Hawthorne commented in 1856 ‘I do abhor this mode of making pilgrimages to the shrines of departed great men.’¹⁷³ Two years later in 1858 Fontane, writing of his tour of Scotland that year, sets aside a whole chapter for Abbotsford, and summed up its significance in the concluding lines of his book, ‘The drive to Abbotsford was a pilgrimage, a duty which I fulfilled, a step to which my heart had urged me.’¹⁷⁴ The perception of Abbotsford as a shrine has continued into the twenty-first century. In 2003, Brown claimed ‘Abbotsford became a shrine, unique in its power to attract pilgrims’¹⁷⁵ and Wright noted that the last two Scott descendants to own Abbotsford also viewed the house in this light.¹⁷⁶ However, for many of these commentators it was not a shrine to Scott per se, as they were concerned with the literary focus of the house,

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¹⁷² Carlyle, p.324.
¹⁷⁴ Fontane, p.223.
¹⁷⁵ Brown, I, p.25.
but rather a shrine to his literature. The different expectations and interest among visitors, inevitably led to tensions over what was on display and who was able properly to appreciate it.

All this was influenced and informed by there being no significant dislocation physically, apart from private areas being set aside, with the Scott version of the house which could be identified through his own personal descriptions. And notwithstanding the movement of individual objects, such as the Byron Urn and Shakespeare’s bust, and the addition of others, such as Scott’s death mask and his clothes, many of Scott’s ‘public’ rooms remained largely as they had been witnessed in his lifetime. (Figure 12) This continuity enabled some visitors to perceive a ‘true representation’ of Scott’s own house. During his lifetime, the image of the house was perceived to be Scott’s, whether through his own words or by proxy, that is through the recollections of visitors such as Irving. After his death, this image became contested.

One group with suggestions to make included the Homes and Haunts travel writers who in describing Abbotsford, whether deliberately or unconsciously, served as cultural brokers, appropriating the house and Scott’s memory, and re-interpreting them for new audiences, albeit ones who shared the same views of Abbotsford as the earlier generation. For these visitors the idea of the shrine legitimised them as true Scott aficionados. By projecting this status on the house and by referring to themselves as ‘pilgrims’, they gave themselves an exclusive status in the face of the growing popularity of Scott and the house. In Scott’s time, such visitors were guests of the writer (invited or uninvited) but now they had to share their experience with paying tourists, and did not always appreciate the situation. Fontane notes that when visiting the Study and on being shown Scott’s clothes on display in a cabinet, he had his ‘pilgrimage’ interrupted:
As I was contemplating these things, a profane remark, ‘All newly washed’, with which a self-satisfied cockney made known his presence and the measure of his wit, quickly dispelled my rather solemn mood and we left the place in some ill-humour and entered the library.  

Mandler’s distinction between pilgrims and tourists is reflected in the division between the literary aspects of the house and the historical artefacts and antiquarian collection, which was not only fostered by Scott in his self-image, but also held an appeal for the ‘tourist’ public at large.

These ‘pilgrim’ visitors considered themselves connoisseurs of Scott’s works; they were well versed in his literature and how it was bound up with the narrative of Abbotsford. Christopher Smout describes the development of what he calls the ‘connoisseur-tourist’, noting that for something to be both a la mode and truly sublime it should also be very exclusive. Such connoisseur-tourists at Abbotsford imposed their own interpretation upon the house, focussing on, in their descriptions, the focal points which had become sacred objects with direct attachments to Scott himself. In this they were assisted by its owners who placed examples of these sacred objects within the house, initially in one of the literary centres: the Study. This co-production, an important theme for this thesis informed levels of expectation of the image to be found. As Erin Hazard writes:

If Scott’s spirit haunted Abbotsford, it did so at the bidding of his survivors who substituted former containers of his body, like his clothes and his death mask, for his presence, summoning his spirit to fill them.

The strength of these images and expectations mark the early stages of the creation of a ‘literary authenticity’ at the site. During this process certain objects, according to an idea proposed by Gabriel Koureas, and articulated by Hazard, became substitutes for the absent

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177 Fontane, p.221.
writer and work to create an ‘aura’ suggestive of his presence. However, this ‘presence’ is one created by the visitors themselves, but only those with the capacity to summon Scott’s spirit, and not Fontane’s self-satisfied Cockneys.

The parts of Abbotsford central to its literary image, that is the Library and the Study, were transformed completely into areas of public display, resulting in a subtle yet significant shift in the presentation of the house. In effect, it was no longer as Scott had left it. Symbols of, and references to, other figures were removed from these areas. The urn, for example, with its Byron associations was first moved, sometime after 1867 to a vault in a bank in Melrose and then, before 1954, to a sideboard in the Dining Room used by the Scott family. (Figure 13) At some point prior to 2002, it was eventually placed in a display cabinet in the Drawing Room for protection. (Figures 14 & 15) It would appear the urn’s significance for Scott and its links to Byron were, for a while, not the associations central to the owners’ interpretation of Scott’s Abbotsford as they saw it, unlike the present day when renewed emphasis is placed upon it. Similarly, the bust of Shakespeare was taken from its prominent position on a pedestal in a niche on the east wall and replaced with the bust of Scott by Sir Frances Chantrey. (Figure 6) The twentieth century guidebooks suggest this was carried out by Scott’s son on the day of Scott’s funeral in 1832. According to Crockett, Shakespeare’s bust was in the Drawing Room in 1905: ‘Bust of Shakespeare. Somewhat youthful-looking.

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183 Maxwell-Scott, W *Abbotsford* (Abbotsford: Bordernet and Meigle revised ed by J. Corson n.d.)

Presented by George Bullock, along with the finely-carved oak cabinet on which it stands.\footnote{Ibid., p.191.}

The bust was eventually relegated to an alcove in-between the Study and Entrance Hall. (Figure 3) The date of this move is uncertain, as in 1858 it was still placed in the Library. For example, according to Fontane, ‘…there are busts of Shakespeare and Sir Walter in the room…’,\footnote{Fontane, p.221.} although he does not give its position.

Unfortunately the sources do not throw light on the motivations behind these moves. Nevertheless, conclusions can be drawn from the reactions of visitors to their experience of the house from the mid-nineteenth century until the early twentieth century. Abbotsford was still considered important enough for commentators to publish their views. One image presented to visitors was of Abbotsford’s significance as the place where Scott wrote some of his best works. Moreover, the house was expected to provide inspiration to those who encountered it, a consistent theme at Abbotsford. Thus, visiting in 1856 Hawthorne had cause to comment:

\begin{quote}
From the hall we passed into the study…at one end of the table stands an easy chair...The servant told me that I might sit down in this chair, for that Sir Walter sat there while writing his romances; ‘and perhaps,’ quoth the man, smiling, ‘you might catch some inspiration!’

What a bitter word this would have been, if he had known me to be a romance-writer! ‘No, I never shall be inspired to write romances,’ I answered, as if such an idea had never occurred to me. I sat down, however.\footnote{\textit{Hawthorne, Stewart, R}, p.342.}
\end{quote}

Even though Hawthorne felt no need of stimulation from a chair, it appears that the guide had sufficient experience of this type of response to make the offer. The incident also testifies to the continuing iconic status of Scott’s chair and desk. Hawthorne did, however, accept Abbotsford as important in understanding Scott’s work and observed that: ‘In a certain way…I understand his romances the better for having seen his house; and his house the
better, for having read his romances. They throw light on one another.'\(^{188}\) He expressed himself in the language of a literary pilgrim and seemed to find much in his visit which pleased him: ‘This study quite satisfies me, being planned on principles of common sense, and made to work in…The library, like the study, suited me well…’\(^{189}\) He also noted how he and others showed reverence towards the dead Scott:

> Adjoining the drawing-room is the dining-room, in one corner of which, between two windows, Scott died. It is now a quarter of a century since his death; but it seemed to me that we spoke with a sort of hush in our voices, as if he were still dying here, or but just departed.\(^{190}\)

However, Hawthorne had little time for the non-literary parts of the tour, remembering nothing of what was in the dining-room and complaining about the profusion of artefacts in Scott’s collection: ‘There were a thousand other things, which I know must be most curious, yet did not ask nor care about them; because so many curiosities drive one crazy, and fret one’s heart to death.’\(^{191}\) Returning in 1857, Hawthorne was again given the opportunity to experience a connection with the subjects of Scott’s writing: ‘He [the guide] asked me to write our names in a book, and told us that the desk, on the leaf of which it lay, was the one in which Sir Walter found the forgotten manuscript of Waverley…’\(^{192}\) Hawthorne does not state his feelings on being given such an opportunity, although he does make it known that he generally disapproved of a visit to Abbotsford on the grounds that it was, ‘little more than going to a museum.’\(^{193}\) Hawthorne’s disappointment was based on Abbotsford’s lack of meaning without Scott’s presence, and brings into sharp focus the differing levels of expectation of pilgrims and tourists. It also makes a good case in point for establishing that

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\(^{188}\) Ibid., p.344.  
\(^{189}\) Ibid., p.342.  
\(^{190}\) Ibid., p.343.  
\(^{191}\) Ibid.  
\(^{192}\) Ibid., p.539.  
\(^{193}\) Ibid., p.540. Hawthorne did not approve of much in Britain.
‘aura’ was something which was in the visitors’ experience and not intrinsically found in the house, its spaces or collections. His return visit in 1857 was quite a different experience for Hawthorne, as the tour gave him the feeling of being treated as a tourist. This time there was an official visitor route: (Figure 10)

The entrance-way to the house is somewhat altered since my last visit; and we now, following the direction of pointed fingers on the wall, went round to a back-door in the basement-story, where we found an elderly man waiting as if [in] expectation of visitors.  

The tour still took a ‘literary’ route beginning with the Study, where Hawthorne seems to have experienced the ‘aura’ of Scott:

The first apartment, into which our guide showed us, was Sir Walter’s study, where I again saw his clothes, and remarked how the sleeve of his old green coat was worn at the cuff - a minute circumstance that seemed to bring Sir Walter very near me.

The sensory markers in the Study and those objects intimately associated with Scott were things that enabled Hawthorne to experience the spirit of Scott, rather than the house per se. However, the full effect of this experience was denied to Hawthorne as he was not allowed to enter the room where Scott died: ‘…we should have entered the dining-room, the most interesting of all, as being the room where he died. But this room seems not to be shown now.’

Hawthorne’s observations suggest that a more formalised visitor route was in place by 1857. On his visit, the previous year, he commented that work on the new wing had been recently completed; now it would seem that a distinct separation between the public and private spaces was established, with the Dining-Room, used by the family, no longer always part of

\[194\] Ibid., p.539.  
\[195\] Ibid.  
\[196\] Ibid., pp.539-540.
the tour. (Figure 16) Hence his complaint about visiting a museum which, for Hawthorne at least, enabled very limited connections to the spirit of Scott.

A year later, Fontane echoed some of Hawthorne’s conclusions. He, too, saw himself as a literary pilgrim, commenting that there was nothing of note in the rooms not linked to Scott’s literary work: ‘From the library we enter the reception-room, which apart from its cedar wood panelling and richly carved furniture has nothing very extraordinary to show…’¹⁹⁷ He too felt that the experience was not one that brought him close to Scott: ‘…even one who is familiar with Scottish history and song walks through these rooms as though they were a waxwork show.’¹⁹⁸ However, Fontane did consider a visit to Abbotsford to be of sufficient significance to declare that:

_I now experience a full pure satisfaction at having wandered through that strange house with its gables and tiles, that house which was also the creation of his poetic genius and which, though it may lag far behind the other creations of his spirit, will always remain the place where this miracle tree of the romantic movement put forth its fairest and above all its ‘healthiest’ blossoms._¹⁹⁹

These tensions between pilgrims and tourists, and among the identities of Scott, are also evident in descriptions by William Crockett in 1905. Crockett first confirmed Hawthorne’s observations on the formal route through the house by noting ‘An ingenious tourist access was also arranged…’²⁰⁰ He added: ‘The public waiting-room is in the basement, whence parties of ten or twelve are conducted through the house.’²⁰¹ Crockett then questioned the motivations of many visitors: ‘…hundreds (among modern trippers) in their hurry can hardly carry away a correct impression.’²⁰² Crockett’s route around the house followed that taken by

¹⁹⁷ Fontane, p.221.
¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.223.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰⁰ Crockett, p.158.
²⁰¹ Ibid., p.170.
²⁰² Ibid., p.171.
Hawthorne and Fontane some fifty years earlier, and he acknowledged that: ‘For the sake of convenience, we follow the order which has been in force for years…’ But he disapproved of the pace of his visit and of being treated like a tourist: ‘All we plead for in the public interest is a little more leisure, if that be possible, for seeing what is to be seen.’

Many of Crockett’s room descriptions showed that little had changed apart from the position of the Shakespeare bust, and the cabinet of Scott’s clothes, the latter now placed in the Entrance Hall. The display of clothes did not produce any particular comment from Crockett which suggests that his main interest was literary, rather than biographical. This interest can be seen in Crockett’s descriptions of his visit:

Visitors are admitted first into what is surely the ‘sanctum sanctorum’ of the place - THE STUDY…Everything is practically as Scott left it. Oaken bookcases line the walls, and hardly a volume (it is chiefly a reference library) has been altered…The Desk is, of course, the chief object of interest. At the desk most of the novels were written, we may suppose, though not all at Abbotsford, as is not infrequently imagined…The fact remains, that in all probability each of the Waverleys was penned at this desk.

He spent some time concentrating on the desk, confirming its iconic status:

Hence its unreckonable value to the literary pilgrim, and unqualified reverence with which tens of thousands have gazed upon it. Certainly no article of furniture has been so intimately associated with Scott.

Crockett was clearly stimulated by the visit to the Study and suggested a sense of getting close to the great man:

Scott’s desk is seldom seen open. The present writer counts it one of the memories of his life to have had that pleasure, and to have sat in Sir Walter’s ‘own huge elbow-chair’, and to have handled - an act almost too sacred after all those years - relics so touching and pathetic.

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203 Ibid., p.175.
204 Ibid., pp.199-203.
205 Ibid., pp.176-177.
206 Ibid., p.177.
Crockett was also enthusiastic about the Library, noting that it contained volumes annotated by Scott and that it was where he did a great deal of his literary research: ‘Note should be taken of Sir Walter’s four-sloped reading desk, movable at the will of the writer, thus enabling him to consult a number of works at one time.’

Once he moved on from the literary centres of the house, Crockett’s reflections became more cursory with none of the warmth of the literary pilgrim. Regarding the Dining Room, the site of Scott’s death, he only noted, ‘The Dining-Room - ‘his own great parlour’ - is not open to the public.’ Both Hawthorne and Crockett make interesting reading as they demonstrate that the ‘aura’ of Scott for these two visitors was fashioned by their own hopes and expectations, and not really from the site itself.

Part of the reception of this literary image of Abbotsford led to groups of people with attachments to the site and/or to Scott increasingly to feel personally connected to one or both. At Abbotsford, for a number of visitors, this connection was such that it had sufficient meaning for them to accept its status as a shrine. However, that perception as a ‘shrine’ was in tension with other elements of presentations and for some the intrusion of these elements led them to be disappointed with their experience.

The exclusivity of Abbotsford as a pilgrim’s shrine did not last long, and was already under threat as Fontane found in 1858. Developments in transport and communications opened the door to greater numbers of tourists with less specific interests. Meanwhile, there was a growing awareness and popularity of Scott. The cumulative sales of volumes of Scott’s works rose from 31,000 in 1853-54 to 1,051,000 in 1863-64, and 2,099,000 between 1866 and
1868. Inevitably the numbers and motivations of visitors to Abbotsford broadened, as Fontane experienced to his chagrin when he had to share his visit to the Study with ‘a self-satisfied cockney.’ For many of these ‘new’ tourists the house was more of a memorial to a great man whose fame exceeded his literary credentials. The steady numbers of visitors to Abbotsford and its continued appearance in guidebooks shows that the allure of Scott remained for many tourists. The house was, in every sense, a monument to the man himself, not only as a literary giant but also as a contributor to Scottish culture and heritage, of which the house had become a part. Lockhart claimed in his Life of Scott that, ‘Abbotsford, after his own immortal works, is the best monument of its founder.’

Howitt also suggests the broadening appeal of the house and the increase in the volume of visitors:

As I drove up to Abbotsford it was getting towards evening, and I feared I might be almost too late to see through the house, but I met three or four equipages returning thence, and as many fresh ones arrived whilst I was there. Some of these were obliged to wait a long time, as the housekeeper would not admit above a dozen persons or so at once; and carriages stood about the court as though it were some great visiting day there.

Howitt was writing of his experiences some dozen years after the death of Scott and his observations point to the house already being seen as a major tourist destination by this date. Although his book concentrated on literary subjects, Howitt does not discuss Scott the writer at the house and instead focuses on describing Scott’s collections: ‘When the door opens, you find yourselves in the entrance hall, which is, in fact, a complete museum of antiquities and

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210 St Clair, p.643.
211 Fontane, p.221.
212 Lockhart, J Life of Scott , first published as Narrative of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, in 2 volumes, 1848 (New York: Macmillan, 1875 ed.), p.246.
other matters. ²¹⁴ Many of these were the subject of Scottish history or Scott’s own antiquarianism. For example in the Entrance Hall Howitt mentions, ‘Opposite to the door is the fireplace…In it stands the iron grate of Archbishop Sharpe, who was murdered by the covenanters; and before it stands a most massive Roman camp kettle.’ ²¹⁵ (Figure 4) Elsewhere Howitt does make the odd literary reference, ‘The armoury is a most remarkable room; it is the collection of the author of Waverley…’ ²¹⁶ noting how the subjects of Scott’s novels take physical shape within the house. However, rather than developing this point he returns to his descriptive narrative,

...to enumerate all the articles which are here assembled, would require a volume. Take a few particulars. The old wooden lock of the Tolbooth of Selkirk; Queen Mary’s offering box…Rob Roy’s purse and his gun…The hunting bottle of James I…Buonaparte’s pistols, found in his carriage at Waterloo…and innumerable other objects of the like kind. ²¹⁷

Rather than observing that the Dining-Room was the place where Scott died, he concentrates on the portraits on show:

There are a considerable number of good portraits in this room. A fine one of Nell Gwynn…An equestrian portrait of Lord Essex, the parliament general…Oliver Cromwell when young…Charles XII of Sweden. Walter Raleigh, in a broad hat… ²¹⁸

Even in the ‘literary’ centres of the house, the Study and the Library, Howitt continues his descriptive narrative, giving as much notice to the equipment with which Scott lit his fire as to the tools of his writing trade: ‘Here are his easy leathern chair and desk, at which he used

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.186.
²¹⁵ Ibid.
²¹⁶ Ibid., p.188.
²¹⁷ Ibid., pp.188-189.
²¹⁸ Ibid., p.190.
to work…On the chimney-piece stands a German light-machine, where he used to get a light, and light his own fire.\textsuperscript{219}

For Howitt it would appear that the spirit of Scott was much more than a literary presence at Abbotsford. Moreover, the literary aspects of the house tour came last in the itinerary; possibly intended to form a climax, but more likely as an adjunct to more general themes. There is no sense that Howitt considered Abbotsford as a shrine, let alone a literary shrine, in contrast to Hawthorne and, to some extent, Fontane. On this view Abbotsford was considered more as a multi-faceted memorial to Scott and the image he portrayed which took in all aspects of his significance. These accounts by contemporary commentators imply a clear expectation of what they hoped to experience, and all their publications were readily available to guide and inform potential visitors. Scott also had standing as a Scottish icon, and one that was governed by contemporary judgement.

Scott’s significance in formulating a Scottish national identity also did not go unnoticed. When Hugh Miller questioned what Scott had done for his country to deserve the ‘gorgeous’ monument in Edinburgh, he answered his own question by saying that Scott had done more than any other literary man in promoting the national character of Scotland.\textsuperscript{220} In a comparison with Shakespeare, Scott was considered to have inspired more fascination for his native land and in doing so fascination in Abbotsford. In 1859 Professor Blackie proposed a toast to the memory of Sir Walter Scott, in which he stated that there were six names that stood out in Scottish history, ‘round which all true Scotsmen must gather as the proudest symbols of their nationality.’\textsuperscript{221} The toast to Scott underscores the notion of an independent Scottish character and nation. He was, Blackie explained, an eminently Scottish writer, and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid.]
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one who had contributed to preserving and extending knowledge of the Scottish character and scenery.\textsuperscript{222}

Scott was a pivotal figure in fashioning the image of Scotland in the nineteenth century, and even those who considered themselves literary pilgrims first and foremost recognised his other attributes. Fontane came to Abbotsford as a Romantic literary tourist and left with his visions confirmed and strengthened. In asking the question, ‘what fame would Scotland have had, had it not been for … Walter Scott?’ Fontane clearly saw Scott as both historical figure and literary figure.\textsuperscript{223} His experience at Abbotsford showed how these popular images of Scott could complement each other. So despite, the disdain shown by Hawthorne, the difference between pilgrim and tourist was not so clear-cut. After all, Scott promoted his own dual image as both literary giant and champion of Scottish national heritage.

Scott remained famous and relatively popular throughout the nineteenth century. His works still ranked in the top three in the stocks of Victorian lending libraries up to the final decade of the century, while operatic adaptations of \textit{Ivanhoe} broke records for continuous performances during the 1890s.\textsuperscript{224} Abbotsford was also more popular than ever. As Crockett claimed in 1905, ‘…this [the road leading to Abbotsford] is one of the world’s highways, with a constant stream of pilgrims, from every land passing to and fro.’\textsuperscript{225} However, as the twentieth century progressed, Scott gradually lost his appeal and alternative holiday destinations, with better climates, meant that fewer tourists were willing to risk the vagaries of the Scottish weather.\textsuperscript{226} Within Britain Abbotsford became increasingly irrelevant as Scott’s romanticising of the Highlands received more attention, deflecting tourists away from

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{223} Fontane, p.xiv.
\textsuperscript{224} See St Clair.
\textsuperscript{225} Crockett, p.169.
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{Durie, Seaton, A}, p.498.
the Borders. Travel writers also ignored the house for much of the century. The implication was that Scott no longer warranted inclusion to this genre of publication.

To ascertain how Abbotsford was presented in the twentieth century, most information comes from guidebooks to the house. The content of the pre-1954 guidebook lists the collections of Abbotsford and shows similarities to the descriptions of Irving, Howitt, Hawthorne, Fontane and Crockett. Scott’s descendants kept Abbotsford as a literary memorial dedicated to their ancestor, despite his now limited attraction as a writer. Similarly, the division of the house between family and public rooms in place since the changes to the house in the 1850s continued up to the death of Dame Jean Maxwell-Scott in 2004 and show Abbotsford as being presented along the lines of the domestic settings of the nineteenth century. All the guidebooks published since the 1950s (until the new 2007 edition) were largely based on that written by Major-General Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott prior to 1954. These post-1950s guidebooks begin with an overview of Scott, his ancestry and his descendants, followed by a detailed explanation of the building of Abbotsford. There then follows a tour of the house taking a route similar to that experienced by Hawthorne, Fontane and Crockett. This commences in the Study and continues through the Library, the Drawing Room, The Armoury and Ante-Room and then the Entrance Hall. The narratives of the guidebooks are very descriptive, noting ‘Chief objects of interest’. They then double-back and take the visitor to the Dining Room; the place of this room within the tour does not

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228 Maxwell-Scott, Whiteholme Ltd revised ed., Maxwell-Scott, Bordernet and Meigle revised ed. Although no dates are available for these publications information contained in the text points to the original edition being no later than 1952 with Corson’s revisions being no later than 1975. Further information provided in the text points to the Whiteholme edition being of an earlier date than the Bordernet and Meigle (no later than June 2002 and May 2004 respectively).
229 Maxwell-Scott, Whiteholme Ltd revised ed.
231 Ibid., pp.9-14.
232 Ibid., p.9.
follow a logical sequence (Figure 3) and suggests that the Dining Room was not always open to visitors, a comment made by Hawthorne and Crockett. This route is essentially ‘literary’, as it begins with the literary centres of the house and ends with a page covering a select list of Scott’s works.  

However, important changes had also been made. In particular, the Byron Urn was no longer given a prominent place and two guidebooks place it in the Drawing Room. The information provided in the text in these guidebooks is purely descriptive and no connection is made between Byron and Scott. In addition, photographs in both editions do not show the urn in place in the stated cabinet, (Figure 14) while the earlier edition clearly shows the urn in a photograph of the Dining Room. (Figure 13) The guidebooks also contain extensive descriptions of Scott’s collection, with an emphasis on items related to Scottish history and antiquarianism. During the nineteenth century, although changes to the fabric of the house occurred and objects were placed in different locations, the antiquarian collections at Abbotsford had remained intact. However, during the first half of the twentieth century, Abbotsford suffered dispersals from its collections. In the 1920s, 1934 and 1935, the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland acquired some of Scott’s archaeological objects and manuscripts once housed at Abbotsford similarly were bought by national collections. The status of these objects was confirmed by their acquisition by the State, while the dispersals imparted a rarity value on what remained. These objects could be seen in their original context, the context where Scott had placed them. This is important, as it was an indication of the enduring non-literary significance of Scott and Abbotsford at a time when the literary worth of both was substantially diminished.

233 Ibid., p.17.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid., p.12.
237 Maxwell-Scott, Whiteholme Ltd revised ed., p.15.
238 McCrone, D; Morris, A; and Kiely, R, p.56.
Further evidence for Abbotsford and Scott’s broader appeal can be found in secondary sources on Scotland’s heritage and on the perceptions from the Executive Manager Jacqui Wright. Visitor figures of approximately 70,000 per annum in the 1990s attest that Abbotsford was still popular as a tourist attraction, although the basis of its appeal and the make up of visitors had changed again. Some undoubtedly visited Abbotsford primarily as a literary destination, but many of these visitors’ places of origin suggest that an interest in Scottish identity was a principal motive for their visit, a suggestion supported by Wright who says that many of them came from various Scottish and Caledonian societies.  This interest can be traced back to 1826 when the Celtic Society presented a sword to Scott in recognition of his importance to Scottish history. For example, of approximately 2,000 entries in the visitor book between 5th and 31st August 1910, about 800 were from United States of America and a further twenty-two countries were represented, including countries in Europe, Africa, the Far East, North, South and Central America, and Australasia. During the twentieth century, 60% of visitors to Abbotsford came from overseas. For these visitors it was not necessary to experience Scott’s house exactly as he had left it; they wanted to gain knowledge of Scottish identity as materialised through the historical and antiquarian objects on show and to experience that identity through the ‘aura’ of Scott, the champion of Scottish identity. This is important as it demonstrates that aura was something related to visitor expectation. Abbotsford had changed very little since the 1850s and its interpretation had remained relatively static and yet, even though a change in emphasis had occurred with what the visitors hoped to experience from a visit, for them an aura of Scott remained.

239 Ibid., pp.60-61.
241 Maxwell-Scott, Bordernet and Meigle revised ed., p.15.
242 Visitor Book, August 5th 1910 - June 16th 1913, Abbotsford House, Melrose.
By the beginning of the twenty-first century the focus of interest in Abbotsford had moved away from literature, as demonstrated by the Scottish Society of Antiquaries conference on Abbotsford in 2000. This conference and the subsequent publication focussed on Scott’s influence as a collector and designer. Apart from Iain Gordon Brown’s own contribution, ‘Scott, Literature and Abbotsford’, the other papers were more concerned with the contents of Abbotsford and the architectural style and designs it represents. For example David Jones gave a paper on ‘Scottish Furniture at Abbotsford’, Jeremy Howard gave a paper on ‘Scott, Abbotsford and the Russian Gothic Revival: Influence and Coincidence’, and Julie Lawson gave a paper on ‘Ruskin on Scott’s Abbotsford’.  

Abbotsford remained in the hands of the Scott family until the death of Dame Jean Maxwell-Scott in May 2004, when it finally ceased to function as a private family home. During the period 1832 to 2004 the house had developed a dual role: as a Scott memorial within the context of a family home. In addition tensions can be identified as to the significance of the house in terms of its Scott associations, with both his literary importance and his historical antiquarian significance being the focus of presentations by the Scott family and being considered central to visitor expectations. Abbotsford now entered public ownership for the first time.


Another phase in Abbotsford’s history began in 2004. The Executors of the estate endeavoured to find suitable owners for the house which culminated, in 2007, with the establishment of a Trust. This charitable trust’s objectives are:

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243 Brown, I. Papers were on subjects as diverse as Romantic decoration, Scott’s portraits of his dogs, and the influence of Abbotsford on Russian architecture.

(1) to preserve, protect and improve the Abbotsford buildings, lands and contents associated with Abbotsford and Sir Walter Scott and his family for the benefit and enjoyment of the public and

(2) to advance the education of the public in relation to the life and works and family of Sir Walter Scott and the history of Abbotsford.\textsuperscript{245}

From this point the spatial presentation of the house changed dramatically: the management of the house as a formal visitor destination with a paid executive manager meant the provision of private areas for family use was now redundant. Consequently, a new interpretation plan was developed which included all areas of the house. Although the dual role of family home and public space is no longer evident, the single role of Abbotsford today still has much in common with Scott’s house.

Between 2004 and the commencement of the Trust’s responsibilities in 2007, a number of avenues were explored to secure Abbotsford’s survival as a Scott memorial. No remaining Scott descendants had an interest in Abbotsford, or the financial ability to meet the running costs, and no Scottish conservation body, such as the Scottish National Trust, was willing or able to take responsibility for the house. During these three years the house remained open to the public (apart from being closed on the day of Dame Jean’s funeral) while the best way forward was discussed by the Executors of her will. In the meantime Abbotsford was presented in the same fashion as it had been under Dame Jean’s ownership, and no changes were made to the way the estate was run.\textsuperscript{246} With the setting up of the Trust, Abbotsford was now managed by an organisation with a paid executive manager responsible for running it as a visitor destination with an expectation that the house would ‘pay its way’. As it was no longer a family home, those responsible for the house were given the opportunity to reassess Abbotsford’s role. The decision was made to continue with previous presentations: namely as

\textsuperscript{245} Wright, J (2007), p.2.

\textsuperscript{246} Jacqui Wright, Executive Manager, Abbotsford Trust, interview by James Pardoe, Abbotsford House, 15\textsuperscript{th} August 2007.
a Scott memorial in a family home with, however, a new addition as Scott’s descendants now became part of the interpretation, with a section of the new guidebook devoted to their story.

The Trust’s reassessment involved the formulation of a new interpretation plan central to which was the publication of a new, completely rewritten, guidebook, mentioned above, also published in 2007.\textsuperscript{247} Therefore, to understand the motivations behind how Abbotsford and Scott are presented in the twenty-first century analyses of the new guidebook and of the perceptions of the Executive Manager are critical.

The narrative of Abbotsford as an undeniable physical link to Scott permeates the 2007 guidebook. The tour of the house describing its contents does not commence until page nineteen of the guidebook; prior to that a number of associations are highlighted. After a ‘Contents’ page mention is first given to ‘The Abbotsford Trust’. The history of Abbotsford and the Scott family are given a central place in its interpretation, the family on an almost equal footing to Scott himself. In the Introduction the house’s significance in relation to Scott is outlined: ‘It reflects, almost as no other place, the mind, enthusiasms and preoccupations of the man who built it’. In addition, ‘…it stands as a great man’s memorial, and much more truly than the fantastic Gothic space-rocket in Edinburgh’s Princes Street’. It is also described as important in the history of ‘Scottish Baronial’ revival architecture and decoration; and a significant site in European Romanticism.\textsuperscript{248} Its position as a tourist destination during Scott’s lifetime is acknowledged, as is its role as a literary shrine of international interest after his death.\textsuperscript{249} After a brief history on the building of Abbotsford, the importance of the house and

\textsuperscript{247} The details of this plan were not made available for public scrutiny nor for the purposes of research for this thesis. However, the results of the Trust’s deliberations surrounding the plan revolved around the responsibilities of the Executive Manager, whom I interviewed in 2007.


\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
its connections to Scott’s literary works are stressed. There then follows an outline of the Scott family history from 1653 to 2004.

A tour of the house, following the route recommended by the guidebook, emphasises different aspects of Scott’s significance in turn: his place in Scottish history, his antiquarian collections, and his literature. In the first room, the Entrance Hall, (Figure 4) the visitor is drawn to biographical materials and from the outset, direct quotations from Scott underline the description of objects. This effectively establishes the idea that the visitor is seeing Scott’s Abbotsford in an unchanged form. In the very first paragraph, which describes the east wall of the Entrance Hall, Scott’s words are used:

*The eastern end of this room is fashioned into two niches, modelled in Paris plaster from those splendid sculptured niches which formally held the Saints and Apostles of the Abbey of Melrose. These niches are each of them occupied by what is rarely seen in Scotland, namely a complete suit of feudal steel armour.*

A description of the armour is then given, accompanied by a large photograph of the east end of the entrance. (Figure 4) The choice of this opening statement to the guided tour of the house, as laid out in this part of the guidebook, is a pertinent one as it also draws attention to the narrative that Abbotsford and its collections are a connection to, and unification of, Scott’s life and literature. Scott the important historical figure is then shown: this is a man important enough to have had lunch with the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, a collector of Napoleonic objects, and the biographer of Napoleon. This statement is achieved through the highlighting of three individual objects; ‘1: A Polish Officer’s shako helmet. 2: Clock said to have been owned by Marie Antoinette. 3: A French Imperial Eagle from the battlefield

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253 Ibid.
254 Ibid., pp.18-19.
255 Ibid., p.19.
at Waterloo.’\textsuperscript{256} These are shown in individual photographs and illustrate Scott’s description of the west end wall, of ‘spoils from the field of Waterloo, where I collected them in person, very shortly after that memorable action.’\textsuperscript{257} The guidebook then notes Scott’s visit to Waterloo, his meeting with Wellington, and other Relics including, ‘two highly prized French cuirasses.’\textsuperscript{258} A further representation of Scott the person is shown in the glass case containing his clothes, which it is suggested may be the ones worn by Scott in a portrait made shortly before his death.\textsuperscript{259} Other objects in this room refer to Scott’s own collections of Scottish historical memorabilia. So in the first room open to the public the visitor is drawn to direct biographical and connected materials. However, the narrative surrounding Scott the literary figure is not directly implied at this juncture.

The next room is the Armoury and Ante Room, where a similar pattern is followed. The central interpretations are reinforced by a Scott quote highlighting his collection and the guidebook emphasizes objects used by the writer: ‘The west wall is devoted to a collection of guns and swords, including Sir Walter’s own blunderbuss with spring bayonet, and a pair of his personal pistols.’\textsuperscript{260} Scott’s associations with Scottish history are alluded to in relation to objects connected with Rob Roy and Mary Queen of Scots.\textsuperscript{261} His international celebrity is referred to via a quote concerning his association with Prince Leopold.\textsuperscript{262} However, perhaps the most telling paragraph sentence relates to: ‘The Ante-Room to the Armoury [where there] is a corner full of curios and paintings and, like the rest of the house, is pervaded by Scott’s powerful personality.’\textsuperscript{263} Here is the central narrative of Abbotsford: the house with authentic

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., p.20.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., p.21.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid.
objects relating to and owned by Scott. This is the house with the authentic Scott context, and this is the house which portrays the vision of Scott inhabiting this space.264

These themes are continued in relation to the Dining Room (Figure 16) but here the links with Scott are more tentative. Because this room has been greatly altered since Scott’s day, the Dining Room is laid out as it was used by Scott’s descendants.265 Nevertheless, the guidebook stresses Scott’s involvement in the design of Abbotsford and draws attention to the dining table which Scott helped design.266 Despite emphasising the Scott links, the image which this room does not produce is that of a shrine. This is where Scott died, but very little emphasis is given to the fact that he had his bed set up here for practical purposes so that he could see and hear the River Tweed as he was dying. However, the room reverted to its original purpose after Scott had died. The whole portrayal of the Dining Room is significant as it challenges the idea of Abbotsford as a shrine.

The object which is given the most attention in the next room, the Drawing Room, gives an interesting insight into the motivations behind displaying Scott. In the twenty-first century Scott’s importance as a literary figure is limited; in Dame Jean’s obituary in The Telegraph it was noted that:

_Shortly before her death [Dame Jean] lamented the ignorance displayed by contemporary visitors to the house: ‘Only the Russians and eastern Europeans seem to read any Scott at school...Now it’s sometimes, ‘Where are his Antarctic things?’ Occasionally one has to be terribly tactful._267

To counter this, the opportunity is taken to champion Scott’s worth by emphasizing his standing among other literary greats of his age; once again the silver urn given by Byron is

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highlighted. By emphasizing, ‘… the respect and affection which Scott inspired…’, and associating him with Byron, Scott’s status is reaffirmed. The urn is considered a key exhibit on the tour, according to the guidebook. It is shown in three photographs and is given special mention in the text. The latter contradicts the notion of the ‘Scott House’ as it states that the urn, in Scott’s time, was most likely to be found in his Study. It is now housed in the Drawing Room with no explanation as to why this is the case. The photographs also show the urn in two positions, on a pedestal in the Library and in its current position in a cabinet in the Drawing Room. Evidently at different times the image of Abbotsford has emphasised different aspects of Scott’s significance. Today Scott’s significance in the field of literature has diminished, so attachments with other recognised figures such as Byron are used to reinforce his reputation. The re-positioning of the urn also shows that deliberate changes have been made to Scott’s house; for example security issues do not allow the urn to go be open display but its current interpretation is linked to Scott’s memorialisation rather than the house in which he lived.

A number of objects in the Library project Scott’s position in society, including an image of his Armorial Bearings. Scott the collector is identified through an image of Napoleon’s pen case and mention in the script of Rob Roy’s purse and a lock of Bonnie Prince Charlie’s hair. Scott the builder of Abbotsford is seen through images of details of furniture and fittings. Scott the man is represented by a lock of his hair seen through a photograph and Scott the writer is the focus of a text relating the potential use of the Library for scholarly research.

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268 Wright, J (2007), p.27.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid., pp. 26, 29.
271 Ibid., p.27.
272 Ibid., pp.26, 29.
274 As is noted earlier, the urn was the scene of a theft in Scott’s time and spent some years in a bank vault, it is now behind security glass in a display case in the Drawing Room.
This holistic approach of who Scott was has resonance with Scott’s own self-portrayed image and pays homage to Abbotsford prior to the writer’s death. It is also the first room in the guidebook that refers to Scott as a literary figure.

The final room on the guidebook tour is the Study.\(^{276}\) This is the main room where Scott appears as a literary figure, and the one that comes closest to being a shrine. Items of a personal and literary nature are emphasized: ‘This was the most personal of Scott’s rooms, the room in which he wrote many of his works. The books in the Study were the books that he was working on at the time…’\(^{277}\) Using quotes from Scott, particular note is made of his desk and chair, giving a very personal link but also following the descriptions of the house made by commentators as far back as Irving. Mention is also made of the tools of Scott’s work in the form of his spectacles, quill and blotter.\(^{278}\) (Figure 17) Finally, a small room off the Study is home to a bronze death mask of Scott highlighted in the text and through a photograph.\(^{279}\) (Figure 12) This display epitomises Abbotsford as the physical representation of Scott’s success, the place most closely associated with his person and his works. As Watson notes, it is ‘a monument to his genius.’\(^{280}\) The vehicle of this genius is his writing desk and chair, those cultural icons mentioned by owners and visitors alike, which emphasise the shrine status of the house evidenced in all the phases of the house’s development.

Today Abbotsford is a museum dedicated to Scott’s greatness, but also a memorial which pays homage to all the stages of the house’s development. Each room has a theme: the Entrance Hall with reference to Scott as an important figure, his position as a Laird, his connections to Scottish history and his antiquarian collections; the Armoury and Ante-Room as centres for his antiquarianism; the Dining Room with a focus on his descendents, Scott’s

\(^{276}\) Ibid., pp.32-34.
\(^{277}\) Ibid., p.33
\(^{278}\) Ibid.
\(^{279}\) Ibid., p.34
creation of the house and his death there; the Drawing Room highlights his cultural importance (symbolised by the urn); the Library centres on his significance in Scottish history, his collections and his literature; and finally the Study points to Abbotsford as an important part of his literature. These points were confirmed by the Executive Manager, Jacqui Wright, when interviewed and questioned about the direction of Abbotsford’s interpretation in its new role as a formal visitor destination.

Wright was appointed as Executive Manager in 2006 with responsibility for implementing the Trust’s policy for the interpretation of Abbotsford. Wright’s perception of this new role for Abbotsford focussed on three themes: the house as a vital component in Scott’s biography; a site of his literary production; and his material legacy. Wright stressed Abbotsford’s ability to engender emotional understandings of Scott - in effect, to convey an ‘aura’ of the writer - based on both his writing and also his role as an embodiment of Scottish nationhood. Wright stressed the importance of Abbotsford for Scott’s biography by suggesting that his perception of his home permeates the building. She maintains that Abbotsford was central to his self-image as a Scottish Laird and his own creation of a romanticised version of this position. This was also a home for his collections and books, surrounded by his own designed landscape that he had first created in his literature. In essence, Abbotsford fulfilled Scott’s dreams of his position in society, reflecting his Romantic ideals.\textsuperscript{281} In this context Scott’s Library and his collection of books were particularly important fashioning his antiquarian ideas, and as a research resource for his own writing. They therefore have significant associations with all the main elements of Scott’s importance. Wright claimed that the Library ‘…reflects so much of the man. It is Scott’s research library. It is unique in the world.’\textsuperscript{282} She also highlighted the Byron Urn and the

\textsuperscript{281} Jacqui Wright, Executive Manager, Abbotsford Trust, interview by James Pardoe, Abbotsford House, 15th August 2007.

\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
importance of the inscription: ‘[the urn] reflects the importance of the man and how much of a celebrity he was in his own time.’\textsuperscript{283} She also noted other things given to Scott by other important people such as the portrait of Charles Mackay as a character from \textit{Rob Roy} which was presented to Scott by the artist, Sir William Allan, in 1826. All are evidence of the importance of Scott as a major figure in Scottish history and as a writer.

In focussing on the Library at the start of the interview, Wright identified her perception of Abbotsford’s significance as being a projection of Scott’s literature, and his view of Scottish history and antiquarianism intermingled in the form of the building. These key messages were expressed by emphasising the importance of Abbotsford to Scott and also by highlighting that the house today is largely the same as left by Scott when he died.

Wright noted that although Scott is no longer widely read in Britain, his literature does have an extensive readership abroad, and that Abbotsford is still a significant literary destination for many foreign readers. This point was also raised by Dame Jean (cited in her obituary), as mentioned earlier.\textsuperscript{284} Wright supported her claim by highlighting the origins of Abbotsford’s visitors, ‘There are masses of visitors from Europe, Russia, the Balkans and USA. All told 63\% of our visitors are from overseas. They come here because of the literature and biography.’\textsuperscript{285} The links between Abbotsford, Scott’s biography, and his writings are clear: many of Scott’s books were written at Abbotsford, ‘the last manic six years of his life in particular’, and many visitors are interested, ‘in this man that produced all these books and wonderful stories…’\textsuperscript{286} This in itself, Wright considered, would be sufficient to convey an ‘aura’ of Scott but she also highlighted the physical legacy of Scott at the house. Wright

\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{285} Jacqui Wright, Executive Manager, Abbotsford Trust, interview by James Pardoe, Abbotsford House, 15\textsuperscript{th} August 2007.
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
repeatedly laid emphasis on Abbotsford’s importance as the house as left by Scott: ‘…the house has remained intact, as it was when Scott left it…’\textsuperscript{287} Wright does acknowledge the changes of the 1850s (with the building of the new family wing) but these alterations had the effect of preserving the original ‘Scott House’ by allowing a family wing to be created away from the ‘Scott parts’. Wright also points out that from this date the house remained unaltered even though the Dining Room has been changed. Nevertheless, Wright’s emphasis on the perception that Scott’s House still exists goes back to at least 1905, when Crockett claimed that when Scott’s son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart, visited Abbotsford…‘ In 1847, for the funeral of the second Sir Walter, he was back at Abbotsford - the first time since Scott’s death. “Everything in perfect order,” he writes, “every chair and table where it was left…”\textsuperscript{288} Crockett supports this by stating that: ‘Sir Walter’s Abbotsford…was completed in 1824. For the next thirty years there was practically no alteration on the place.’\textsuperscript{289} However, like Wright, Crockett does acknowledge that changes had occurred: ‘Most visitors to Abbotsford have the impression that Sir Walter was responsible for every part of the present edifice, whereas it is at least a third larger from that of Scott’s day.’\textsuperscript{290}

Wright sees this ‘authenticity’ as central to the interpretation and presentation of the house:

\textit{It is authentic. Abbotsford is intact. The walls in the dining room have changed colour. The curtains have been renewed. The Turkey rug in the library has long gone. But virtually everything else is just exactly the same.}\textsuperscript{291}

Wright noted other influences on Scott’s life relating to his time at Abbotsford:

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item\textsuperscript{287} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{288} Crockett, p.145.
\item\textsuperscript{289} Ibid. It seems that this lack of change was due to the fact that Scott’s son did not live at Abbotsford after 1832, spending almost all his time with his regiment, the 15th Hussars.
\item\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., p.159.
\item\textsuperscript{291} Jacqui Wright, Executive Manager, Abbotsford Trust, interview by James Pardoe, Abbotsford House, 15th August 2007.
\end{thebibliography}
This was an area where he went riding, walking and fishing. This area of the Borders was very inspiring; and he was, of course, inspired by the mythology of the Borders. He was (and his work) wound up with the Borders. One cannot get an understanding of an essence of Scott without coming to Abbotsford. 292

She also returned to the notion of Scott’s own ideas about the house by suggesting, ‘Scott almost created a shrine and people definitely make a pilgrimage here.’ 293 Wright reiterated the importance of Abbotsford to Scott later in the interview, supporting her claims by relating her views to his death:

I think Abbotsford must have been very important to him. He became ill on his travels and desperately wanted to get back to Abbotsford because he knew he was going to die. He died in [what is now set out as] the dining room where he could hear the sound of the River Tweed, surrounded by his servants and his friends. 294

Wright’s interpretation was reinforced by a guided tour that I joined in August 2007. The guide explained how Scott’s Study epitomised Abbotsford as the site and stimulus for his literary output, and where those books most important in Scott’s literary research were kept. Portraits of Scott were also an important part of the tour: for example, Scott’s celebrity and significance in his own time were highlighted, with a painting in the Library depicting the fifteen year old Scott meeting other great Scottish figures such as Robert Burns, John Hume and Adam Smith, being a major stopping off point in the tour. (Figure 18) The importance of Scott in the history of Scotland was repeatedly emphasised.

There is no designated route around the house beyond the Entrance Hall: visitors either turn right towards Scott’s Study, or left to the Armoury and Ante Room, as recommended by the guidebook. Guided tours are an additional option and take the route via the Study which emphasizes, initially, Scott’s importance as a literary figure, and then his role in Scottish

292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid.
history. The guidebook does the opposite; thereby according Scott a much broader significance from the outset. The guided tour also emphasises the ‘Scott House’, reinforcing Wright’s claims that Abbotsford still looks and feels as Scott left it, whereas the guidebook is more concerned with the legacy of Scott at Abbotsford and its subsequent history. (Figure 3)

According to Wright, the interpretation of Abbotsford today is influenced by its collections inherited from Scott himself. However, visitor expectations also appear to be driving the two main media of interpretation at Abbotsford since 2004. This expectation is related to what is considered to be Scott’s significance for visitors in the twenty-first century. As Wright points out, many overseas visitors still consider Scott’s literature to be important and arrive at Abbotsford expecting to see a writer’s house. Many of these visitors take the guided tour, with its literary emphasis. British visitors are less likely to be interested in Scott’s literature today and many take the open tour using the guidebook for reference, which addresses their likely interests in Scottish heritage and history.

Further opportunities for interpretation were discussed with Wright. As Abbotsford is no longer a family home, a number of redundant utility areas have been earmarked for development as exhibition and education spaces and discussions revolved around the themes which could be presented: including, literature, Scott as an historical figure, and his impact on the landscape through his Romantic ideals.

In reflecting on the key messages derived from an analysis of interpretation at Abbotsford as presented by the 2007 Guidebook, discussions with the Executive Manager, and the 2007 guided tour, it is important to note the perception that all emphasize the continuities today with Scott’s Abbotsford. Scott’s home remains largely intact, however, a number of physical changes have occurred that inevitably have effected its management and presentation as a

295 Of the tours witnessed by the author on three separate visits to Abbotsford, two were given to overseas groups and one to a literary specialist group at the LitHouses Conference 9th November 2007.
visitor attraction. Nevertheless, visitors are presented with versions of the ‘Scott House’ whichever route they follow, with their different emphases.

Conclusion

The key to understanding Abbotsford’s role as a literary house is the significance of the house to Scott himself. Abbotsford became a symbol of Scott, an extension of his personality, and a means of self-presentation; Scott supervised its construction, created a setting for his literature, and made it a subject of his writing. Scott’s own projection and the words of commentators such as Irving give a clearly defined description of Abbotsford which still leads to claims that this is the authentic Scott House. After Scott’s death Abbotsford was portrayed by both owners and visitors as the house as Scott had lived in and as he left it. The question is, how far was this actually the case? Many commentators considered Scott as a literary giant and concentrated on Abbotsford as a literary destination. But Scott saw himself and Abbotsford as much more, and this extra-literary aspect of Scott’s life and image has always informed the presentation and reception. But, no attempt to place the Abbotsford of Scott in historical perspective can confine itself to the period of Scott’s residence. The biography of Abbotsford shows how the house was materially altered from the ‘Scott House’ although much of the original also remained. Throughout its history, Abbotsford has retained Scott’s ‘aura’ in the eyes both of the owners and at least some of its visitors.

My findings have shown that the long history of Abbotsford as an established literary destination has produced a multi-layered narrative of both Scott and the house. In ‘creating’ Abbotsford, Scott exploited an emergent interest in the physical links between writers and place. By building the house into a landscape which was already the subject of his writing.

and then writing about the house that he built, Scott created his own narrative for Abbotsford. In doing so he also created another narrative: namely, the house as a tourist site dedicated to a literary giant during his own lifetime and beyond. These two narratives have sustained and developed subsequent owners in their interpretation of the house and the focus of the reception of Abbotsford by visitors since the early nineteenth century - a focus which acknowledges the physical links between the house, the literature and Scott - and have reinforced Abbotsford’s position as the pre-eminent Scott literary destination. These narratives have been applied to the house by both visitors and owners in an effort to construct a significance for Abbotsford. As a result, Abbotsford has always been considered as the site central to an understanding of Scott and his work. Underlying this reputation are issues of authenticity and the perception by some of Abbotsford as a shrine to Scott. Research shows that there are a number of tensions relating to the identity of Abbotsford: is it a literary house and/or an important site of a Scottish history? In a sense, these tensions can be traced back to Scott’s own vision for his home. An analysis of the history of Abbotsford shows the literary narrative to be the dominant image at certain points, but there is also evidence which points to the house as portraying Scott’s wider interests. This tension underpins the themes running through this chapter on Abbotsford - something not previously covered in the literature.

Although the presentation of the house was essentially static from 1832 and 2004, some subtle changes did occur, such as the removal of the Byron urn and Shakespeare bust, reflecting the shifting emphases in interpretation. These, in turn, appear to be partly informed by visitors’ expectations. The interaction of these portrayals and their reception revolved around the ability to recognise how much of Scott, and what influenced him, can be experienced at Abbotsford. Some expected to be able to visit Scott’s house unchanged since his death in 1832; for others the spaces and objects within the house enabled a different vision of Scott to be encountered. Although these themes all acknowledge Hendrix, Marsh
and Watson, and how links are established between the writers and audience, it is the work of Latour and Lowe which better explains the tensions in evidence at the house. Latour and Lowe’s discussion of the production of ‘aura’ is valuable in understanding practices and perceptions of authenticity at Abbotsford. Visitors such as Hawthorne and Fontane visited Abbotsford with different expectations, both hoping to encounter something of Scott himself. Fontane wanted to find the literary genius in the house, but came away disappointed because he had to share his experience with others who were unable to appreciate Scott’s spirit. This supports the view that aura is not inherent, otherwise the ‘tourists’ would surely have been able to experience it themselves. Hawthorne also was unable to experience a sense of Scott as his expectations demanded a portrayal which was not in evidence, and left him feeling that Abbotsford was nothing more than a museum of curios.

The owners of Abbotsford have also attempted to enable visitors to experience the authentic Scott, from the guide who offered Hawthorne the opportunity to sit in Scott’s chair to gain a physical connection with the writer’s muse, through to the present day guided tours which highlight Scottish ancestry. The change in emphasis away from the literary to Scottish identity also supports this premise. Even though the evidence points to a stagnation in interpretation from the 1850s, as witnessed by Crockett, visitors were still experiencing a sense of Scott, even though this spirit no longer surrounded his literary standing. The changes in emphasis on the part of the owners did not come about due to any financial reasons during the period of the Scott family ownership. The motivation of Scott’s descendants for attracting visitors came from a sense of duty, rather than financial needs. They believed in the significance of their illustrious ancestor and thought that his legacy should be made available to his public. When the significance of Scott changed, the family reacted by subtly adapting how Scott could be viewed at Abbotsford. However, the objectives of the Trust responsible for the management of the house since 2004, are, in part, financially driven and thereafter
need to respond to diverse visitor expectations and interests. Today these expectations and interactions present both the literary and wider dimensions of Scott tailored to the motivations of different visitors. This is achieved through the guided tour which focuses on the literary significance of Scott and which is often taken up by visitors with a literary interest, or the self-directed tour which uses the guidebook and its emphasis on Scott’s wider importance.
CHAPTER THREE

NEWSTEAD ABBEY

Introduction

Newstead! What saddening scene of change is thine,
Thy yawning arch betokens sure decay;
The last and youngest of a noble line
Now holds thy mouldering turrets in his sway
(Elegy on Newstead Abbey, Lord Byron)²⁹⁷

What can Newstead Abbey tell us about the way we view literary houses and their associated writers in the 21st century? The previous chapter examined how the material legacy of Scott has been presented at Abbotsford since the early nineteenth century and this chapter pursues similar themes in the context of a house with a long history of changing ownership: Newstead Abbey. It covers a period from 1808 when Byron took up residence there to a recent set of policy reviews commissioned by Nottingham Museum and Galleries Service between 2003 and 2006.²⁹⁸ The chapter draws on Hendrix, Watson and Marsh’s concept of the literary home both as place of remembrance and memorialisation, and of conserved or reconstructed sensory markers connected to the writer.²⁹⁹ The survival, conservation and reproduction of architectural features, rooms and objects show how Newstead emerged as a literary house and museum as a result of an historical process and demonstrates the importance of a house’s biography in shaping the image of a writer.

²⁹⁹ Hendrix, Watson (2009), Marsh.
Newstead as the ‘Byron House’ - that is, the surviving architectural features dating to the period when Byron lived there, rooms used by the writer, and objects left in the house by him - has been a central narrative of Newstead over the past two centuries. (Figures 19 & 20) Similarly important is the debate about Newstead as an inspiration for Byron’s literary works. The stanza at the start of this chapter is from one of a number of poems related to Newstead Abbey; Byron wrote the *Elegy on Newstead Abbey* sometime between 1803 and 1806. The last two lines of this verse, in which Byron is referring to himself, is an example of how commentators have interpreted Byron’s relationship with his ancestral home. Not only was Newstead a subject of his verse, it also acted as a stimulus to his imaginative powers.

This chapter considers the 200 year history of Newstead since Byron’s ownership, from 1808 until 2006, within three distinct phases: the ‘Byron House’, that is Newstead as created and left by the writer, 1808-1817; the ‘Byronic House’, that is the private home of Wildman and the Webb family, incorporating a Byron memorial, 1817-1931; and the ‘Museum’, that is the visitor destination managed and owned by the City of Nottingham since 1931. Throughout this history the meaning of Newstead has been influenced by the image of Byron as the popular writer and notorious celebrity. However, Newstead is also more than a literary site associated with Byron, as is evident in the presentation of the house today. In addition, the question remains as to what parts of the site are original to the writer and how the answer to this question impacts on the contention that Newstead is the iconic Byron site. First, let us

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301 On leaving Newstead Abbey (1803), *Elegy on Newstead Abbey, The Adieu* and *To an Oak at Newstead* (all 1807), *Newstead Abbey* (1811) and Cantos 13 and 16 of *Don Juan* (1823).

302 Beckett (2001), Grosskurth.
examine the house that Byron inherited and to which he responded, both practically and imaginatively.

**The ‘Byron House’: to 1817**

Newstead Abbey was founded as an Augustinian Priory in about 1160 by Henry II. The original buildings would have been in the Romanesque style, but very little remains from this time. The Priory followed a typical plan of a monastery with a large church abutted by a range of buildings around a square cloister on its south side. Throughout the lifetime of the religious community there would have been a number of building phases, some of which have survived to the twenty-first century, notably the west front of the church dating to circa 1270 and the cloister from the mid-fifteenth century.\(^{303}\) (Figures 19 & 20)

In 1539 the Priory was closed as part of Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries, and in 1540 it was sold to Sir John Byron of Colwick, near Nottingham. The Byron family then converted the former Priory into a family residence, making a number of alterations over the next century. These included the addition of a floor above the cloister which provided a corridor to give better access to the upstairs rooms.\(^{304}\) (Figure 21) It is presumed that the church was demolished early in the Byrons’ time, but why the west front was retained is unknown. Also at this time the Priory became known as ‘Newstead Abbey’. Again the reason is unknown but it has been suggested that it was for prestige, as an abbey was superior to a priory in the church hierarchy. A new roof and ceiling were added to the former refectory in the 1630s and a new higher floor added at the same time. The former refectory is now known as the Great Drawing Room or Salon. During the English Civil War of the 1640s, the Byron family were staunch Royalists; in reward for his services to the Crown the 4\(^{th}\) Sir John Byron

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\(^{304}\) Ibid.
was made a Baron, so becoming the 1st Lord Byron. Although Newstead was not sequestrated following the King’s defeat, the Byron family had to pay a number of fines to Parliament and it would appear that for much of the remainder of the seventeenth century his successors focused their efforts on trying to consolidate their possessions.\footnote{Jackson, H Review of Collections at Newstead Abbey (unpublished document, 2005).}

By the early eighteenth century, when the first surviving illustrations of Newstead were made, much alteration work had been carried out. Views show a building which, although still significantly medieval, contained structures and alterations of a later date and style. These were mainly introduced by the 4th Lord Byron who inherited in 1695, and whose three favourable marriages vastly improved the family fortunes. The 4th Lord Byron also made extensive adaptations to the gardens and parklands. These were continued by the 5th Lord Byron who succeeded in 1736 and initially spent vast sums on building projects in the park, including mock forts and castles around the upper lake where he re-enacted naval battles. He also bought a great deal of art and other items for the house. However, by the middle of the century it seems that financial difficulties had arisen and many trees in the park were felled and sold for timber. In 1778 an auction of the house’s contents was held, and over the next twenty years the estate was allowed to fall into serious disrepair. Neither the son or grandson of the 5th Lord Byron survived him and so the estate passed, in 1798, to his brother’s grandson, the 6th Lord George Gordon Byron, the future poet.\footnote{Coope, R ‘Newstead Abbey in the Eighteenth Century: The Building Works of the Fourth and Fifth Lords Byron.’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 83 (1979): 46-62, Jackson (unpublished document, 2005).}

The estate inherited by the young 6th Lord Byron was in financial chaos. Under the management of the family solicitor John Hanson, the Abbey was let during Byron’s minority, from 1801 until 1808. Although Byron was educated at Harrow (1801-1805), and then at Trinity College, Cambridge (1805-1807), he remained in touch with Newstead. He lived in nearby Nottingham (1799-1800) and Southwell (1803-1807), and visited Newstead during
vacations. In the autumn of 1808 Byron took up residence at Newstead and initiated a programme of repairs and redecoration, including the construction of a plunge bath off the east cloister. It was also during this time that he installed his gilt tester bed which had previously been in his rooms at Trinity College. (Figure 22) Byron used Newstead as his country retreat and divided his time there between athletic and literary pursuits. His last period of residence was in the autumn of 1814, and in the following year he attempted to sell Newstead, only for the sale to fall through. Following the breakdown of his marriage in 1816 and his self-imposed exile to mainland Europe that year, Byron finally sold the Newstead estate to his Harrow school friend, Major (later Colonel) Thomas Wildman in 1817.  

In all, Byron lived at Newstead for no more than three years and had minimal physical impact on the building. Today, Newstead is only one of a potential thirty ‘Byron’ houses and sites, as shown in Martin Garrett and Fiona MacCarthy’s recent biographies. Despite this, a number of accounts attest to the position of Newstead as the place to be visited because of its Byron connections. Why did the house gain this status? One suggestion, as outlined by the architectural historian Rosalys Coope, is that Newstead is as much a construct of Byron as it was of subsequent owners: the house was both an inspiration for his work and a subject of it. Additionally, by leaving what were later called the ‘Byron Relics’, either by design or not, he ensured that the nucleus of a potential collection of objects owned by him and

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308 Garrett, M *George Gordon, Lord Byron* (London: The British Library, 2000), p.6 shows a map of these sites; MacCarthy, F *Byron - Life and Legend* (London: John Murray, 2002) has thirty sites mentioned throughout the text.
associated with his residence at the house survived there. Moreover, Newstead represented Byron’s social status, and symbolised for him the possibilities of success and fame. Arguably, these physical and literary legacies are not matched elsewhere.

Byron’s birthplace in London no longer exists, and although the Wren Library in Trinity College, Cambridge houses the statue of Byron intended for Westminster Abbey, and owns some objects once belonging to the writer (such as his Greek sailor’s cap) it receives only one or two visitors per year interested in Byron.311 Annesley Hall, near Newstead, home to Mary Chaworth, Byron’s first love, is now being converted into an old people’s home,312 and Seaham Hall, County Durham, where he was married, does not celebrate its Byron connections.313 Villa Diodati, Cologny, near Geneva (rented by Byron from June to October 1816 and famed for being where the ghost stories The Vampire by John Polidori and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein were inspired) is a private residence, divided into apartments and not open to the public.314 Palazzo Mocenigo, on the Grand Canal, Venice (leased by Byron from 1818 to 1819) is now an exclusive hotel, and although it does mention its Byron connections in its publicity it incorrectly suggests he wrote some of his most famous poetry here in 1880.315 Palazzo Lanfranchi, Pisa (home to Byron 1821-1822) is owned jointly by the Municipality of Pisa and the University of Pisa and has no mention of Byron’s residence, today being the site of the Museum of Graphic Art.316 Villa Dupouy, Livorno (rented by Byron April to July 1822) where Byron kept in close contact with Mary and Percy Shelley

311 Author’s discussions with Jonathan Smith, Manuscript Librarian, Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge, 4th August 2006.
313 Seaham Hall is in the process of undergoing a major restoration project overseen by the National Trust and English Heritage. Stewart Ainsworth, Senior Investigator, Research Department, English Heritage was not aware of the Byron connections. Author’s discussions with Stewart Ainsworth September 2010.

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until the latter’s death by drowning, was put up for sale, in a derelict condition, in August 2008. At this time it was the subject of a local preservation campaign, part of which cited Byron’s residence as a reason for the local government authority to buy it. However, what appears to have been more important locally was that the Villa had been an anti-Fascist partisan headquarters during World War Two. The objective was to save the Villa so it could be developed into a museum of the partisan campaign. Ultimately, Livorno Regional Council could not afford the £1.6 million price tag and the Villa was sold to create holiday accommodation.317 Byron’s house at Metaxa, Cephalonia (lived in by Byron late summer to December 1823) was destroyed by an earthquake in 1953.318

In his two publications that featured Byron, Rural Life of England (1838) and Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets - Vol.II (1846), Howitt treated Newstead differently from the writer’s other residences. In Rural Life Newstead was given a chapter to itself, and was included in Homes and Haunts, despite directing his readers to his earlier book for information on the house, Howitt still thought Newstead important enough to include it in the pages of his new publication.319 Newstead’s claims are based on the presence of a significant Byron collection, and the survival of certain aspects of the writer’s home as he knew it and wrote about it. Newstead plays a prominent part in a number of biographies of Byron, which clearly identifies it with the memory of the writer and helps to define it as a literary house. How did this distinct, and visitable, ‘Byron House’ develop?

John Beckett claims that Byron was not a success in terms of the conventional expectations of an aristocrat. For example, the writer sold his family patrimony for his own short term gain, ‘…reducing the Byrons to a state of virtual landlessness almost unheard of among the

317 Times Archive, Byron Villa For Sale [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article4526038], accessed 9th February 2011.
318 Garrett, p.6.
English aristocracy.”

Beckett also notes that Byron spent little time at Newstead, found it a financial burden and then sold it, and, in doing so, showed less remorse than his wider family at the loss of the family house. From 1812, Beckett claims that Byron considered himself a Londoner, who had no interest in his family estate. Eventually for Byron Newstead was nothing more than a financial asset which enabled him to pay off his debts and which gave him an investment income. Other commentators do not share Beckett’s hypothesis that Newstead was not important to Byron, adding to the perception of its wider significance.

For example, Howitt in Volume I of Homes and Haunts mentions that Byron ‘incurred great expense in repairing the abbey, much indeed beyond the reach of his resources’ suggesting his determination to do something with his inheritance and its importance to him. Much of the evidence for this is based on Byron’s own thoughts on the subject. For example, in the often quoted line in a letter to his mother he states ‘…What you say is all very true: come what may, Newstead and I stand or fall together.’ Although Byron did later sell Newstead, he described its importance to him in detail:

I have now lived on the spot, I have fixed my heart upon it, and no pressure, present or future, shall induce me to barter the last vestige of our inheritance. I have that pride within me which will enable me to support difficulties. I can endure privations; but could I obtain in exchange for Newstead Abbey the first fortune in the country, I would reject the proposition. Set your mind at ease on that score. Mr. Hanson talks like a man of business on the subject, -- I feel like a man of honour, and I will not sell Newstead...

321 Ibid., p.17.
322 Ibid., p.299.
323 Ibid., pp.11-12, 15-19, 281-299.
324 Howitt, II (1857), p.488.
326 Ibid.
Writing in 1831, Irving stressed the importance of Newstead to Byron both as an influence on his work and as a subject of it: ‘Still he felt pride in the ruinous old edifice; its very dreary and dismantled state addressed itself to his poetical imagination, and to that love of the melancholy and grand which is evinced in all his writings.’ Throughout his description of Newstead, Irving uses Byron’s poetical works to describe the Abbey, such as the statue of the Virgin and Child above the ruined west end of the church: (Figure 23)

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 in a higher niche, alone, but crown’d,
The Virgin Mother of God-born child,
With her son in her blessed arms, looked round,
       Spared by some chance, when all beside
       was spoil’d:
       She made the earth below seem holy ground.
 Don Juan, Canto III
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He even suggests that Byron’s bedroom influenced the spectral scenes in Don Juan.

Samuel Chew, writing in 1924, chooses a line from The Dream written by Byron in Geneva in 1816, to illustrate the importance of Newstead and Nottinghamshire:

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 Only around Nottingham do associations cluster thickly about him;
and no lover of English poetry can pass unmoved the hill ‘crowned with a peculiar diadem’, on the way from Newstead Abbey...
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Chew argues that an understanding of Byron and his poetry in England can only be realised by experiencing Newstead and its environs. This argument is taken up by MacCarthy, in her biography of Byron, suggesting the Abbey took on a ‘fictionalised fame’ and powerful identity through his poetry. This was a process which began with the three Newstead poems in Hours of Idleness, and continued through Canto I of Childe Harold and Don

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327 Irving, p.58.
328 Ibid., p.61. Irving makes further descriptions of Newstead using Byron’s works, see pp.62-82.
329 Ibid., p.112.
330 Chew, pp.2-3.
331 Ibid. pp.1-4
332 MacCarthy,
333 Published 1807.
334 Published 1812.
These poems are considered as reflections of Byron’s life and also suggest that Newstead’s influence on his Romantic ideals was of central importance. In doing so, they also created a narrative for Newstead as a Romantic house, an idea promoted throughout Newstead’s subsequent history. Marsh supports these observations noting that: ‘…[Newstead] provides a backcloth for some of the best scenes in the poem [Don Juan].’ Similarly, Peter Porter highlights Newstead’s influence not only on Byron’s life, but also on his literature, particularly Don Juan, which Porter considers his greatest work. As he points out, ‘Cantos 15 and 16 amount to a guide to Newstead, so that almost two hundred years after they were written they conjure up the mansion in a form recognisable to the modern visitor.’ In effect, Porter is arguing that the Newstead of today is recognisably the Newstead of Byron. This is a contentious claim as there is a question whether Byron’s descriptions of Newstead are taken from his own recollections of the house prior to its sale in 1817, or whether the Newstead of Don Juan, completed between July 1822 and May 1823, takes into account the early Wildman changes, of which Byron had been informed. For example, what is not noted by Chew, MacCarthy, Marsh and Porter is the observation made by Hawthorne writing in the mid-19th century. Hawthorne claimed that, although much of Newstead could be seen in Don Juan, it was not Byron’s house that was being depicted: ‘Byron was informed of all the Colonel’s fittings up and restorations, and, when he introduces the Abbey, in Don Juan, the poet describes it, not as he himself left it, but as Colonel Wildman has restored it.’

Even Irving’s conclusions were written after a visit made in 1831, by which time the house had been substantially changed architecturally since Byron’s time. This raises a key question

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Juan. Published 1822-23.
336 MacCarthy, pp.18-20.
337 Marsh, K, p.xvi.
338 Ibid., pp.83-94.
339 Ibid., p.85.
as to the validity of the existence of the ‘Byron House’, even in the recollection of Byron himself. However Howitt, who visited the house both during Byron’s ownership and that of Wildman, suggested that in Don Juan, the writer was describing the house that he had known directly. The dispute may be due to the use of the word ‘court’. In Don Juan, Byron places the Newstead fountain in the ‘court’, which has been interpreted by some commentators, such as Hawthorne, as the cloister courtyard where the fountain was placed by Wildman and by others as the forecourt where the fountain would have been in Byron’s time. (Figures 21, 24, 25 & 26)

However, even the architectural survival of the ‘Byron House’ is open to question. The writing of Don Juan indicates that Newstead was still an important influence on Byron’s works five years after he had sold it, and while he was living in Italy.\footnote{Cantos 6 - 16 of Don Juan were completed between July 1822 and May 1823. See Garrett, p.123.} Moreover, by leaving the Byron relics he ensured, whether deliberately or not, that a ‘Byron’ connection remained there.\footnote{Cited in Beckett, J Newstead Abbey and Nottingham City Council (unpublished paper 2008), p.54.} Although numerous commentators believe Byron intentionally left these items, there is no evidence either way.\footnote{These ‘relics’ were to remain where Byron left them at Newstead when the house was given to the Corporation of Nottingham by Charles Ian Fraser to accompany the gift of Newstead by Sir Julien Cahn in 1931.} Most of these items were transferred with ownership of Newstead when it was sold to Wildman in 1817, and again in 1861 when William Frederick Webb bought the property.\footnote{Wildman died, childless, in 1859. His wife sold the property to Webb in 1861.} Some may have returned to Newstead when Byron’s body was brought back to be buried at nearby Hucknall, as one item is referred to as having been used by Byron in Greece.\footnote{Beckett (2001), pp.281-299.} A number of accounts comment on the subsequent owners’ interest in keeping these objects in the places where they were left by Byron. It is evident that the objects held at Newstead manifest a status for the house. This is derived from the constructed narrative that these objects retain a value because they were owned by the writer, they were
left in place where he used them and they have remained where he left them. Hence, the Byron relics promote the idea of a surviving ‘Byron House’ and of Newstead as their repository.

Why was a domestic life and house of a writer considered to be important in understanding his work? The popular fascination with the life of Byron, coupled with the marketing and promotion of his works, led him to become a celebrity in his own lifetime. But what did ‘celebrity’ mean in Byron’s day? Stella Tillyard argues that we have to be careful not to impose twenty-first century definitions of celebrity on the nineteenth century.346 Celebrity in the nineteenth century involved private life becoming a public commodity played out between an audience seeking entertainment and public figures wishing for recognition if not adoration. From the middle of the eighteenth century one way to achieve celebrity status was to gain notoriety. Therefore by the nineteenth century, would-be celebrities were well aware of this way to enhance their public image and were not adverse to leaking details of scandals attached to their names.347 Tom Mole’s study of Byron’s celebrity, as well as Julian North’s work on biography and the Romantic poet, show that Byron would have been well aware of this vehicle of self-promotion and many of the scandals attached to him came from suggestions made by the writer himself.348 Tillyard highlights Byron as an example of the notorious celebrity, and he became known as much for this, as for his writing.349 In fact, many people would have been familiar with stories surrounding his life, even if they had never read his works.350

347 Ibid., pp.61-69
348 See Eisner, Higgins, Holmes (2005), Lee, Mole (2009), North, Parke.
350 See Eisner, Higgins, Holmes (2005), Lee, Mole (2009), North, Parke.
Byron’s celebrity was to influence the biographies which appeared during the writer’s lifetime and immediately following his death in 1824; in turn, this forged a public awareness of his association with Newstead. As Andrew Elfenbein notes, an unprecedented cultural phenomenon surrounds the writer, which he terms ‘Byronism’, and which ‘…includes the biographies, legends, reminiscences, rumours and gossip that surround every aspect of Byron’s life…[but also it] refers to the variety of responses to the poems and biographies by Victorian men and women, from professional writers to casual diarists.’

In the two years after Byron died a number of biographies appeared, which his friend and companion Leigh Hunt divided into five categories:

Those which really contain something both true and new respecting him; those that contain two or three old truths vamped up...; thirdly, criticisms upon his genius, written with more or less good faith; fourthly, compilations containing all that could be scraped together respecting him, true or false; and fifthly, pure impudent fictions.

North notes that during Byron’s own lifetime and the years following his death, it was biography which was the arbiter of his reputation. For many followers of Byron, influenced by his celebrity status and by these biographies, his personality and works became bound up together. As early as 1818 Scott saw Byron’s work as autobiographical and although this is open to challenge, enough people believed it for a number of places to become famous for their links with Byron. Newstead became an important conduit for the promulgation of

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351 Elfenbein, p.9.
353 North, pp.58-100.
356 For maps showing almost thirty sites relating to Byron see Garrett, p.6.
Byron’s life, work and image. For example, Charles Skinner Matthews, a friend of Byron at Trinity College, Cambridge, described a party at Newstead in a letter dated 22\textsuperscript{nd} May 1809

\textit{…Our party consisted of Lord Byron and four others, and was now and then increased by the presence of a neighbouring parson…Our average hour of rising was one…It was frequently past two before the breakfast party broke up. Then, for the amusement of the morning, there was reading, fencing, single-stick, or shuttle-cock in the great room - practising with pistols in the hall…playing with the bear or teasing the wolf. Between seven and eight we dined, and our evening lasted from that time till one, two, or three in the morning. The evening diversions may be easily conceived. I must not omit the custom of handing round after dinner, on the removal of the cloth a human skull filled with Burgundy…A set of monkish dresses, which had been provided…often gave a variety to our appearance and pursuits.\textsuperscript{357}

The contents of Skinner Matthews’s letter were quoted by Moore (1830), Howitt (1838), Bailey (1855), Allen (1874), Marchand (1957), Langley-Moore (1961), and Coope (1987).

Similar references appeared throughout the nineteenth century. For example John Watkins, whose \textit{Memoirs} were published in 1822, wrote that: ‘His [Byron’s] aristocratic affectations - the pet bear, the drinking cup made from a skull - were deplorable signs of misanthropy.’\textsuperscript{358}

The letter of Susan Vaughan, Byron’s head-housemaid, also gave an example of some of his ‘pursuits’: ‘You will not have forgot the night you came up to our room when I was in bed - the time you locked the door…’\textsuperscript{359} This continuing narrative is still in evidence at Newstead today, where a reproduction of the skull cup is prominently displayed in Byron’s Study.

North notes that the nature of Newstead became a significant motif in Byron’s biography. Accounts by biographers as house guests gave intimate insights into the life of Byron, and


\textsuperscript{358} Watkins \textit{Memoirs} p.86, 90 cited in, North, p.72.

\textsuperscript{359} Letters of Susan Vaughan 20 January 1812 cited in, Langley-Moore, p.169.
also provided detailed descriptions of Newstead and its grounds.\textsuperscript{360} Not only did this give the accounts credibility but allowed for the establishment of perceived authentic representations of the house in Byron’s time. Accounts such as Skinner Matthews’s have been used as source material for the appearance of Newstead by Byron’s biographers and by authors of guidebooks to Newstead throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Coope also uses Skinner Matthews to establish how parts of Newstead may have looked in Byron’s time,

\begin{quote}
There are two tiers of cloisters, with a variety of cells and rooms about them, which, though not in an inhabitable state, might easily be made so - and many of the original rooms, amongst which is a fine stone hall, are still in use...Leading from the Abbey to the modern part of the habitation is a noble room, 70 feet in length and 23 feet in breadth; but every part of the house displays neglect and decay, save those which the present Lord has lately fitted up.\textsuperscript{361}
\end{quote}

Other accounts, such as F.C. Laird’s recollections from his visit in 1811, have also been used; for example, in Bailey’s 1855 guide and then by Coope in her description of Byron’s study.\textsuperscript{362}

Newstead was not only a place of ‘Byronism’ in terms of biography but was also a physical presence made up of structures, spaces and objects directly associated with Byron’s life. However, I would argue that, overall, Newstead today is not the ‘Byron House’ but a ‘Byronic House’. The key difference is that the ‘Byron House’, in the sense of the Newstead of 1808 to 1817, is a perception and an ideal, rather than a reality. Whereas the ‘Byronic House’ is a memorialisation of Byron which incorporates the elements of the ‘Byron House’ and creates anew those areas associated with the writer within a rebuilt and restyled family home. As we will see this notion of the ‘Byronic House’ is promoted by Nottingham Museums, which aims to engender ‘… something of the spirit of Byron and his world’, for


\textsuperscript{361} Cited in A souvenir of Newstead Abbey: formerly the home of Lord Byron (Edinburgh: Richard Allen & Son, 1874), p.24.

visitors to Newstead. That is to say, although the Newstead of Byron’s day has been incorporated into a ‘Byronic House’, enough elements survive to allow for a direct emotional connection with Byron himself.

**The ‘Byronic House’: 1817-1931**

The account of Byron’s life at Newstead that was presented for a century after his death was influential in shaping Byron’s identity for successive generations, and in enhancing the house’s status as a literary destination. According to Hendrix, houses of great writers attract those readers who want to go beyond their literature and experience physical contact with the places where the writer lived. At Newstead, Byron’s celebrity already made him a subject of interest beyond his literature. The transformation from the ‘Byron House’ to the ‘Byronic House’ marks a subtle but important shift in the narrative of Newstead, including the establishment of the Byron literary memorial. As Hendrix notes, any development of a literary house is achieved in a selective way, privileging some aspects and interpretations of the writer’s work and persona over others, and is highly susceptible to manipulation. It is the latter context which marks out Newstead as different during this period and identifies the house as being Byronic, rather than of Byron. Hendrix also suggests that houses are ‘often the products of initiatives by persons or institutions interested in constructing a particular kind of public memory.’ In the case of Newstead this construction included a narrative in which Byron was not a part; and which centred on the image of the two families that owned the house up until 1931. During this period Newstead remained uneasily poised between being an addendum to the Byron narrative and the interests of Newstead’s owners, who saw the house as being something more than a Byron literary memorial frozen in time.

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364 Hendrix, p.1.
365 Ibid.
Thomas Wildman bought Newstead in 1817 and invested large sums of money on a major renovation. Wildman’s alterations to Newstead were extensive and reflected the influence of the emerging revival of Gothic architecture. Wildman had a great interest in architecture and although he employed the architect John Shaw, he himself designed and built the existing great South staircase and succeeded in creating a coherent ensemble of mid-nineteenth century design. Almost all evidence of post-medieval architecture was erased and the building was refaced in Gothic style masonry. Some earlier work of the Byron family from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century survived, due perhaps to its close affinity to medieval architecture. New stairs were inserted and rooms reconfigured; these included the extension south of the Great Hall, the removal of the entrance stair and the construction of the Sussex Tower. (Figure 25)

In 1859, Wildman died without children, and Newstead was eventually sold in 1861 to William Frederick Webb. Webb came from a wealthy background. He had been educated at Eton, held a commission in the army, and had spent a number of years in Africa where he had formed a lasting friendship with the explorer, Dr David Livingstone. From his father and two uncles he inherited a number of estates, none of which appears to have provided him with a suitable country seat, hence his purchase of Newstead. Webb continued to make additions to the house, again in the Gothic Revival style, including a stable block, entrance lodge and gates, and the decoration of the chapel. (Figure 27) Woodland was planted and Webb introduced other landscape and garden features. After his death in 1899, his daughters continued the programme of work, and made a particular contribution to the gardens, including new Japanese, French and Spanish gardens, a fernery and the adaptation of existing gardens.

366 Wildman paid approximately £95,000 for the estate and spent a further estimated £100,000 on renovations. See Coope (1997).
Despite these changes, Wildman and the Webb family understood the implications of the Byron connection and maintained parts of the house as a Byron memorial. Thomas Moore visited in 1828 and was shown the Byronic parts of the house, commenting on ‘the dining room which Byron used when he first took possession, the small apartment he afterwards occupied, dinner, sitting and bedroom.’

Irving, in 1831, commented extensively on the preservation of the memory of the writer:

*What most, however, will interest the visitors to the Abbey in favour of its present occupant, is the reverential care with which he has preserved and renovated every monument and relic of the Byron family, and every object in any wise connected with the memory of the poet.*

*Such was the medley of objects presented to the eye on first visiting the Abbey, and I found the interior fully to answer the description of the poet.*

He even changed his bedroom so he could take the opportunity to stay in the one used by Byron:

*It possessed still more interest in my eyes, from having been the sleeping apartment of Lord Byron during his residence at the Abbey. The furniture remained the same. Here was the bed in which he slept, and which he had brought with him from college; its gilded posts surmounted by coronets, giving evidence of his aristocratical feelings. Here was likewise his college sofa: and about the walls were the portraits of his favourite butler, old Joe Murray; of his fancy acquaintance, Jackson the pugilist; together with pictures of Harrow School and the College at Cambridge, at which he was educated.*

These descriptions would appear to suggest that Wildman’s house was still very much in keeping with the ‘Byron House’. However, questions began to be raised by later commentators as to how much of Newstead could be considered as ‘Byron’s’. Howitt,
visiting in 1838, praised Wildman for keeping Byron’s memory alive but was one of the first people to raise the issue of authenticity at the site:

Wildman is as desirous as any man can be not to obliterate any traces of his Lordship’s former life here [but] … I cannot help regretting that the poet’s study should now be converted into a common bedroom; and most of all, that the antique fountain which stood in front of the abbey and makes so strong a feature in the very graphic picture of the place drawn in Don Juan, should be removed. It now adorns the inner quadrangle, or cloister court, and is certainly a very beautiful object there.371 (Figures 21 & 24)

Obviously Wildman was now selecting which parts of the ‘Byron House’ were convenient enough to keep in situ. Additionally, Newstead’s influence on Byron’s poetry was being openly challenged. In spite of his earlier misgivings, Howitt was later to commend Wildman’s changes:

Of Newstead … I have given a particular account in the Rural Life of England. To [this] I must refer, and have only to add that, in the hands of Lord Byron’s old school-fellow Colonel Wildman, Newstead is restored and maintained as all lovers of English genius would wish it to be, and is ever open to their survey.372

Howitt was right to question Wildman’s modifications as, although visitors such as Irving left feeling that they had experienced Byron’s Newstead, what they saw had been substantially altered. Even Byron’s bedroom was not strictly the same, with changes made to the fireplace and parts of the bed adjusted to account for alterations in ceiling levels.373 (Figure 22) It would also appear that Wildman purposely exaggerated the extent to which visitors could acquaint themselves with the writer’s house. In 1849 a visitor wrote, ‘Colonel Wildman possesses the Table (a round one covered with green baize) at which Lord Byron told him he

had written the whole of ‘Childe Harold’. He keeps the table in his study.\(^{374}\) (Figure 28) By this date, scholars of Byron’s poetry should have known that the later cantos of this piece were written after he had left England in 1816, although some of the poem may well have been written at Newstead. Wildman’s alterations to the building and accounts of events suggest a desire to manifest strong links to the writer, but Newstead now was not that of Byron.

Evidence of these changes at Newstead, particularly those highlighted by Howitt, would have been noted by a number of visitors. In an earlier publication Howitt notes the popularity of visits to Newstead, ‘It has been fashionable to visit Newstead, and it has been visited…’\(^{375}\) The italics on “has” emphasises the number of people who had visited. Howitt used the visitor books found at the site of Byron’s burial, the nearby Hucknall church, to suggest that these visitors would have also visited Newstead. As Howitt notes, ‘The signatures of visitors [sic] in 1834 amounted to upwards eight hundred, amongst which appear the names of various people from North and South America, Russia, the Indies, and various other distant places and countries…’\(^{376}\) He continues:

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...the names entered in the clerk’s book afford no just criterion of the number or quality of the visiters [sic] to the poet’s tomb, as many of the most poetical and refined minds might naturally feel reluctant to place their signatures in such a medley of mawkish sentiment as is always found in such albums.\(^{377}\)
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Other sources support the view that Newstead was popular, and that Wildman encouraged visitors: ‘…thousands [of visitors had] by his courtesy, been permitted to traverse its spacious

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\(^{375}\) Howitt (1838), Vol.I, p.269.
\(^{376}\) Ibid., p.272. Howitt was writing of his visit in 1834 although this view came from the 3rd volume of Rural Life published in 1844, twenty years after Byron’s death.
\(^{377}\) Ibid.
galleries and venerable halls.” The changes highlighted by Howitt might have been expected to have led to adverse comments on the Byronic authenticity of the house, but this does not appear to be the case. What then were visitors’ expectations? The evidence of commentators is not entirely clear on the matter. Some sources suggest that visitors thought they were seeing Byron’s house, while others acknowledge that visitors accepted that they were seeing a memorial, that is, the ‘Byronic House’. If so, they recognised the physical changes that Wildman had put in place but considered that enough remained to allow them to experience the ‘aura’ of Byron.

The ambiguity of the sources is such that even in 1909, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt kept alive the myth that Byron’s bedroom remained untouched: ‘Byron’s own little bedroom, with its simple furniture, is most interesting, unaltered since his time.” Sentiments such as these may have had their origins in the claims made by Irving on his visit in 1831. However, Irving only visited Newstead after major works had been carried out and he did not have the benefit of seeing the pre-Wildman house. Instead he relied on information contained in Byron’s poetical works on the subject and from members of the Wildman household. Howitt should have been a more reliable witness, having visited Newstead in both its ‘Byron’ and ‘Byronic’ phases, but he too implied that the interiors of Byron’s house remained intact:

...the only objects in the interior, which can much interest strangers, as connected with the history of Lord Byron, are equally familiar. The picture of his wolf-dog, and his Newfoundland-dog...; the skull-cup kept in a cabinet in the drawing-room, and the little chapel and cloisters mentioned by him. There are also in a lumber-room the

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379 Blunt, p.663.
identical stone-coffin, and the foils I saw there twenty-years ago, and a portrait of old Murray smoking his pipe. There is also the well-known portrait by Phillips.\(^{382}\) (Figure 29)

After a visit in 1857 Hawthorne also claimed that Byron’s bedroom remained unaltered, ‘…we were led to Byron’s own bedchamber, which remains just as when he slept in it, the furniture, as well as all the other arrangements, being religiously preserved.’\(^{383}\) He also mentioned Byron’s plunge-bath: ‘In the basement, was Byron’s bath, a dark, and cold, cellar-like hole, which it must have required good courage to plunge into…’\(^{384}\) Among other Byron objects he noted the skull-cup.\(^{385}\) Otherwise he stated that the house bore limited resemblance to the Byron’s Newstead and was one of the first commentators to suggest that Newstead was now more ‘Byronic’; it was Hawthorne who suggested that Byron was writing about Wildman’s house in *Don Juan*, and not his own. Despite the ambiguity of what was being seen at Newstead, all of its nineteenth century commentators recognised a ‘sense of place’, whether the association with Byron was direct or indirect. This is an important point as it suggests that these visitors’ expectations were being met and leads to the conclusion that it was they who were activating this Byron spirit.

An essential component of the ‘Byronic House’ was a sense of place associated with Byron notwithstanding the changes made since he sold Newstead. Byron could still be accessed through his works, physical legacy and via memorialisation by Wildman. Latour and Lowe’s concept of the migration of aura from an original to a copy can be applied to Byron’s bed, one of the central relics at Newstead. As Irving, Howitt, Hawthorne and Scawen Blunt all maintain, visitors were shown the bedroom, with its iconic bed at the centre, as a kind of shrine, being informed that it remained as Byron had left it. But as Coope claims, this myth

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\(^{383}\) *Hawthorne, Stewart, R*, p.487.
\(^{384}\) Ibid.
\(^{385}\) Ibid., p.489.
may well have been fostered by Wildman as there is evidence of changes to both the room and the bed.\textsuperscript{386} An 1815 sale catalogue describes the bed in detail:

\begin{quote}
...a very superb (five feet six) double-screwed four post BEDSTEAD, on French castors; the feet posts carved and finished with burnished gold; rich pattern FURNITURE, lined with yellow; full green silk and yellow draperies, rich SILK French fringe, gilt cornice surmounted by a carved coronet, lines, tassels \& c.\textsuperscript{387}
\end{quote}

However, during his renovations Wildman had the ceiling of the bedroom lowered which probably necessitated the loss of the ‘French castors’ and the cutting down of the bed-posts.\textsuperscript{388} Copies of the bed-curtains were made in circa 1905, which themselves were replaced in 1988.\textsuperscript{389} (Figure 22) In the rest of the room the 1815 Catalogue lists:

\begin{quote}
...six japanned chairs with rush seats horsehair cushions and cotton cases, a japanned dressing-chest of three drawers a swing dressing-glass in a mahogany frame, a mahogany chest of drawers night table \& [and] a japanned chiffonier bookcase with brass wire doors and yellow curtains.\textsuperscript{390}
\end{quote}

Of this furniture, only Byron’s bed and a pair of bed steps remained. (Figure 22) The other pieces mentioned in the nineteenth-century descriptions, a number of which did belong to Byron, were brought from elsewhere in the house.\textsuperscript{391} Despite the changes, visitors (in particular Irving and Hawthorne) recounted their visits to the bedroom in reverential terms, and commented on the spirit of Byron to be found there. But how was this spirit reproduced at Newstead and how did visitors respond to what they were being shown? Byron’s ‘aura’ was, in some part, due to the belief that what was being seen was original. This was enhanced by the memorialisation fostered by Wildman. Those who did not consider the house to be the

\textsuperscript{386} Coope (1997), p.167.
\textsuperscript{387} Newstead Abbey - A Catalogue of very Elegant Furniture (New within the Year) which will be sold by Auction by Mr. Farebrother on the Premises on Monday, 23rd October 1815 and following days. Newstead Abbey Collection - this sale never took place.
\textsuperscript{389} Author’s personal recollections while Museum Assistant at Newstead 1986-88.
\textsuperscript{390} 1815 Catalogue.
\textsuperscript{391} 1815 Catalogue.
‘Byron House’ still accepted the interpretations as they, too, believed these imparted an aura of the writer.

Byron remained an integral part of the later development of Newstead but why were his associations exploited in this way? One possibility is that such was Byron’s popularity and influence, that an audience for Newstead had already been created. Certainly, Howitt’s description of his first visit when the house was owned by Byron suggests that this was the case, as did Laird’s 1813 guide.\textsuperscript{392} Newstead had been set up to be viewed by a visiting public based on Byron’s physical and literary legacy. The successive owners set areas aside for public opening and the house attracted a considerable audience.\textsuperscript{393}

Evidence shows that Wildman and the Webb family both encouraged a Byronic reading of the house. Howitt’s \textit{Homes and Haunts} of 1846 along with James Carter’s observation in his 1850 guide to the area, Bailey’s 1855 guide and Allen’s guide of 1874 each perpetuate this role for Newstead.\textsuperscript{394} However, compared with Abbotsford, much of the tour of Newstead was not connected to Byron at all. Hawthorne, for example, accepted that Newstead was more than Byron’s house: certainly by 1857, it was presented as a neo-Gothic country house - with all that implied for Wildman’s politics of neo-feudalism.

This was a time when English history, and particularly the medieval period with its religious morality and ideas of chivalry, was championed and relocated within a neo-Gothic landscape.\textsuperscript{395} As Mark Girouard has shown, this engendered a cultural and political climate whereby some members of the Victorian elite adopted a neo-feudal mantle as the protectors


\textsuperscript{393} Wildman’s political views on neo-feudalism meant that the house was the centre of an estate and would be open for public view. See Coope (1997), Mandler, Girouard (1979, 1981), Tinniswood (1989, 1998).

\textsuperscript{394} Howitt, I (1857), Carter (1850), Bailey (1855), Allen (1874).


of English culture against the effects of industrialisation. Wildman was at the forefront of this movement.\textsuperscript{396} It is no coincidence that Newstead was refurbished by Wildman (and later by the Webbs) in a neo-Gothic style.\textsuperscript{397} (Figure 30) Wildman paid homage to English history by naming rooms in the east wing ‘Edward III’ and ‘Henry VII’. Carter’s 1850 guidebook also notes that The Tapestry Room ‘…was formed by the Byrons for the use of Charles II’\textsuperscript{398} and, by the publication of Allen’s guide in 1874, this had been duly named ‘Charles II’s Room’ - though whether by Wildman or the Webbs is not known.\textsuperscript{399}

Part of this movement was an interest in visiting country houses which were increasingly seen as part of a national culture; as Mandler maintains, houses thus fell into ‘the physical possession of the Victorian public.’\textsuperscript{400} This was a two-way process, with the public considering houses as part of their heritage, and owners welcoming them in a protective yet shared role, ‘…enmeshed in a living relationship between aristocracy and people…’\textsuperscript{401}

There was an explosion in the day-trip market from the 1850s onwards and, like Abbotsford, Newstead is thought to have been one of the most visited houses throughout the nineteenth century. It is difficult to gauge actual visitor figures at this time, but it has been suggested that by the 1870s, reflecting the popularity of Byron, Newstead was receiving tens of thousands of visitors per year. These estimates by Mandler are cited by Beckett and readily accepted by Nottingham City Museums.\textsuperscript{402} They appear to be based on the accessibility of Newstead (along with other ‘show houses’ such as Chatsworth, Hardwick, Belvoir and Warwick

\textsuperscript{396} Coope (1997). Wildman was supported in this political standpoint by the Duke of Sussex (Queen Victoria’s uncle). He was also equerry to the Duke who was a frequent visitor to Newstead.

\textsuperscript{397} Ibid. Also see Pardoe, \textit{The History of Newstead Abbey c.1170-1988} (unpublished document 1988)

\textsuperscript{398} Carter (1850).

\textsuperscript{399} Allen (1874).

\textsuperscript{400} Mandler (1997), p.37.

\textsuperscript{401} Ibid., p.71.

Castle for tourists from the densely populated areas of the industrial midlands and north. However, no primary sources appear to be available to verify these figures, although the 1850 Guide does claim that ‘thousands of visitors’ were welcomed to the house. Certainly, sufficient numbers were arriving by the 1860s for official guidebooks to be published and for the owner at the time, William Frederick Webb, to begin vetting potential visitors for their suitability:

_The proprietor is most generous in granting permission to view the Abbey, under certain restrictions which every right thinking person will consider absolutely necessary. It being a family residence, in a private domain, cannot be thrown open for persons to visit, indiscriminately, from mere idle curiosity._

_Parties desirous of seeing the Abbey, for its associations or other commendable reasons, must a few days previous, write the proprietor for permission; all such applications being courteously responded to._

The caution of Webb indicates numbers were sufficiently high for the owners of Newstead to want to be forewarned of impending visitors. A fair amount of anecdotal evidence suggested that the house was liberally shown in Colonel Wildman’s day and even when the house was not open, the grounds were much visited for their own intrinsic merit, and being on a well-travelled route. Even after Wildman’s time, on ‘show days’ the house could attract very large numbers; for example 3,000 people visited in one day in 1866. What attracted so many visitors to Newstead and what did they expect to see and experience there? One factor was that Newstead was easily accessible at a time when visiting the houses of the gentry (as

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403 Mandler (1997), pp.76.
404 Carter (1850), p.29.
406 Author’s personal correspondence with Peter Mandler 15th January 2007. Mandler refers to Lady Amberley’s Journal, 30 August 1866, Bertrand Russell and Patricia Russell (eds), _The Amberley Papers_ (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937), pp.524-7. For his research on country house visiting Mandler used actual visitor records from a sample of houses, though not Newstead. He then carried out some extrapolation to houses that seemed to be in the same category based on accessibility, location and qualitative evidence.
opposed to literary tourism) was at its peak.\footnote{Mandler (1997), pp.76.} This accessibility was due partly to the construction of a railway station at Newstead by Webb in 1865. Newstead had been a tourist destination in the eighteenth century, long before Byron inherited, and it featured in travel guides such as \textit{The Farmers’ Tour through the East of England} (1777),\footnote{Young, A ‘The Farmers’ Tour through the East of England, vol. 1’ (London: W. Strahan, 1771), pp.142–48, cited in, Beckett (2001), p.44.} \textit{Complete English Traveller} (1772),\footnote{Sanders, R \textit{The Complete English Traveller} (London: J. Cooke, 1772).} \textit{Britannica Curiosa} (1777),\footnote{Burlington, C \textit{The Modern Universal British Traveller} (London: J. Cooke, 1779).} and \textit{The Modern Universal British Traveller} (1779).\footnote{Newstead Abbey, the Family Seat of the Byrons, Nottingham Public Libraries: Pictorial Survey, 8.11,10595} The text accompanying an early nineteenth century engraving of Newstead notes that ‘Newstead …independently of its living peer [Byron]…has always been ranked among the curiosities of Nottinghamshire,’\footnote{Wright, C \textit{Newstead Abbey: Its Present Owner, with Reminiscences of Lord Byron} (London: Longman & Co. and Nottingham, 1857), p.iii.} and a mid-nineteenth century guide promoted the house as being of interest for ‘the most casual observer…the antiquarian, historical [as well as] literary tourist.’\footnote{Carter, J (1850), cited in, Beckett(2001), p.292.} James Carter, writing in 1850, included Newstead in his guide to Sherwood Forest which also took in the Abbeys of Rufford and Welbeck; Annesley, Thoresby, and Hardwick Halls; Bolsover Castle and what he termed ‘Other Interesting Places in the Locality with a Critical Essay on the Life and Times of Robin Hood.’\footnote{Beckett (2001), p.292.} Beckett supports the argument that Newstead was visited as a country house, as well as a literary house, and notes that the numbers visiting Newstead after Byron’s death increased partly due to its associations with the writer and also partly because his death coincided with a growing interest in country-house visiting.\footnote{Mandler (1997), p.196.} This activity reached its nineteenth century zenith in the 1870s\footnote{Mandler (1997), pp.76.} and there is evidence to suggest Newstead received...
high levels of visitors at that time.\textsuperscript{417} However, from the 1880s, country-house visitor figures in general saw a marked downturn, and from this period until the 1930s many country-houses were demolished or adapted for other purposes, particularly during the two decades following World War One. Newstead was threatened with conversion into apartments but its connections with Byron saved it, although, by now Newstead had long been viewed as a ‘Byronic House’ rather than the house that Byron once lived in.\textsuperscript{418}

Not only were the actions of the owners important in developing the ‘Byronic House’, so were audiences. Among the most influential groups of visitors were the \textit{Homes and Haunts} writers, who were central to the interaction between owners and visitors. These writers often stressed Newstead’s fundamental importance to Byron and highlighted aspects of the house that were associated with the writer. Nevertheless, their descriptions (and criticisms) of the changes made by Wildman and the Webbs helped establish the ‘Byronic House’, and arguably, were as significant as the actions of the owners themselves.

Howitt’s views had particular significance as he had visited Newstead before it was sold to Wildman, and so was able to give a credible view of the changes that had occurred. Although he made a point of highlighting how much of Byron’s house remained, he also wrote that Wildman wished to keep Byron’s spirit alive ‘through traces of his former life at the Abbey.’\textsuperscript{419} This was a house, in Howitt’s view, which had a \textit{sense} of Byron, but which, as he noted, contained only ‘traces’ of the writer. He was critical of the new architectural style that Wildman had brought in, suggesting that it was not Romantic enough, and not what he would have expected at a Byron house:

\textsuperscript{417} Tinniswood (1989), pp. 142-43.
\textsuperscript{418} Mandler (1997), pp.196-221. Parts of the house were converted into apartments as we shall see in the following section.
\textsuperscript{419} Howitt, I (1857), pp.297-98.
I think a style of architecture in restoring the abbey might have been adopted more abbey-like - more in keeping with the old part of it - and more consonant to the particular state of feeling with which admirers of the noble poet’s genius would be likely to approach it. To my taste it is too square and massy in its ‘tout ensemble.’

Writing in 1857, Hawthorne echoed some of the points made by Howitt: in his description of the bedroom;

...we were led to Byron’s own bedchamber, which remains just as when he slept in it, the furniture, as well as other arrangements, being religiously preserved.

The Monk’s skull cup was noted as a highlight of the tour:

...the house-keeper unlocked a beautiful cabinet, and took out the famous skull which Byron transformed into a drinking-goblet. It has a silver rim and stand; but still the ugly skull is bare and evident, and the naked inner bone receives the wine.

Despite his protestations to the contrary, Hawthorne made sure he gave quite detailed descriptions of anything directly and physically linked to Byron. He also suggested why Wildman kept the Byron rooms as he did:

He appears to have been on good terms with Byron, and had the latter ever returned to England, he was under promise to make his first visit to his old home; and it was [in] such an expectation, that Colonel Wildman had kept Byron’s private apartments in the same condition in which he found them.

However, for Hawthorne the ‘aura’ of Byron was more important than details and he noted how much of Newstead was Wildman’s rather than Byron’s, implying that for him, at least, the spirit of Byron could be experienced only to a limited extent:

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420 Ibid.
421 Ibid.
422 Hawthorne, Stewart, R, p.489.
423 Ibid.
...except the two bedchambers already noticed, nothing remained in the least as Byron left it; yes, one other place there was, his own small dining-room, with a table of moderate size, where no doubt, the skull-goblet has often gone its rounds...Colonel Wildman’s dining-room was Byron’s shooting-gallery, and the original refectory, the housekeeper says, of the monks; it is now magnificently arranged, with a vaulted roof, a music gallery at one end, suits of armor [sic] and weapons on the walls, and mailed arms extended, holding candelabras.424 (Figure 31)

One of the last Homes and Haunts writers to signal the importance of Newstead was Samuel Chew writing in 1924 (the centenary of Byron’s death).425 Chew considers twelve different guides and books which mentioned Newstead ranging from ‘The Mirror’ of January 1824 (when Byron was still alive) through to ‘A Guide to Newstead Abbey and Gardens’, by A.J. Lloyd (n.d., preface dated 1916).426 Most were published in the 1850s, suggesting a renewed interest in Byron, but also in what was, by now, the ‘Byronic House’. Chew also notes the movement to establish a national memorial to Byron, the committee of which included the Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli: ‘The original plan of the committee had been to purchase Newstead Abbey, and install therein a collection of Byron Relics. But the funds collected fell far short of the necessary amount, and a statue was decided upon instead.’427 This was a considerable amount, as the Webbs had paid £147,000 in 1861.428 Nevertheless, there was no suggestion of an attempt to recreate Byron’s house, and Chew suggests that it is Byron’s personality and not his literature which would be the attraction. In particular he highlights Minto’s article to support this view: ‘At the end of his article Minto remarks that the fascinating problem of Byron’s personality will draw students to him longer than his verse.”429

424 Ibid.
425 Chew, pp.2-3.
426 Ibid., p.275.
427 Ibid., pp.294-295.
429 Chew, p.296.
Even though Byron’s popularity waned in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the new owners kept his associations alive at Newstead and treasured its link with the writer. Emilia Webb, wife of the owner, William Frederick, preserved the Byron links as her daughter Augusta later recalled:

*It is chiefly owing to her care on her first arrival at Newstead that every relic connected with him has been so religiously preserved. Her almost meticulous reverence for all that connected the Byron family, and, of course, more especially the poet, even at times provided ridicule, a clever relative remarking with some truth that mother seemed ‘much less mistress in her own house, than caretaker for the Byrons’. She regarded them, however, as an obligation, and in some sort as a duty that she owed to all the poet’s admirers.*

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt also noted they were, ‘proud of their family possessions …and of its connection with the poet.”

A number of accounts attest to the position of Newstead as the place to be visited because of its Byron connections, emphasising the importance of objects and spaces within Newstead and the subsequent owners’ willingness to promote these associations and to maintain these items and spaces in a private home. The presence of a memorial demonstrates the perception of Newstead’s importance in terms of Byron. For a number of visitors, their reverence for Byron was such that any changes to the physical connections associated with the writer were outweighed by feeling his enduring spirit at the house. One visitor wrote, ‘we have just been seeing Lord Byron’s room, but in horrid taste, nothing but the remembrance to make it interesting.” The remembrance of Byron, rather than a replication of his life, was what visitors to Newstead came to experience. By the late nineteenth century, therefore, the ‘Byron

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432 Cited in, Coope (1997), p.167. No date is given for this comment but where Coope cites it in her article would suggest some time in the 1850s.
House’ no longer existed, and an ‘aura’ of Byron could be experienced in the context of a house that was more ‘Byronic’ than directly of Byron.

**From Private House to Public Museum: 1931-2002**

When Webb died in 1899, ownership passed to his surviving children and then, in 1925, to his grandson, Charles Ian Fraser. However, this did not include the contents of the house which had been left to Fraser’s uncle by marriage, Sir Herbert Charles Chermside, husband of Geraldine Webb. On the death of his wife, Chermside had remarried and moved to Pepper Arden in Yorkshire, which he furnished with some items from Newstead, including paintings, furniture, papers and documents. Most of the other contents went to auction in January 1921, apart from some items bought by Fraser’s mother, which included ‘those things she considered should not leave the Abbey - among them the Phillips portrait of Byron and the poet’s bed.’ It was also reported in the *Nottingham Guardian* that, ‘it is pleasing to know that most of the things known as the “Byron relics” are not to be sold, and that the poet’s bedroom will remain in the condition that visitors to the abbey are accustomed to see it.’

At this time, the ‘relics’ consisted of pictures, clothes, swords, pens, books, furniture and other ‘Byron’ objects including his bed. These were kept in what was called the ‘Byron Room’, believed to have been used as a study by the writer, and the Byron Bedroom. In addition, the Phillips portrait hung in the large drawing room, and oil paintings of Byron’s two dogs were displayed in the west corridor. Several other lots in the 1921 sale were described as formerly in Byron’s ownership, including five bookcases. Many items of the

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433 Beckett (unpublished paper 2008), pp.6-10. Geraldine, William Webb’s eldest daughter, had inherited on her father’s death, but had died in 1910.
434 Reelig, bundle 568, Roderick Webb to Augusta Fraser, 17th February 1915; also cited in letter from Violet Carnegie to Rosalys Coope, dated 26th May 1975, Newstead Abbey Collection.
436 *Nottingham Guardian*, 11th January 1921.
438 Letter from Violet Carnegie to Rosalys Coope dated 26th May 1975, Newstead Abbey Collection.
sale were, however, acquisitions by Wildman and Webb, including books, furniture, china and glass.\(^{439}\)

Fraser’s mother, Geraldine’s younger sister Augusta, who had ‘saved’ the Byron relics, moved into Newstead after the sale: she furnished the south-east wing and lived there until her death in 1925. It is not clear what remained at Newstead as we only have Violet Carnegie’s memoirs as a direct source,\(^{440}\) and she states that the house was completely emptied except for a large, damaged table.\(^{441}\) But there is no evidence that every item was sold in the 1921 sale, and later references in the press suggested that some items remained at Newstead which had belonged to the Webbs, and even to Wildman.\(^{442}\) It also appears that the public rooms were still furnished and open to visitors. A newspaper report of a visit by Nottingham Ramblers in June 1923 suggests the house was far from empty as they claimed that ‘the poet’s bedroom and dressing room…have been kept in their original state as when used by Lord Byron.’\(^{443}\)

Fraser, the last of the private owners of Newstead, had no interest in keeping the Newstead estate and saw it as little more than an opportunity to finance his Reelig estate in Scotland.\(^{444}\) Piecemeal sales of land took place and reports were made of plans to convert the house into family apartments. In January 1927, the local press reported that workmen were ‘busily engaged in a scheme for making accommodation in Newstead Abbey for three families.’\(^{445}\)

\(^{439}\) Newstead Abbey Sale Catalogue 10-13 January 1921, Newstead Abbey Collection.

\(^{440}\) Violet Carnegie was Augusta Fraser’s daughter. She wrote her memoirs 50 years after her mother’s death, when aged 83.

\(^{441}\) Letter from Violet Carnegie to Rosalys Coope dated 26th May 1975, Newstead Abbey Collection.

\(^{442}\) Hucknall Dispatch and Leen Valley Mercury, 1st June 1922.

\(^{443}\) Hucknall Dispatch and Leen Valley Mercury, 14th June 1923.

\(^{444}\) Letter from Violet Carnegie to Rosalys Coope, dated 4th May 1975, Newstead Abbey Collection.

\(^{445}\) Mansfield and North Notts Advertiser, 14th January 1927.
Demolition, although never publicly discussed, may also have been an option\textsuperscript{446} and Fraser could have disposed of an expensive burden which the agent for the estate, Harry German, considered unsaleable.\textsuperscript{447} German told Fraser that he considered it unlikely that he would find a purchaser for Newstead: ‘you might get someone to give you a fancy price for the Abbey, but with the great colliery development in this area, I think all chance of this is gone’.

Consequently, he advised Fraser that: ‘you will have to make up your mind to turn Newstead Abbey and grounds into a business proposition with two objects in view viz: (1) letting as much of the Abbey as possible, (2) developing to the fullest extent the showing of the Abbey and Grounds.’\textsuperscript{448}

Fraser sold what he called, ‘the most ancient part’ of the building; that is, all of the house apart from the south-east wing containing the three flats mentioned in the local press in January 1927, and the west wing including the tower, together with the gardens and lakes, to Sir Julien Cahn, a Nottinghamshire philanthropist. Cahn then presented the property to Nottingham Corporation as a ‘National Memorial to Lord Byron’ on 16\textsuperscript{th} July 1931. At the same time, Fraser gave the Corporation as a: ‘further memorial to the poet…such of his personal furniture and effects as I possess…which my mother bought privately upon her succession to Newstead, in order to ensure their remaining in the house of which they are properly the complement.’\textsuperscript{449} In addition to his gift of Byron relics, Fraser allowed portraits, furniture and other possessions of Thomas Wildman and the Webb family to remain at Newstead, and these he also converted into a gift in 1931. On 16\textsuperscript{th} July 1931 (the anniversary of Byron’s burial at Hucknall church) a ceremony took place in front of 2,000 invited guests.

\textsuperscript{446} Many houses from the mid-1920s of a similar size met this fate. Mandler, P ‘Nationalising the Country House’ in Hunter, M (ed) \textit{Preserving the Past: the rise of heritage in modern Britain} (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1996), p.99.


\textsuperscript{448} Letter from Harry German to Charles Ian Fraser, n.d., Newstead Abbey Collection.

to transfer Newstead to Nottingham Corporation. The guest of honour, the Greek Prime
Minister, hoped that under the ownership of Nottingham ‘the ancestral home of Byron might
continue as a shrine of pilgrimage for devotion to ideals and poetry…liberty and sacrifice.’

For his part Cahn said that, ‘I shall have the pleasure of knowing that Newstead, which is of
such great interest to the lovers of Byron’s works, will for all time be in safe hands.’

Why did Cahn donate Newstead to Nottingham Corporation and why did it accept? And how
much of the ‘Byron House’ and ‘Byronic House’ actually remained at this time? Cahn’s
money came from a furniture business which had been set up by his father and was based in
Nottingham. Throughout the 1920s he had sponsored a number of charitable works in the
Nottingham area and also made donations to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club. He
remained open to ways in which he could utilise his wealth for the public good and his love
of cricket brought him into contact with German, who also had a keen interest in the sport.

Cahn approached Fraser through German, ‘and said he would sponsor any possible upkeep in
the future if he might have credit of presenting the Abbey to the Borough and Corporation of
Nottingham, and might buy it really cheaply.’

News of Newstead’s future became public knowledge on 20th February 1930 and was
reported in the press the following day. The Nottingham Guardian reported that:

Negotiations are in progress for the purchase by Sir Julien Cahn of the
historic portions of Newstead Abbey, the home of Byron, and the
gardens associated with memories of the poet. Sir Julien’s intention, it
is understood, is to give them to the nation without reservation, and it

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450 Nottingham Journal, 17th July 1931.
451 Newstead Abbey, Roe-Byron Collection, 21.
452 Obituary for Sir Julian Cahn, Nottingham Journal, 28th September 1944.
453 Parts of speech by Cahn at the handover of Newstead Abbey to Nottingham Corporation, as reported in
454 Letter from Violet Carnegie to Rosalys Coope dated 26th May 1975, Newstead Abbey Collection.
is expected that they will be presented to the National Trust in a few month’s time.  

The deal with Fraser was completed and signed on 24\textsuperscript{th} June 1930\textsuperscript{456} but attempts to present Newstead to the National Trust ended in failure. Despite being associated with Byron, Newstead was architecturally unfashionable at the time, and could not provide enough income to offset the cost of repairs, and the annual cost of upkeep. It was therefore not a viable concern for the National Trust. In addition, the fact that two parts of the building were in private hands meant that the Trust would not have entire responsibility which was deemed essential for the care of the house.\textsuperscript{457} Having failed with the National Trust, Cahn then turned to Nottingham Corporation, and on 20\textsuperscript{th} July 1930 Alderman Sir Bernard Wright, chairman of the General Purposes Committee and leader of the majority Conservative group on the Council, and W.J. Board, the town clerk, met with the Newstead agent, Harry German, to discuss the possible transfer of Newstead to the Corporation.\textsuperscript{458}

Why did Wright agree to acquire Newstead? First, politics would have been involved, since Cahn was president of the Nottingham City Conservative Association, and the Conservatives were the majority party on the Council. The rhetoric of the speeches during the handing over ceremony also suggest that the acquisition of Newstead provided an enormous boost to Nottingham’s civic pride, as well as excellent publicity for the Conservative Council. Second, Newstead had remained open to the public throughout the 1920s, albeit by special admission to groups by prior arrangement in writing.\textsuperscript{459} Income figures suggested that it had approximately 30,000 visitors annually, confirming the view of the \textit{Nottingham Guardian} that ‘Some thousands of people flock to Newstead during the summer months.’\textsuperscript{460} German

\textsuperscript{455} \textit{Nottingham Guardian}, 21st February 1930.
\textsuperscript{456} Shawe-Brown MSS, Newstead Abbey Collection.
\textsuperscript{457} Beckett (unpublished paper 2008), pp.24-27.
\textsuperscript{458} NAO.CA.TC10/119/27/1.
\textsuperscript{459} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{460} \textit{Nottingham Guardian}, 30th August 1930.
stressed to the Corporation that ‘if the place is run on the same economical lines as at present, the receipts would exceed the expenditure.’\textsuperscript{461} It was with this point in mind that it was decided to continue to open the house and grounds to the public along the lines suggested by German.

Advertisements appeared in the press for the following summer opening\textsuperscript{462} and by November 1932 some 42,113 people had paid to enter the house or grounds.\textsuperscript{463} Newstead was managed by Duncan Gray, Nottingham City Librarian from 1935 to 1953, who organised tours focusing on the ‘Byron Museum’ based on the collection presented by Fraser. These objects were displayed in four areas of the house: the ‘Byron Room’ which included approximately forty items of furniture, clothing and other personal objects belonging to the writer; the ‘Byron Bedroom’ which included approximately fifty items of furniture focusing on the bed, and other miscellaneous prints, paintings and objects; the Large Drawing Room which housed the portrait of Byron by Phillips; and the West Corridor which housed the two paintings of Byron’s dogs. There were other donations such as the Roe-Byron collection which passed to Newstead in 1937,\textsuperscript{464} and the transfer of a number of ‘Byron relics’ from the Castle Museum in Nottingham.\textsuperscript{465} In 1945, the south-east wing was sold to the Corporation, when the three flats were made into one substantial home and let to tenants until 1971, when the wing was incorporated into the house proper. This was to house the Gatty Collection (acquired 1977) which comprised seventy-four items of furniture originally belonging to Wildman and the Webbs which had been removed by Chermside in 1910.\textsuperscript{466} In 1946 the

\textsuperscript{461} NAO.CA.TC/10/119/27/1.
\textsuperscript{462} Nottingham Evening News, 24th May 1932.
\textsuperscript{463} NAO.CA.TC/10/119/27/11.
\textsuperscript{464} This contains 1,906 items including 614 prints; 513 books and pamphlets (mainly editions of Byron’s works); 216 letters of Byron and of people associated with him; 53 manuscripts; and 2 mahogany bookcases and 5 mahogany cupboards from the 1921 sale, formerly owned by the writer. This had been the private collection of Herbert C. Roe, formed from a number of sources, mainly through dealers and from auction sales.
\textsuperscript{465} NAO.CA.TC/10/119/27/6.
\textsuperscript{466} Newstead Abbey: a review of the collections, Nottingham City Museums ands Galleries, February 2003, p.6.
Corporation purchased the flat in the west wing, and with this acquisition, finally acquired all those parts of Newstead that had been sold in 1931.  

Newstead was administered by the Nottingham Public Libraries from 1931 until local government re-organisation in 1973, at which point responsibility was transferred to the City of Nottingham museum service. From 1973, until 1988 (the Byron bi-centenary year), Newstead was developed as a Byron museum within the Department of Applied and Decorative Arts at Nottingham Castle Museum. The way that Newstead was managed by the City of Nottingham from 1931 to 1988 had a profound impact on the house as a literary destination. The dispersals of the collections between 1910 and 1931 meant that the house bore limited resemblance internally to the home of Wildman and Webb. But what did remain were the Byron public rooms and their Byron objects (which would have been recognisable to nineteenth-century visitors such as Howitt and Hawthorne) and these formed the basis of how the house was presented from 1931 to 1973. In addition, the Council saw fit to exploit Newstead’s Byron connections to the full, both to increase civic pride by association and to enhance income generation. This latter objective was in stark contrast to the motivations of Wildman and the Webbs: they had opened Newstead from a sense of duty (Mandler’s political and cultural gesture) and not through any economic need.

During this stage of its history Newstead, therefore, saw a renewed emphasis on its role as a Byron memorial first and foremost, rather than as a country house of the gentry housing memorials to Byron. This attempt to re-present the ‘Byron House’ was reflected in the acquisition of collections from 1935 to 1971, which provided further sensory markers of Byron’s time there. The most significant acquisitions included the S.W. Gibbons Gift (1935) of three mahogany bookcases from the 1921 sale, owned by Byron and used by him at

Newstead; the Herbert C. Roe (Roe-Byron) Collection (1937) of 1,906 items relating to Byron, mentioned earlier; and the Gatty Collection (1971) purchased from Richard Gatty of Pepper Arden, an heir of Sir Herbert Chermside, consisting of ninety-two items including fifteen autograph letters from Byron to Elizabeth Pigot and her brother John Pigot, written between 1806 and 1807.  

With the transfer of responsibility to the museum service in 1973 and the appointment of a curator, a further change in presentation can be detected. Although Byron was still the central feature in the house’s presentation, between 1973 and 1988 a gradual transition took place with Newstead beginning to be re-interpreted as the ‘Byronic House’ rather than the ‘Byron House’. This, again, was reflected in the acquisition policy which saw the collections enhanced by the Carver Gift (1976) of a group of twenty-five watercolour views of Newstead Abbey, its interiors and gardens circa 1850 by an unidentified artist; (Figure 32) the Gatty Collection (1977), mentioned above; the Gatty Gift (1981) of a collection of 254 photographs contained in two albums of views of Newstead, its interiors, gardens and park during the period of Webb family ownership and once the property of Mrs William Frederick Webb. (Figure 31)

The challenge is to ascertain whether this transition was determined by a sea-change in attitude on the part of the officers of the museum service and their political masters or a reaction to the opportunities now afforded to interpret the ‘Byronic House’ by the additions made to the collections in the 1970s and 1980s. Certainly the collections now included

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470 Newstead Abbey: a review of the collections, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, February 2003, p.6. These and other memorabilia of Byron’s life in Southwell and his friendship with the Pigot family originally formed part of the collection created by Miss Pigot and deposited by her at Newstead (only to be removed by Chermside in 1910).
471 The curator, Pamela Wood, had a dual role as curator for Newstead and curator of Applied and Decorative Arts at Nottingham Castle Museum.
472 Newstead Abbey: a review of the collections, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, February 2003, p.6-7.
enough original materials and primary sources to enable a reconstruction of the ‘Byronic House’. In addition, the curator’s expertise in applied and decorative arts would enhance such a reconstruction. Also, if one considers Newstead against the background of the growth of what Robert Hewison termed the ‘Heritage Industry’ of the late 1970s and 1980s, then a direct correlation can be made between a renewed interest in country houses and a change of direction in Newstead’s interpretation. Newstead was now managed by a museum and galleries service with a remit beyond Byron, and funded by a city council whose Conservative Party majority were willing to provide funds to create a heritage destination which would meet current visitor expectations. These funds allowed for the employment of a Museums Assistant to research Newstead’s history to help facilitate new displays, and for an Assistant Curator whose sole responsibility was for Newstead. Therefore, to a certain extent, both a change in attitude on the part the museum service and a reaction to the opportunities afforded by additions to the collections can be ascertained.

In 1988 Newstead became a separate department of Nottingham Museum and Galleries Service with its own curator, and a programme of restoration commenced, with the aim of recreating Newstead’s nineteenth century interiors, including the Byron parts as a memorial to the writer. The following themes would be included: Newstead Priory and the monastic period; the Byron family, from the seventeenth century to the life of the writer; the Wildman and Webb families; architectural and garden history; and history of the estate from 1540 to

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474 Haidee Jackson, Senior Keeper Newstead Abbey, interview by James Pardoe, Newstead Abbey, 17th June 2006.


Acquisitions made after 1988 to support this interpretation included a portrait of the 5th Lord Byron (or his brother John) by Joshua Reynolds circa 1748; two portrait-miniatures of the writer; a portrait of the writer’s great grandmother Frances, Lady Byron painted by Michael Dahl circa 1720 (recorded in the 1762 catalogue of portraits at Newstead); a group of four views of Newstead Abbey painted in oil for the 4th Lord Byron by Peter Tillemans; four watercolour drawings attributed to the 4th Lord Byron; a painting in oil signed and dated 1758 by the 4th Lord’s son Richard (1724-1811), showing an east view of Newstead and the Great Garden; and Miss Ethel Webb’s manuscript notes and sketches made during the creation of the Japanese garden at Newstead circa 1900. These acquisitions were devised to fit the new display policy. However, collecting also had to be selective due to a lack of resources. As is highlighted in the 2003 Review: ‘Competition in the sale rooms from foreign institutions and private collectors has at times placed restrictions on collecting Byron material for the museum and donations of high value items are increasingly rare.’

In 1931 Newstead had been ‘saved’ due to its Byron associations, but by the twenty-first century the house, rather than Byron, had taken centre stage. By the twenty-first century the curators of Newstead selected elements of its history to construct a new narrative based on its entire history reaching back 850 years. Still, many aspects of the presentation of Newstead during the past 200 years also survived. Arguably, the house had become little more than a reproduction and yet for many visitors the aura of the ‘Byron House’ remained, albeit via a process of migration as described by Latour and Lowe.

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477 Ibid., pp.2-3.
478 The writer’s great uncle or grandfather. NB the writer was the 6th Lord Byron.
479 Newstead Abbey: a review of the collections, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, February 2003, pp.4-5.
480 Ibid., p.5.
481 Haidee Jackson, Senior Keeper Newstead Abbey, interview by James Pardoe, Newstead Abbey, 17th June 2006.
The House in the Twenty-First Century: a Result of an Historical Process

Newstead today is the product of four main phases of development: the medieval priory from circa 1160 to 1539; the creation of a country seat by the Byron family from 1539 to 1817; the reinterpretation of the house during the Romantic and High Gothic Revivals of the nineteenth century; and the museum owned by Nottingham City Council. Despite the many changes, the house is still organised spatially along the lines of the conversion from the Priory to the house by the Byrons. Even where rooms have changed, in general their functions are similar; for instance, with bedrooms in the former dormitory. The footprint of the cloister ranges has not changed since the late twelfth century and the monks who lived there in the thirteenth century would still recognise the west front of their former church. Arguably, any of these phases could be deployed in the interpretation of Newstead today. There are thus various ways in which a study of this subject could be approached but pivotal to this at Newstead is the role of the owners interacting with the expectations of visitors. In the twenty-first century this role can be seen to be articulated through plans as set out by the Nottingham Museum and Galleries Service and through the input of the Newstead curator, Haidee Jackson.

In 2002 it was decided by Nottingham City Council Heritage Service to review interpretation at Newstead.482 There had never been a formal interpretation policy and it had developed since 1931 largely on an ad hoc basis. This review led to a process which resulted in the commissioning of five plans483 over a three-year period which began with a review of collections in 2003, conducted by the Nottingham Museum and Galleries Service, which was followed by a response by the curator in 2004. These deliberations resulted in the compilation

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482 The local government department responsible for all Nottingham museums.
483 Haidee Jackson, Senior Keeper Newstead Abbey, interview by James Pardoe, Newstead Abbey, 17th June 2006.
of an interpretation plan in 2005, a conservation plan in early 2006, and an audience development plan later in 2006.484

These plans provide evidence of Newstead and Byron’s perceived significance in the twenty-first century and how this significance is interpreted. The Interpretation Plan, although largely concerned with presentation media, did make suggestions for themes to be presented which focused on Newstead as much as on Byron.485 However, the Conservation Plan of 2006 highlights Newstead’s broader significance. There is an acknowledgement that ‘It is unique in many respects, both in its physical form, its setting and in the history of its subsequent owners.’486 The wider significance is outlined in The Vision for Newstead487 whose aims are:

To conserve the fabric of Newstead Abbey and to preserve and develop its collections in accordance with current best practice. To enhance the presentation of the Abbey as an early example of the Romantic English country house and 19th century literary shrine. To enhance appreciation of all phases of Newstead’s history. To increase understanding and appreciation of the life, work and “cult” of the Poet Byron. To re-establish the framework of the 19th century parkland setting for the Abbey as a 19th century romantic house. To restore and enhance the formal gardens as an encapsulation of three centuries of garden design.488

Byron’s association with Newstead is recognised but only as one of five priorities in the Audience Development Plan.489 This point is reiterated in the ‘Conservation Philosophy’ of the Conservation Plan which states:

Alterations to the original Priory have been ongoing ever since its dissolution as a monastery. Each generation of the Byron family carried out some project

484 Newstead Abbey: a review of the collections, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, February 2003.

487 Ibid., p.81.
488 Ibid., p.82.
489 Newstead Abbey Audience Development Plan, p. 5, 12.
of greater or lesser extent. Wildman carried out very extensive alterations and
the Webb family yet more. Such a degree of alteration to a Mediaeval building
would not be allowed today. What the centuries of change have left us is a
thing of beauty and value in its own right, perhaps of greater interest than the
ruins we would have had if the site had not been inhabited.\footnote{Newstead
Abbey Conservation Plan, p.80}

The importance of the building’s history as a whole is again emphasised: ‘The surviving
work of each century up to the time when the site was gifted to Nottingham City Council is
seen as having significance and \textbf{all these phases are to be retained}.\footnote{Ibid., p.81. NB the bold
typeface is reproduced from the original document.} This significance has
been recognised legally as Newstead is both a Grade 1 Listed Building and a Scheduled
Ancient Monument.

Overall the \textit{Executive Summary} of the \textit{Conservation Plan} outlines the diverse importance of
Newstead:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Of international significance} is the connection to the poet Byron. As an
example of Gothic Revival architecture and surviving 13\textsuperscript{th} century
ecclesiastical architecture Newstead Abbey is of \textbf{high national significance}. The other monastic
remains and surviving 17\textsuperscript{th} century interior are of \textbf{national
significance}. Also of \textbf{national significance} is the role of Newstead as a
literary shrine, its collections with their close associations to Byron, the
landscape and gardens and the associations with friends and visitors of the
owners such as the 19\textsuperscript{th} century explorer Dr David Livingstone. Other aspects
of Newstead, such as its ecology, its educational and recreational value are of
\textbf{regional significance}.\footnote{Newstead Abbey Conservation Plan, p.2.}
\end{quote}

These areas of significance fall into four broad areas: Newstead’s architecture; the literary
site; the Byron memorial; and the non-Byron house. How the architectural features and
spaces of the house are dealt with in the various plans is indicative of the multi-faceted
interpretation of Newstead in the twenty-first century. Architecturally Newstead is seen as
important as a monastic conversion and a country house but, additionally, this theme is used
to underpin the presentation of Byron’s image. By foregrounding certain spaces and features,
Newstead is presented as the house which Byron knew and wrote about, that is the ‘Byron House’. Features are also highlighted which are fundamental to an understanding of the house of Wildman and the Webbs, both as the ‘Byronic House’ and as an example of Gothic Revivalism. These elements are pinpointed throughout the Conservation Plan and are indicative of the notion that Newstead cannot survive in the twenty-first century as a literary house alone.

Examples of important architectural features at Newstead include the nineteenth century Japanese decoration in one of the bedrooms on the east wing: ‘1.2.2.5 …another [room has] imported Japanese screens and panels. Some of these Japanese items are of unusually early date and considerable rarity’\(^{493}\). In addition, although the Plan notes that there are a number of fine examples of monastic conversions throughout England, Newstead’s particular significance as an example of this genre is outlined, ‘No other converted religious house however retains a pre-Dissolution feature to rival the great West Front of the priory church at Newstead.’\(^{494}\) The plan also outlines the role of the ‘Byronic Shrine’:

\[The Byronic shrine centres on Byron’s bedroom suite, which was altered by Thomas Wildman after the Poet’s death, and further changed by Ethel Webb when the plaster was removed from the adjoining dressing room in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century...[Despite these and other changes] Were the Poet to revisit Newstead now, he would recognise distinct features such as the West Front of the Priory church, the Great Drawing Room and the principal monastic structures, but there would be many parts of the house with which he would not be familiar as existing during his period of residence.\]^\(^{495}\)

Here is a recognition that, despite major changes, substantial parts of the building existed during Byron’s time, the inference being a ‘Byron house’ may still be visited.

\(^{493}\) Ibid., p.24.  
\(^{494}\) Ibid., p.43.  
\(^{495}\) Ibid., p.50.
Although the Conservation Plan is grounded in Newstead’s architecture, it does additionally describe Newstead’s role as a literary shrine: ‘Both men [Thomas Wildman and William Frederick Webb] and the subsequent public ownership by the City of Nottingham continued the strong association between Newstead and Byron, making it a pre-eminent literary shrine.’ This is an important point as, in addition to claiming a literary significance for Newstead, it also points to the history of that significance having value. The literary significance of the house is also covered in the Executive Summary when Newstead is noted as having ‘national significance’. The literary shrine is also one of the six key aims outlined in the Executive Summary. This is the literary shrine of the ‘Byronic house’, a point supported by the emphasis on the collections at Newstead as being based on those which were housed there in the nineteenth century and enhanced by various ‘Byron’ gifts and acquisitions relating to the period from Byron through to Wildman and the Webbs. This is further emphasised as a key objective of the presentation which considers the literary shrine as being specifically related to the Gothic Revival house. However, this is an interpretation which does not stop in the early twentieth century and is considered relevant to the present day. As the Conservation Plan asserts: ‘…Byron is a writer of international as well as local and national appeal, who mattered to his contemporaries and continues to matter in the opening decade of the 21st century.’ It further says that: ‘Newstead Abbey is one of the earliest examples of a house being visited as a “literary shrine”…Even within Byron’s lifetime, admirers visited Newstead, a practice that both Wildman and Webb encouraged.’

The principles for the re-presentation of the shrine today are described thus:

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496 Ibid., p.1.
497 Ibid., p.2.
498 Ibid., p.3.
499 Ibid., pp.29-30.
500 Ibid., p.107.
501 Ibid., p.139.
502 Ibid., p.45.
The Abbey and its gardens remain much as they were when the site functioned as a literary shrine and popular tourist destination in the 19th century, from the 1820s onwards. Many of the original contents of the house, including Byron’s furniture and other personal possessions of the poet which were on display during that time, remain in the collection at Newstead. Byron’s bedroom remains virtually as it appeared in the 1870s, during the height of Newstead’s popularity as a place of pilgrimage. In this room, as elsewhere in the house, painted decoration from this period has been lost. The decoration is however well documented and there is scope for its restoration.  

Despite there being an emphasis on the literary shrine devoted to Byron, it is the interpretation of Byron’s wider significance which is given greater importance, including, ‘…his involvement in Greek nationalism, his controversial personal life and his celebrity in his own lifetime…’ Newstead’s connections to Byron are claimed to be of ‘international significance’ as opposed to the literary shrine, which is of ‘national significance.’

Throughout the documents, the wider cultural and political importance of Byron is emphasised. For example his role within politics, his celebrity status, his posthumous influence on later artists, thinkers and politicians, and his relevance today are all identified in turn. The inference being that many of these areas, as opposed to Byron’s poetry, are of interest to a broad section of visitors: ‘Although he is acknowledged to be a poet of tremendous stature, poetry is an art form with which relatively few are familiar, and Byron’s ‘oeuvre’ in particular is known to even fewer…’

Unlike the other houses discussed in this thesis, Newstead does have historical and architectural significance independent of its connection with its associated writer. The interpretation plans highlight Newstead’s historical status, as well as the significance of its

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503 Ibid., p.51.
504 Ibid., p.1.
505 Ibid., p.2.
507 Ibid., p.54.
landscape and grounds and its wider resonance, such as links with the African explorer Dr David Livingstone.\textsuperscript{508} Under policies for presentation it is suggested that:

\textit{Priority should be given to presenting the interior of the Abbey as an example of an early 19th century Gothic Revival house, except in areas where there is insufficient evidence for an appropriate scheme of decoration or where a space derives its main significance from an earlier or later phase of the Abbey’s development.}\textsuperscript{509}

These objectives also emphasise that the presentation should be inclusive, and not restricted to its links with Byron: the danger is that, ‘Byron has so much potential interest that there is a danger of emphasizing his life to the exclusion of other aspects of the site’,\textsuperscript{510} and under \textit{Policies} the point is made, ‘…Accept that the association with Byron is Newstead’s unique but not its only selling point.’\textsuperscript{511} Nevertheless, the plan recognises that, ‘The terms of the Deed of Gift of Newstead Abbey prevent it being sold or used for private or commercial use. It must therefore remain open to the public and, as quoted in the covenant, “used as a memorial to Lord Byron.”’\textsuperscript{512}

The findings of the Plans suggest the development of an interpretation policy focusing on a significance for Newstead which is as broad as possible. However, the person central to discussions surrounding these plans, and who would ultimately influence their implementation is the curator, Haidee Jackson. It would be Jackson’s interpretation of the plans’ findings which would prove crucial in determining an interpretation policy for the house. With this in mind, Jackson proved a useful source in determining how Newstead and Byron were to be presented in the early twenty-first century.

\textsuperscript{508} Ibid., pp.46-47.
\textsuperscript{509} Ibid., p.93.
\textsuperscript{510} Ibid., p.72.
\textsuperscript{511} Ibid., p.108.
\textsuperscript{512} Ibid., p.58.
My interview with the curator, Jackson, allowed me to interrogate some of the assumptions held in the plans further. Her initial thoughts on the position of Newstead within the City of Nottingham were articulated in terms of economic expediency and political relevance. In these contexts, Newstead needed to broaden its appeal and present other elements in addition to Byron. However, Jackson still viewed Newstead primarily in terms of its relevance to Byron and a number of themes surfaced which revolved around how best to represent the writer albeit within the broader significance of the house. Jackson’s perception was that Newstead, first and foremost, is an internationally significant memorial to Byron: therefore the interpretation of the house should focus the collections, highlighting their originality and authenticity in terms of their Byron connections. The present interpretation of Newstead is of a nineteenth century gentleman’s home, housing a Byron museum. The first part of this presentation is a furnished house with collections, largely roped off and following a designated route. At certain key points in the route, the Byron relics are either displayed as they would have been in the nineteenth century, or in glass cases designed for the purpose. There has been no new guidebook published since 1989, so presentation media comes in the form of individual room information sheets and from house stewards positioned at strategic points throughout the building.

What information is produced for visitors and how is the identity of Byron presented today? The answer is based on Jackson’s view that Newstead was very relevant to the writer. She acknowledges that there is an argument that the house had very little influence on Byron, but counters this by noting that even after he had sold the house it was still a subject of his verse; namely *Don Juan* and *Dome of My Sires*. She also claims that Byron’s position as an

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513 Haidee Jackson, Senior Keeper Newstead Abbey, interview by James Pardoe, Newstead Abbey, 17th June 2006.
aristocrat was important to him and that he saw his ancestry as very closely linked to Newstead: what she calls a ‘physical embodiment of his aristocratic ancestry.’

According to Jackson, the interpretations of the collections and physical spaces enable visitors to experience a sense of the authentic Byron at Newstead. This is a significant point as it acknowledges Latour and Lowe’s stance that aura is not an inherent state of being. Jackson’s perception of the aims of the collection also highlights this stance. The significance of the collections derives not so much in their intrinsic merit, but from the fact that many are original to the house. Jackson notes that in the case of the Byron objects these belonged to the writer, were used by him at Newstead, and are placed where he used them. In this sense Jackson’s use of the word ‘original’ relates to the period of Byron’s residence and therefore the importance of this stage, 1808 to 1817, in Newstead’s history is recognised. However, Jackson also recognises that the Byron objects remain where they are because of the history of the house since his time there. This recognition supports the notion of the significance of Newstead as a literary shrine, and also the influence of historical precedence in the way the house is presented. It is important to stress, however, that although the collections have not changed, Jackson acknowledges that their presentation has - in effect to make Byron more relevant to present day audiences. According to her, it is fortunate from the perspective of creating a presentation of the writer that Byron’s life, both his biography during his lifetime and the phenomenon of his celebrity, can be represented at Newstead. She claims there are many ways that people can relate to him, even his disability and single parent family, which enable them to experience the spirit of a ‘Byron house’.

According to Jackson, Newstead’s twenty-first century interpretation is influenced by it being part of a professional accredited museum service. Consequently, it is presented through the

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514 Ibid.
515 Ibid.
516 Ibid.
use of evidence with its origins in the house’s history. Because there are sufficient available primary sources, in the form of objects, written documents, and visual images, there is enough verifiable material to restore the house to its nineteenth century form: in other words the ‘Byronic House’. (Figures 31, 32 & 33) Jackson is of the opinion that the ‘Byron House’ which preceded it could only be ‘recreated’ as a pastiche, which would have little or no historical basis or the available material, and therefore has no credibility as part of an accredited museum. Even so, Jackson does believe that the chosen presentation does allow for some elements of Byron’s house to be portrayed. For example, it is possible to highlight areas that Byron would recognise, including architectural spaces such as the West Front of the Priory Church, the cloisters (including Byron’s plunge bath), elements of his bedroom and the view from here over the lake, the Salon/Great Drawing Room, Byron’s Dining Room, and his Study. (Figures 22, 28, 34 & 35)

The interpretation also permits visitors to experience a sense of Byron at Newstead. This is not solely a house and collection to be curated; it is something more than a museum. Jackson regards her role, along with other responsibilities to the house, in terms of making Byron accessible physically, intellectually and **emotionally**. She considers this to be achievable because, despite arguments to the contrary, Byron’s Newstead is still recognisable. 517 Jackson highlights that it is important that we feel Newstead’s connection to Byron and although only a fragment of what was there during Byron’s time remains, it is a significant fragment. A good example of the museum service interpreting this is the recreation of the writer’s Study in the room where it is believed he did a lot of his writing, historically known as the ‘Byron Room’.

Jackson admits that they have no evidence to show how the room looked in his day, but they use Byron’s furniture to recreate an idea of the room, as a reminder that he did write

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when he was at Newstead. In addition, these are works that are still being read today. Not only are these physical links to the writer, they also enable an ‘aura’ of Byron to be experienced. Jackson notes that visitors respond strongly to these links to Byron and that a perception of ‘aura’ runs deeper than superficial decorations and alterations to the building.\textsuperscript{518}

Jackson makes an observation that an experience of the ‘spirit’ of Byron can be strengthened through links to material evidence. She cites that Linda Pratt, Professor of English Literature at Nottingham University, often uses of Byron’s Newstead works as part of field studies for her students, in particular \textit{The Dome of My Sires} written at Newstead in August 1811, to encourage her students to understand the writing process. Jackson also believes visitors and students can connect with a manuscript, as she explains:

\begin{quote}
...the ink on the page is the ink Byron used, it is his handwriting, he touched that paper, the way he used that paper can be seen with his crossings out and marginalia. What is mapped on the page is his creative process at that particular moment. Evidenced by the shapes of the letters on the page. Almost detect the speed that the pen is going over the sheet. Detect in the slant of each line - quite feverish. Everything that handwriting tells you what is going on at that moment. It is an object and in a sense there is a force - like an aura I suppose - which reminds me of spirit of place but it’s like spirit of object. It has a power to hold you in a way that a printed page or a text on a screen has not.\textsuperscript{519}
\end{quote}

These original documents are presented as part of the Roe-Byron Collection in a special display area in the South Gallery purposely constructed in the twenty-first century and devoted to Byron as a literary figure.

An understanding of Byron’s life is also facilitated through the display of objects in the Library. Here some of what Jackson calls the more iconic objects can be found, such as the Byron helmet, sporting equipment such as fencing masks, swords and boxing gloves, his

\textsuperscript{518} Haidee Jackson, Senior Keeper Newstead Abbey, interview by James Pardoe, Newstead Abbey, 17th June 2006. See also \textit{Newstead Abbey Conservation Plan}, January 2006.

\textsuperscript{519} Haidee Jackson, Senior Keeper Newstead Abbey, interview by James Pardoe, Newstead Abbey, 17th June 2006.
wedding ring and one of only four surviving copies of Byron’s first printed work, *Fugitive Pieces*. These are displayed in bookcases that belonged to the writer. Visitors are invited to pause in this room - tables and chairs are provided - and look at texts relating to Byron’s life and works, and in Jackson’s words, ‘to get in touch with his spirit’. The room is on the visitor route directly after Byron’s bedroom, with its iconic bed: it is what Jackson calls, ‘the shrine, within the shrine, within the shrine.’ Throughout the interview with Jackson it was evident she believed that the ‘aura’ of Byron at Newstead is something she perceived to be significant and is intrinsic to the house. Yet, she also acknowledges the necessity to provide visitors with the tools to invoke this spirit and leads to the conclusion that this sense of Byron is a manifestation of Jackson’s own expectations based on an in-depth knowledge and experience of the writer’s links to the house. Visitors, likewise, experience Byron’s ‘aura’, but only because they are encouraged to do so by sensory markers deliberately placed within Newstead today.

In reflecting on the key messages derived from an analysis of the Plans and Jackson’s responses, it is important to note that the twenty-first century presentations at Newstead have their basis in the histories of both the ‘Byron House’ and ‘Byronic House’. Today elements of both phases, including surviving physical features, are accessible to visitors. However, the presentation of the ‘Byronic House’ dominates, in terms of visible architectural spaces and furnishings, and it is this concept which is given precedence in the current displays. Nevertheless, the present managers also seek to evoke a Byron ‘aura’ and much of the presentation of the writer is focused on this element of the house.

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520 Ibid.
521 Ibid.
Conclusion

The key to understanding Newstead as a literary house and museum is to take note of a number of themes. Although it figures prominently in a range of studies surrounding Byron’s literature, it is also important as a subject within his biography. These elements are intertwined in the establishment of the Byron memorial and have evolved over nearly 200 years. Newstead, when associated with Byron, is therefore much more than a literary site. Crucially this favoured image of Newstead developed concurrently with its own history as a house of the gentry. All these elements are now combined in the presentation of the house today. Alongside its significance to wider fields of study, Newstead has achieved the status of being central to an understanding of the life and literary work of Byron.

Newstead’s significance in the twenty-first century is enhanced by there being a recognisable element to the house in the form and features of the building which can be linked to the writer, and with Byron displays from the 1820s still being in the collection. This would appear to provide significant and direct links to the writer as outlined by Watson and Marsh. However, these features and displays highlight the importance of Newstead having an unbroken narrative as a memorial to the writer, and in doing so emphasise the need to take cognisance of the history of the house and how this legacy of the writer has been interpreted and presented. A study of the history of the house shows that the ‘Byron’ features have been maintained and interpreted by all successive owners. Given this long history of representation of Byron at Newstead, what can be considered ‘authentic’ or ‘original’ at the house? In the case of Newstead its historical contexts are not fixed but have developed over the past two centuries, so the answer depends on whether Newstead is viewed as the ‘Byron House’ or ‘Byronic House’. Again, Latour and Lowe’s theorisation is useful in proposing how ‘aura’ can migrate from the original to copies; in this case the ‘copies’ being the presentation of the
Byronic House. In other words, ‘aura’ is not inherent in the original object but has to be reproduced in the eye of the beholder. 522

A number of discussions surrounding authenticity and originality relate to the ‘Byron House’ - that is, when Byron lived there and the legacy of his literature with the house as subject, the spaces within the house he would have known, and the legacy of the Byron Relics left in situ. These all provide sensory markers which lead to discussions surrounding the notion of a Byron ‘aura’ which may, or may not, be experienced at the site. This is something referred to by numerous visitors to Newstead in the past 200 years - again emphasising the need to study the history of the house - and by the present curator, Haidee Jackson.

According to Jackson, the interpretation at Newstead allows an ‘aura’ of Byron to be formed; she believes that the Byron artefacts at Newstead retain an inherent ‘aura’ of the writer. This overlooks the need to interpret these objects so that visitors can recognise their Byronic connections. In other words, the Byron ‘spirit’ is not intrinsic, but has to be activated by catalysts that visitors can recognise. This, in turn, is dependent upon visitors having the tools - knowledge, experience and expectations - to be able to respond. In reality, visitors come with a host of different ‘tools’ at a time when Byron’s significance as a literary figure is not as great as in the nineteenth century. Hence the need to present Newstead as more than just a literary house today. There is also a financial element underpinning these changes in interpretation. As the only Nottingham City Council museum currently to charge an entrance fee, pressure has been placed on the managers of Newstead to increase visitor income. An inclusive approach to interpretation has also been driven by the need to attract a large audience in order to maximise its economic potential.

522 Latour and Lowe.
Jackson’s perceptions of ‘a sense of place’ at Newstead reflect her own detailed and thorough knowledge of the house and Byron, and also the experience of visitors ranging from Irving in 1831 to Porter in 1993, who could feel a ‘sense’ of Byron by just being in spaces that he occupied. For example, Porter hoped that by walking in Byron’s footsteps he would be able to experience what the writer had experienced. For others, concrete sensory markers were required in order to touch the spirit of the writer; such as was the example of Irving and his wish to sleep in Byron’s bed. The construction of narratives relating to Byron permeates the history of Newstead: even Wildman purposely exaggerated links to Byron that visitors could find. An example of this was the table on which Wildman suggested to visitors that Byron wrote the whole of *Childe Harold*, though as we have noted Byron wrote much of this poem after he left England in 1816.523

Newstead’s long history has provided a number of conflicting narratives: the Byron House, the Byronic House, and the history of the non-Byron Newstead. To understand the tension prevalent in these narratives an in-depth study of how Newstead’s long history has impacted on present day presentation at the house is required. This has shown a new perspective on Newstead, but has also given another example on how literary houses can be analysed to show the extent to which they are seen as twenty-first century expressions of their associated writer.

523 See page 120 above.
CHAPTER FOUR

KEATS HOUSE & THE KEATS-SHELLEY MEMORIAL HOUSE

Introduction

Some writers’ houses have been partially converted into museums with glass cases exhibiting manuscripts, letters and objects, and biographical information provided on panels and displays...Such presentations anchor our minds on the writer and tell a story.\(^{524}\)

It was not until the twentieth century that the houses associated with the writers Keats and Shelley became significant literary destinations. Why did it take nearly a century after their respective deaths in 1821 and 1822 for this to occur, whereas the homes of Scott and Byron were opened as attractions for a visiting public while these writers were alive? And, why were Wentworth House in London and Piazza di Spagna 26 in Rome considered suitable sites of remembrance and memorialisation for Keats (in London and Rome) and Shelley (in Rome)?

This chapter considers two houses, one of which is associated with Keats and one of which is associated with both Keats and Shelley, departing therefore from the examples of Scott and Byron where each writer has one significant house which is considered to be the iconic site associated with them. In this case, two houses are recognised as being significant Keats destinations, while the Keats-Shelley Memorial House is considered as significant for Shelley (despite his not having any known connections to the building during his lifetime).\(^{525}\)

In previous chapters I have examined the ways in which the central narratives of both Abbotsford and Newstead were promoted from the outset as their respective writers’ homes and how their collections were developed as traces of these writers’ domestic settings. In this

\(^{524}\) Marsh, K. p.xiv.

\(^{525}\) Keats is not unique in this respect, for example Wordsworth has three houses strongly connected to his name: Dove Cottage, Rydal Mount, and Wordsworth House.
chapter, I investigate the capacity of two houses - Keats House in London and the Keats-Shelley Memorial House in Rome (henceforth KSMH) - and their collections in constructing narratives which foreground episodes in the lives of Keats and Shelley and in doing so contribute to a mythology attached to both. Central to this examination will be the contribution that the biographies and popularity of the two writers during the nineteenth century made to the adoption and subsequent adaptation of the two houses in the twentieth century. That is to say, I will explore how the construction of the writers’ mythologies developed through the medium of biography prior to the creation of the literary houses. In addition to examining the historical dislocation of both of the houses, I will focus on the issue of ownership: that is, the differences between local authority and trust management, and the pressure that these differences place on curators. There will also be an analysis of visitor expectations and how their perceptions have influenced the interpretation at each of the sites.

As with Abbotsford and Newstead, I take a chronological approach to both houses from the writers’ lifetimes until the houses were established as literary destinations, in order to establish how the growth of Keats’s and Shelley’s reputations led to a desire for visitable sites associated with their lives. This approach to the history of the houses is also important in determining views held on the writers and impacts on how they would be received at certain locations. In addition, this historical approach will show how these houses and their adaptations were solely the result of how the writers and these houses were received by a public, in terms of both the owners of the properties and their visitors. An important point to note is that ultimately it was this public which initially determined how the writers should be viewed and continued to be of influence from the houses’ establishment as visitor destinations. At Abbotsford and Newstead, the lives and activities of Scott and Byron respectively was crucial in establishing how these sites were subsequently managed and
interpreted. In sharp contrast there is no evidence of either Keats or Shelley expressing an opinion on “their” houses.

Given this, why are these two houses linked to Keats and Shelley? I suggest the answer is partly connected to the nomadic nature of both their lives and the lack of evidence that the writers themselves felt particular connections to any one location. In other words no one place could claim to be the destination for admirers of Keats and Shelley. These particular houses came to the notice of the writers’ devotees through historical accident in the sense that both were threatened with demolition at a time when Keats’s and Shelley’s stars were in the ascendant, and influential people were on hand to save them. A brief consideration of the fate of Shelley Manor makes an interesting comparison. A shrine to Shelley had been kept at his family home at Boscombe on the Hampshire/Dorset border throughout the nineteenth century, but was no more than a family memorial. At the beginning of the twenty-first century an opportunity presented itself to create a public memorial at this site. In 2005 the Friends of Shelley Manor launched an appeal to set up a scheme for a Shelley literary museum to be created at this house. However, in 2010 the appeal had to be shelved when Bournemouth Council had to withdraw a promise of funds, and no other sources of finance were forthcoming to make the scheme a reality. If this had occurred one hundred years earlier it may have had a different outcome, as the examples of Keats House, KSMH and Newstead show.

Although there are a number of similarities between the two houses which are the subject of this chapter, there are some fundamental differences as well. Keats House is solely concerned with Keats and since its opening to the public in 1920 it has been owned and managed by a number of local government organisations (successively, Hampstead Borough Council,

527 Bournemouth Echo, 22nd July 2010.
Camden Council and the City of London Corporation). The KSMH is associated with both Keats and Shelley and since 1906 it has been owned and managed by one independent organisation, the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association. Each house will, therefore, be discussed separately although the format of each discussion will follow the same pattern. A brief history of the associations of the house with the two writers will be followed by an analysis of how each house has been viewed since their creation as literary houses in the early twentieth century. The chapter will end with an analysis of both houses in relation to the general aims of the thesis.

Keats House

A Home of Keats Becomes Keats House and Memorial: 1818-1997

John Keats was born at Finsbury in 1795 and died at Rome in 1821, and was 21 years old when he became intimately associated with Hampstead. But despite the fact that the poet was not born and did not die in Hampstead, yet, as Sir Sidney Colvin has pointed out, it was here that he lived and loved, and it is consecrated by his sufferings and by the ablest production of his genius.528

Thus the 1939 guidebook to Keats House foregrounds the links of Keats to Hampstead and outlines the central narrative of the house during its first four decades as a literary destination. Although the writer lived at Keats House for less than two years, this should be seen in the context of his short life-span. The house did in fact offer a happy and productive interlude between his brother’s early death, and his own death in Rome. Keats House also had a part to play in the latter story, as it is where his terminal illness developed.

Keats House is one of two buildings dedicated to the memory of the great poet John Keats...In Keats House he lived during the most productive period of his life; under the same roof lived Fanny Brawne to whom he became engaged; here, later, resided his sister, Fanny. Clearly there is no place better fitted to

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become a centre in which all that relates to his life and work may be gathered and to which students and lovers of his poetry may make pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{529}

This passage taken from the 1934 guidebook explained the reasons why Wentworth Place was adopted as a memorial to Keats, and gave the underlying rationale for its adaptation and interpretation as this memorial. The house, which had been known as ‘Lawn Bank’ since 1868, was renamed Wentworth Place and Keats Memorial House in 1924.\textsuperscript{530} Keats lived at Wentworth Place, Hampstead from 1818 to 1820 with his friend Charles Brown. Here he wrote some of his most critically acclaimed poems, including \textit{Ode to a Nightingale}, and also met his fiancée Fanny Brawne, the elder daughter of his next door neighbour. It was from this house that, suffering from tuberculosis, he left to spend the winter of 1820-21 in Italy hoping to find a cure in the milder climate of Rome. This was a forlorn hope as he died in February 1821.\textsuperscript{531}

Wentworth Place was built in the form of a modest suburban villa in 1814 by William Woods, a local builder, and completed in 1816 as two properties: it was the smaller of the two which was occupied by Charles Brown and where Keats came to live in 1818. The larger house was first occupied by Charles Wentworth Dilke who let it to Fanny Brawne’s mother in 1819. (Figures 36 & 37) Keats stayed in the house for just seventeen months before travelling to Italy where he died. For much of the following century the house disappeared from the public gaze, remaining in private hands and even changing its name from that which Keats, or his circle, would have known. The Brawne family carried on living in the larger side until March 1830, and from September 1828 until December 1831, Keats’s sister Fanny and her husband Valentine Llanos (who had married in 1826) lived in the smaller side. Thus, a Keats connection remained at the house for ten years after his death. The house was

\textsuperscript{529} LMA/KB.31 KEA 1934, \textit{Keats House and Museum – Historical and Descriptive Guide} (2nd Ed. 1934), Introduction, p.3.

\textsuperscript{530} Keats House History and Names, \textit{Extracts from the Curator’s Notebook}, (n.d.), pp.9-10.

\textsuperscript{531} Stephanie Healey, Visitor Services Manager, Keats House, interview by James Pardoe, Keats House, 19th August 2005.
subsequently converted into one property by Eliza Chester in 1838-39, and in April 1839 it was renamed Wentworth Place - having been recorded as being called Wentworth Cottage in March 1838. The house was called ‘Lawn Cottage’ from June 1843 until December 1845 when it was renamed ‘Laurel Cottage’. After Eliza Chester left in 1848, there were eleven more residents, the last one being George Manning Whiley who moved in during 1898.

The house was mentioned by Howitt in Volume I of his *Homes and Haunts*:

> ...during his residence at the last house that he occupied before he went abroad, he was at times more than tranquil. His house, it appears, was in Wentworth-place, Downshire-hill, Hampstead, by Pond-street, and at the next door lived the young lady to whom he was engaged.

But apart from the suggestion of tranquillity, Howitt does not mention anything else of significance. He also fails to mention that, by now the house had been converted into one residence and had been known, for two years, as Laurel Cottage (and prior to that Lawn Cottage). It would appear that Howitt, who took more interest in Hampstead as a whole, had not visited the house in his researches. (Figure 38) It was only in 1895, when the Royal Society of Arts erected a plaque on the outside of the house that the first public recognition was made of Keats’s residence there. (Figure 39)

The building underwent a number of structural changes, including those carried out on behalf of Eliza Chester, and no objects associated with Keats were left *in situ*. After the Brawnes and Keats’s sister’s family departed, no connections to Keats remained. In 1920 the house, as ‘an eligible building site’, was threatened with demolition. However, as soon as this ‘danger became known’ the Mayor of Hampstead, Alderman J.I. Fraser, JP, took steps which led to the house being saved by public subscription and purchased by the Keats Memorial

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532 *Extracts from the Curator’s Notebook*, (n.d.), p.9.
534 *Extracts from the Curator’s Notebook*, (n.d.), p.9.
The Committee in 1921.\textsuperscript{535} The Committee, chaired by Fraser, included a number of noteworthy people of the time. Sir Sidney Colvin, the biographer of Keats, was Honorary Treasurer, and Mr W.E. Doubleday was Honorary Secretary. There was also a committee in the United States of America presided over by Miss Amy Lowell.\textsuperscript{536} As part of the publicity and fundraising it was decided to issue a Keats Memorial Book to which Thomas Hardy sent an \textit{Ode} and in which Sir Sidney Colvin allowed a reprint of an article on Keats. Other contributions came from A.E Housman, Rudyard Kipling, H.G Wells, J.M Barrie, Arthur Balfour MP (the future Prime Minister), and the Bishop of Durham.\textsuperscript{537} Once the house was purchased it was renamed Keats House and handed over to the Borough of Hampstead.\textsuperscript{538} It opened to the public as a museum in 1925 and the inaugural ceremony on 9\textsuperscript{th} May was attended by the new Mayor Frank G. Howard, Edith Holman-Hunt (a descendant of Leigh Hunt), Frances Ellis (née Brawne) and C.E. Baker (both descendants of Fanny Brawne), and Suzanne Dibdin Severn and Arthur Severn (descendants of Joseph Severn).\textsuperscript{539} The property had been offered for sale at £3,500 and the Committee raised £10,000 to buy the house, repair it, and maintain it as a memorial to Keats.\textsuperscript{540} (Figure 40)

Why was the house neglected as a Keats site during the nineteenth century and why, in the 1920s, was it then thought to be worthy of rescue? It is well known Keats lacked popular acclaim during his lifetime and in the period immediately following his death. However, for a fuller understanding of the lack of interest in the house it is useful to turn the biography of Keats by Andrew Motion.\textsuperscript{541} As Motion claims, as early as 1829, only eight years after his

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{535} Ibid., p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{536} The John Keats Memorial Volume, Issued By The Keats House Committee, Hampstead (London & New York: John Lane & Bodley Head, Feb.23rd 1921), pp.v-ix.
\item \textsuperscript{537} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{538} LMA/KB.31 KEA 1934, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{539} GLRO/21/53, Keats House Visitors Book Vol. I , Feb. 22 1921 - Sept. 2 1938, p.28.
\item \textsuperscript{540} History of Keats House, [http://www.keatshouse.cityoflondon.gov.uk/229/History-of-the-house], accessed 16th September 2010.
\item \textsuperscript{541} Motion, A \textit{Keats} (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).
\end{itemize}
death, Arthur Hallam championed the importance of Keats. This had little impact on Keats’s popularity, but Hallam did influence his friend Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who, in turn, publicly extolled the virtues of Keats’s work. As Tennyson’s fame grew, so an audience was also created for Keats. With the assistance of Monckton Milne’s biography, by the 1850s, Keats’s star was in the ascendant. Over the next three decades Keats became critically acclaimed and the popularity of his work grew to the extent that, between 1851 and 1886 twenty-seven separate editions of his poems were published. This was Keats of Romantic escapism, the dreamer who was championed by the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and who seemed to mirror certain Victorian sensibilities. At the start of the twentieth century this view of Keats influenced the poets Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, the latter’s work being described as using Keatsian language.\textsuperscript{542} This interest in Keats was then stimulated by the use of his work (along with that of Shakespeare and Wordsworth), during World War One, by the British Government for propaganda purposes, to demonstrate British cultural superiority to anything German. Keats, along with Wordsworth, had excerpts of his works published by The Times in the form of broadsheets which were presented to the troops in the trenches, where they must have represented a rose-tinted Edwardian view of the pastoral beauty of England.\textsuperscript{543}

This was the context in which Keats House was “saved” in the 1920s; Wentworth Place became available for purchase when a nostalgic view of Keats and his work prevailed. The immediate aftermath of World War One was also a time of memorialisation and Keats’s suffering and death at a young age would have seemed familiar to many who had recently suffered the loss of their own young men.\textsuperscript{544}

\textsuperscript{543} Robb, G British Culture and the First World War (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.131.
The temporal dislocation between the home of the writer and the house as memorial meant that the transformation of Wentworth Place into Keats House reproduced old and new associations between the house and writer. The change in name indicates, in itself, a new phase in its life: the renaming was a statement of intent and established a new status for the house in Keats’s narrative. It soon developed a role as a pilgrimage site, as is shown by the guidebook of 1934.

To understand the intentions of the original owners of Keats House, as opposed to Wentworth Place, and to assess the impact of subsequent changes in ownership, an analysis of the material available to them, and of how these materials were curated, needs to be made. In terms of the contents of the house, nothing remained from Keats’s occupation, and a collection had to be acquired that could form the focus of interpretation. In fact, a collection was already owned by the Borough of Hampstead, acquired in 1911, ten years before the house, and placed in the Public Library at Hampstead.545 This was the Dilke Collection of ‘Keats Relics’ which had been a private collection held in Chelsea between 1891 and 1911. Dilke had moved his collection to Hampstead because of

...the indelible connection between Keats and this district, for, although it is true that Hampstead was neither the place of his birth or death, it was here that he spent the summer of his life; it was here that, encouraged by many friends, his genius blossomed forth to produce immortal fruit; it was here that he met and wooed Miss Fanny Brawne; and it was here hence that he passed forth to die. It was therefore considered proper that the various objects included in the Collection

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545 LMA/KB.31 DIL 1911. Illustrated handbook to the Dilke Collection of Keats Relics preserved at the Central Public Library, Hampstead, N.W. (inside front cover).
should be preserved as a memorial of his life and work in Hampstead.\textsuperscript{546}

Many of these sentiments were to inform the significance of Keats House throughout the following century.\textsuperscript{547} With the purchase of the house, the London Borough of Hampstead was now possessor of an important house connected to the writer and a valuable collection of associated objects, both of which were important in terms of Keats’s life and work. In order to display the collection, a new building was created next to the house (in the area which had once been stables and kitchen gardens) for use as an exhibition space and also a branch library.

The Dilke Collection consisted of forty objects and fifty collections of letters, manuscripts, papers and books.\textsuperscript{548} Of these, only three were not of a literary nature (‘Locket containing Hair of Keats, cut from the poet’s head after death, probably by Severn; Plaster Bust of Keats. Published by P. MacDowall, Sept. 9, 1828; Plaster Mask of Keats) and none had direct associations with the house.\textsuperscript{549} (Figure 41) Therefore, a new identity for the house and collection had to be created, as outlined in the 1926 guidebook,\textsuperscript{550}

\textit{The birthplace of Keats no longer exists: the school at Enfield has been superseded by a railway station; and the little surgery at which he lived at Edmonton was swept away by road-widening in 1926. It were idle to look for his apartments in the Borough, and his Well Walk home has long since disappeared. One or two houses to which Keats paid fugitive visits may perhaps survive, but only two places intimately associated with his memory now remain. These are the Keats-Shelley Memorial House in which he died in Rome, and this Hampstead home which his genius has dowered with imperishable fame.}\textsuperscript{551}

\textsuperscript{546} Ibid., p.1.
\textsuperscript{547} Stephanie Healey, Visitor Services Manager, Keats House, interview by James Pardoe, Keats House, 19th August 2005.
\textsuperscript{548} LMA/KB.31 DIL 1911, pp.6-13.
\textsuperscript{549} Ibid., p.10.
\textsuperscript{550} LMA/KB.31 KEA 1926 The Keats House (Wentworth Place) Hampstead: An Historical and descriptive Guide (1926).
\textsuperscript{551} Ibid., p.12.
The area of Hampstead had been of interest to admirers of Keats from the nineteenth century, as shown by Howitt who refers on a number of occasions to Keats’s links to the ‘Vale of Health’ of Hampstead and its environs and its impact on Keats’s poetry. However, to establish the credentials of Keats House, associations between objects connected to Keats and the house had to be constructed. How this was achieved can be found in the description of the Keats Sitting-Room in successive guidebooks - for example in 1926 ‘This room has undergone no structural alteration and remains very much as it was when the poet occupied it.’ The motivation was to recreate a room which suggested a direct physical association with Keats. But although this may have been true in terms of the spaces itself, in terms of the furnishings and fittings this could never be Keats’s room again. The use of reproductions was intended to recreate an ambience of place and objects, reinforced by the inclusion of one of the few objects linked to the writer’s person: a lock of his hair. In effect, a number of sensory markers were used to encourage a sense of Keats within the house.

The idea was to recreate a moment in Keats’s life as witnessed and recorded by his friend Joseph Severn, in the form of a picture which was painted in Rome between 1821 and 1823: ‘...the picture provides an authentic record which has governed the arrangements [of the furniture].’ It provided those responsible for the house with what Albano calls ‘a vision of the person who inhabited that space.’ Keats House thus became a part of the life of Keats once more and visitors were given the opportunity to experience an imagined moment in the writer’s life. Page fourteen of the 1926 guidebook shows a reproduction of

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553 Ibid., p.15.
Severn’s portrait of ‘Keats in his Sitting-Room at Wentworth Place.’ On the facing page there is a photograph of ‘Keats’s Sitting-Room as it is now.’ Everything in the photograph is in the position shown in the painting, using reproduction furniture. The intention here was to show Keats’s room, except for the writer no longer seated in one of the two cane chairs. The inference is that he may have just stepped out into the garden through the open French windows. This theme continues in all the Hampstead guidebooks with the sitting-room remaining a highlight of the tour and reproduction being the same as it was in 1926.

The Keats sitting-room presents a significant domestic scene in the life of the writer played out for visitors who perceive it as it is, as well as a reproduction of what may have occurred at Wentworth Place. The success of this representation relies on a visitor being able to identify the image of Keats and relating it to this room. These visitors would be expected to arrive with knowledge of Keats. The interpreters relied upon their visitors to enable the success of their presentation and, therefore, the continued success of the house as a literary destination.

The initial motivations for the establishment of Keats House as a memorial to Keats were, on the one hand, his strong links to the area, and, on the other, the importance of the house as the place where he wrote some of his best known poems. Today the significance of Keats’s poetry is central to the status of Keats House, and forms the dominant narrative at the site. However, for the first fifty years it was more important as a memorial to the life and works of Keats as a resident of Hampstead, without identifying that this was the site of his greatest literary production. It is only in 1974 that the narrative of the house as the location for his best works was given prominence. This followed a significant change in ownership in 1965,

557 Ibid., p.15.
when for the first time, the house was managed by an organisation with limited interest in the writer.

Evidence of this narrative comes from guidebooks to Keats House which were published on average once a decade from the 1920s. These were not merely reference guides to the house and collection, but also included more subjective readings of the history of the house and its significance. In the first decade, these themes remained constant, for example the 1934 guidebook can be seen to be largely an amalgam of those published in 1911 and 1926. The Keats sitting-room was the highlight of the tour and the room stayed unchanged from 1926. By 1934 the collections had grown substantially, as the list of objects in the collection shows:

‘Letters, Books, Other Personal Relics, Portraits, First Editions, His Publishers, His Relations, His Guardian, His Friends, Biographers and Critics, Poems on Keats, and General Collections.’ Emphasis is therefore first given to literary objects, followed by personal items. Furthermore, two of the new acquisitions related to Keats’s literary work and were especially purchased (rather than given like two other items):

OTHER PERSONAL RELICS
27. Facsimile of Keats’ application for a certificate to practice as an apothecary, dated July 25th, 1816 (Sir S. Colvin)
30. Gold Brooch in the form of a Greek lyre, with strings made of Keats’ hair. (T.W. Percy) — purchased and presented to the Keats Museum in 1932.
32. Keats’ Inkstand (Purchased)
33. Keats’ Writing-desk (Purchased) (Figures 44 & 45)

The 1934 guidebook highlighted aspects of ‘originality’ from Keats’s time:

These rooms [the Brawne Rooms] remain much as they were when first occupied. The fireplaces are the same, the wooden shutters to the French windows are still fastened by the original iron bars, and the

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559 LMA/KB.31 KEA 1934.
561 Ibid., pp.17-30.
562 Ibid., pp.20-21.
‘reed’ pattern of the wainscoting and architraves is typical of many contemporary houses in the neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{563}

The sitting-room again is emphasised for its Keatsian presentation:

\textit{It has suffered no structural alteration... The shutters of the French windows leading into the garden are still secured with the stout iron bar which the poet must have fastened into position many times.}\textsuperscript{564}

The 1939 guidebook continues to highlight the sitting-room and its references.\textsuperscript{565} At this point the house remained in the hands of an organisation which closely identified itself with Keats. It is with the 1957 guidebook that important changes and highlights are noted, probably due to the necessary renovations and refurbishments including the creation of specially designed display cases, due to the bomb damage suffered during World War Two.\textsuperscript{566} For the first time a guidebook specifically mentions particular objects: ‘…Notable items in the collection are the Miniature Portrait of Keats by Joseph Severn, the Life Mask by B.R. Haydon, locks of the poet’s hair and some of the most important of his letters.’\textsuperscript{567} For the first time personal items relating to Keats’s life are central to the presentation. It seems that, the need to repair and renovate, due to extensive war damage, coincided with a shift in priorities. The Chester Room was reconstructed and refurbished to foreground the ‘presence’ of Keats:

\textit{An important feature of the scheme has been the transfer of relics associated with Keats, his family and his friends from the adjoining library building to the restored Chester Room, where they are now displayed in showcases specially designed for the purpose. These cases show a unique collection of relics and they have been so arranged as to give the most effective display possible.}\textsuperscript{568}(Figure 46)

\textsuperscript{563} Ibid., p.12.
\textsuperscript{564} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{565} LMA/KB.31 KEA 1939.
\textsuperscript{566} LMA/KB.31 KEA 1957.
\textsuperscript{567} Ibid., p.14.
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid., p.11.
These changes were reinforced in the 1963 guidebook which began to direct visitors in a prescribed manner.\textsuperscript{569} Even so, these changes of emphasis remained in a context in which Keats’s life and work as a whole and his connections with Hampstead were primarily celebrated.

With the re-organisation of local government in 1965, the London Borough of Hampstead ceased to exist, and from 1965 to 1997 the London Borough of Camden took responsibility for the house and collection. This change in ownership was to have a significant impact on the way the house was managed during these three decades. In addition, a number of further structural deficiencies became apparent at this time, which led to a series of closures and to a lack of funds for the house. Cuts in local government funding exacerbated the situation and with only around 5,000 visitors per annum, Camden Council could not justify expenditure on what was: ‘considered of marginal consequence.’\textsuperscript{570} Keats House had moved from ownership by an organisation which considered both the writer and house to be important in terms of local identity, to ownership by an organisation which had no inherent interest in Keats. With this change in ownership a distinct change in the emphasis of the interpretation took place, with intention of making Keats ‘relevant’ to a wider audience. Camden Council stressed Keats’s wider importance - that is, his status as an internationally renowned writer who produced some of his most important works here - rather than his ties to Hampstead. The three guidebooks produced during this phase of ownership still highlighted the sitting-room and its contents: \textsuperscript{571} ‘…copy of Severn’s picture ‘Keats at Wentworth Place’ painted in Rome in 1821-23…the picture provides an authentic record which has governed the arrangements

\textsuperscript{569} LMA/KB.31 KEA 1963.
\textsuperscript{570} Charlotte Shaw, Manager, London Metropolitan Archives, interview by James Pardoe, London Metropolitan Archives, 1st August 2006.
[of the furniture]’. However, they also differed from those produced by Hampstead. Glossy paperback editions began in 1966, but without contemporary photographs of the rooms. The 1974 edition included a tour of the garden, highlighting its importance as the place where Keats produced some of his finest works: *Ode to a Nightingale* was reputedly written under a tree there. This narrative has been central to the interpretation of Keats House ever since. This is significant, because, although the narrative of this being the place where his best works were created already existed, it is not until 1974 that this is highlighted.

Further necessary repairs and restorations to the house were undertaken in 1974-75 with the house re-opening in 1976. The 1980 guidebook reflected these changes. The tour was no longer prescribed but particular emphasis was placed on certain items in the collection. Again, Severn’s painting and the matching layout of the sitting-room were stressed. However, the books in the bookcases were also now considered worthy of note: ‘…a selection of contemporary works owned by Keats and presented to Keats House in 1945 by Maurice Buxton Forman, son of Harry Buxton Forman – Victorian collector of Keatsiana.’

It was also considered necessary to point out the provenance of items with the Dilke Collection, Osborne Collection (items given by Brown’s grand-daughter), Mrs Oswald Ellis Collection (grand-daughter of Fanny Brawne) and items given by various descendants of Joseph Severn. Many of these objects relate to associates of Keats, which itself highlights the paucity of objects directly connected to the writer himself. For example, the bedroom which underwent substantial changes during the works of the mid-1970s now included a number of replicas and reproductions such as a ‘…tent-bed similar to the one that Keats

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573 LMA/KB.31 KEA 1966.
574 LMA/KB.31 KEA 1980.
575 Ibid., p.6.
576 Ibid., p.10.
might have occupied.’\textsuperscript{577} Therefore, the interpretation was now broadened to include more emphasis on Keats’s circle and introduced reproduction furniture to imitate the house as lived in by Keats - as far as this was possible. Camden Council spent approximately £90,000 on restorations during 1974-75 and these reproductions - using designs copied from original examples dated to 1810-1830 - were put in place to make the house more attractive and accessible to a wider audience. (Figures 47, 48 & 49) Part of the Keats Memorial Library was now housed in one of the Brawne-Dilke bedrooms, to be ‘used for a study for serious students of Keats, Byron, Coleridge, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Shelley and Wordsworth.’\textsuperscript{578}

The evidence of visitor books and commentators suggests that for some at least, the intention of evoking the house that Keats lived in had been achieved. In reality, a number of major changes had occurred to both the architectural spaces and its contents, but this did not stop visitors making comments which attest to the perception that Keats could be experienced at the house:

\begin{quote}
Wentworth

You’re a visit worth
Let so often all skyes leads
To this splendid house of Keats\textsuperscript{579}

- extremely Beautiful. – a real pilgrimage to hear(sic)
Keats would approve:\textsuperscript{580}

‘Of beechen green, and shadows numberless’
- as it was when Keats penned these words\textsuperscript{581}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{577} Ibid., p.12.
\textsuperscript{578} Ibid., p.15.
\textsuperscript{581} GLRO/21/58 ‘Anonymous comment’.
This is supported by literary commentators, such as Margaret Drabble: ‘It was and is a welcoming house, with a smiling aspect, and although it has undergone several alterations and improvements it remains very much the house that Keats knew.’\textsuperscript{582} But Drabble also recognises the need for objects to enhance that experience: ‘There are touching relics – a sampler and a fichu made by Fanny Brawne, her gold bracelet, and a gold brooch commissioned by Severn in the form of a Greek lyre with strings made of Keats’s hair…’\textsuperscript{583} However, it should be pointed out that, according to the current curatorial staff, a high proportion of visitors to Keats House are those with an interest in the writer and who make a conscious effort to visit.\textsuperscript{584} These are the ‘pilgrims’ mentioned in 1934 and are the audience for whom the interpretation is intended. As Stephanie Healey, Visitor Services Manager, observes, it does take some effort to find the house. A point also made by a visitor in 1976: ‘Might I suggest there be some sign/information by the Belsize Park & Hampstead Tube Stations of how to get here? I had the devil’s own job. None of the natives seem even to have heard of John Keats, let alone his house.’\textsuperscript{585} (Figure 50)

By now the connections to Keats himself were central to the interpretation at the house, including his life and works.\textsuperscript{586} The influences which were presented centred on how his time at the house impacted on Keats’s work and, specifically, on this being where his best work was created. This interpretation, and related visitor expectations, has continued to influence presentation and interpretation of the house today.

\textsuperscript{583} Ibid., p.256.
\textsuperscript{585} GLRO/21/57 ‘Comment by Margaret Keefe (Oak Park, Ill, USA)’, 17th June 1976, Keats Memorial House Visitors Book, 18th September 1975-23rd June 1976.
\textsuperscript{586} Howitt, I, (1857), pp.423-435.
Keats House and the City of London: 1997-2007

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.
(Ode to a Nightingale Stanza VII, John Keats)\(^{587}\)

Ode to a Nightingale is considered to be one of Keats’s most important poems.\(^{588}\) However, unlike the Elegy on Newstead Abbey with which I introduced the previous chapter, this piece of work, although written by Keats at Wentworth Place, and therefore closely linked to the site of Keats House, is not a consideration of the house itself, and nowhere is there evidence to suggest that this home was as important to Keats as Newstead was to Byron. Nevertheless, this poem, and in particular the third line of the above stanza, is a useful starting point in analysing the links between Keats and Keats House in the early twenty-first century.

According to Geoff Pick, Head of Public Engagement at Keats House, the Ode to a Nightingale is the ‘signature poem’ for the house. Pick readily adapts Keats’s words, in particular the ‘opening of magic casements’, as a metaphor for the motivation of the production of the narrative of Keats at this site, that is during his time at this house he was inspired to write some of his major works.\(^{589}\) In this way Keats House, as an example of Hendrix’s theory that a literary house acts as a frame for artistic production as a medium of remembrance, seems to be clearly demonstrated here. Importantly this follows the precedent for the interpretation set in 1974. Pick describes the 2007 interpretation at the site in terms of the house as both a memorial to John Keats and a literary meeting place. It is where the ‘magic casements’ of Keats’s works can be opened and explored, but it can also guide

\(^{587}\) Written at Wentworth Place in May 1819.


visitors towards wider interest and enjoyment of poetry and creative writing. Comparisons with Abbotsford and Newstead can be made, as these houses have been considered to be much more than literary destinations limited to a single writer. The twenty-first century interpretation at Keats House develops further lines established in the twentieth century, that is, although the interpretation at Keats House is literary, it now goes beyond the writing of Keats alone.

1997 marked the beginnings of a new direction for Keats House and the start of the development of a new interpretation policy after the stagnation of the Camden Council years from the re-opening of the house in 1976 after the renovations of 1974-75, until the change in ownership to the City of London in 1997. Keats House’s continued survival as a literary destination at the end of the twentieth century was guaranteed by the City of London. Nevertheless, it took two years of deliberations to find a suitable department to manage it. When in 1999 it became part of the London Metropolitan Archives under the direction of the Libraries Department this was considered to be its ‘natural place’ as the City did not, and does not, have a museums service, and most of the Keats House Collection consisted of books and manuscripts. A Keats House Management Committee was set up and responsibilities for the house and collections were divided between Visitor Services, responsible for interpretation, and Archives, responsible for collections. The collections were now catalogued to professional standards, a series of education and outreach programmes were implemented, and an acquisition and disposal policy was put in place. An interpretation plan was then developed to re-create the period rooms of the house, a process.

590 Ibid.
592 London Metropolitan Archives, Keats House Acquisition and Disposal Policy (November 2003).
completed in the autumn of 2009. This new interpretation will not be analysed in this thesis as it is too early for its impact to be assessed and the comparisons with the other three houses cannot be made as their new policies are still in a state of process of implementation.

With the new ownership of the City of London a shift occurred in emphasis of interpretation. The themes now represented at Keats House included: the establishment of a link between the present and Keats; the impact of his time in Hampstead, focused on Wentworth Place, on his literature; and the conservation and reproduction of elements of the house as lived in by Keats. Underlying these themes are ideas of a ‘death narrative’ and of the ‘aura’ of Keats.

The intentions of the owners can be ascertained from a number of sources: the formal intentions as articulated by the Keats House Acquisition and Disposal Policy; the perceptions of the curatorial staff, both those involved with visitor services and collections management; the interpretation scheme in operation until 2007; and my own observations during research visits.

The Keats House Acquisition and Disposal Policy is a formal document which states the legal obligations of the Keats House Management Committee. It outlines the remit of the present collections and the criteria for adding to them. It begins by outlining the existing collections which the City of London inherited in 1997:

1. Description of the Existing Collections

The Keats collections consist of manuscripts, books, prints, paintings and small items of personal memorabilia relating to the poet John Keats (1795-1821), his work and circle of family, friends and associates. Later nineteenth and twentieth century material reflects the emergence of Keats as a major English poet and there are a few items from other Romantic writers such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley. The printed book collection continues these themes with periodicals, bibliographies and

catalogues; and critical works on the Romantics of which a significant number relate to Shelley and Charles Lamb.\textsuperscript{594}

Clearly the collections were not directly linked to Keats House itself and showed a much broader subject area for collecting had developed. It was also recognition of the impact of collections from the late nineteenth century onwards, and an example of the City of London inheriting the ideals and policies of those who were responsible for the house prior to 1997. The Policy goes on to state,

2. \textit{Criteria Governing Future Collecting}

\textit{Keats House will continue to build upon its existing collections both in subjects and theme, focusing particularly on the life and works of John Keats and his circle.}

3. \textit{Period of Time and/or Geographical Area}

\textit{The period of John Keats’ own life (1795-1821) and the lifetimes of his circle (roughly the first half of the nineteenth century).}\textsuperscript{595}

The focus is not solely related to Keats or his time at this site. Other themes include his work, his entire life - before and beyond Wentworth Place - and those associated with him, and relate to the impact of Hampstead on his literature, his literary significance - which can be seen to be enhanced by his circle - and aspects of his life. These parts of the \textit{Acquisition and Disposal Policy} indicate that the City of London had no intention of moving away from the collections policy they had inherited, a policy which had grown out of the intentions of those previous owners stretching back to the late nineteenth century and reinforced by visitor expectations from that time and throughout the twentieth century.

In terms of the overall interpretation of Keats House another document, which refers to the 2003 and 2006 essential repairs, gives an important insight into the City’s priorities for its interpretation. Between autumn 2002 and the summer of 2003 restoration experts worked on

\textsuperscript{594} \textit{Keats House Acquisition and Disposal Policy}, p.1.

\textsuperscript{595} Ibid.
the exterior of the building: ‘A specialist firm carried out detailed investigation of the layers of paint on the walls and woodwork and concluded that the original colour scheme was off white and green paintwork. These are the colours chosen for the new decorative scheme for the house.’ This demonstrates a conscious effort to reproduce the external appearance of the building as it was in the period of Keats’s residence. External aesthetics were an important part of the narrative of Keats at Wentworth Place in terms of his literary output, in particular the episode of hearing a nightingale in a tree in the garden at the house which was the inspiration for *Ode to a Nightingale*. This repair work enabled a direct link with Keats and his literature and enhanced the possibility for visitors to experience an aura of the writer in the garden. Further repair work in 2006 also included elements of the reproduction of the house from Keats’s time: ‘A new path will follow the approximate alignment of the original path to the front door which Keats would have used to access the House.’ But alterations also had to take into account the requirements of being open to the public in the twenty-first century with reference to access issues:

*A new accessible entrance gate will permit level access to the garden instead of the current stepped entrance...A new seat will allow for a resting place along the path...The original front entrance path will be relaid with reused York stone and this will provide a more even surface whilst retaining the established appearance.*

Interpretation in the early twenty-first century is analysed by considering the guide leaflet for the house and the programmes of events which were organised at the house or in conjunction with it. A four-sided A4 information sheet was produced in 2006 to guide visitors around the house. This complemented printed guides to the paintings and furniture in each room giving factual descriptions, as well as information panels on the walls, providing contextual

597 Ibid., p.1.
598 Ibid.
narratives.\(^{599}\) (Figure 47) The sheet begins with a brief paragraph outlining when Keats lived at the house and includes information on the writing of *Ode to a Nightingale* and his love affair with Fanny Brawne. It then goes on to outline the physical changes that had occurred since the Keats period, informing visitors that the part they were standing in at this stage of the tour of the house was in fact not the Keats side of the property:

\[
\text{The room where you purchased your ticket and the room overlooking the front garden are called the Brawne Rooms, after the Brawne family who occupied this side of the house. In 1818, John Keats came to live in the smaller, eastern side of the house, which was owned by his friend Charles Brown.}\(^{600}\)
\]

In each of the rooms on the tour the information sheet relates objects found in the room to known episodes in Keats’s life:

\[
\text{Keats’s sitting room. The portrait of Keats over the fireplace shows him sitting in this sunny, tranquil room. Keats’s friend Joseph Severn painted the original version of this picture after the poet’s death. Charles Brown supplied Severn with a description of the room so that he could paint the picture accurately. In the display case opposite the fireplace you can see life and death masks of Keats, as well as his inkstand and writing desk.}\(^{601}\)
\]

No attempt had been made to recreate this room despite detailed information on how it looked in Keats’s day. The themes of this house as being important for Keats’s literature and his tragic terminal illness are interwoven in other rooms, such as Brown’s sitting room:

‘…this room was probably used for entertaining guests. Keats became ill in the early 1820s, and in one of his letters he describes how a ‘sopha-bed’ was made up for him in this room, so that he could look out of the window at the garden.’\(^{602}\) (Figure 47) Constant reference is made to how little of the house from Keats’s period survives. The next room on the tour is the Chester room:

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\(^{599}\) Author’s observation during research visits, 19th August 2005, 1st August 2006.


\(^{601}\) Ibid.

\(^{602}\) Ibid.
Almost twenty years after Keats left England the houses that made up Wentworth Place were bought by an actress, Eliza Jane Chester. Her portrait hangs opposite the door into this room. She converted the two houses into one, removing the staircase in the smaller house and making the two parlours in the larger house into one large room.⁶⁰³

An attempt is made at stimulating visitors’ imaginations to enable them to experience an ‘aura’ of what the house would have been like for Keats. In addition, the house’s importance in his affair with Fanny Brawne is referenced:

As you go back into the main part of the house, you are passing through the original doorway into Keats’s and Brown’s house. Imagine how narrow the hallway must have been when the staircase was in place. At the end of the short corridor, turn right towards the front door and go up to the first floor, remembering that you are now in the larger, Brawne, side of the house. For several months Keats lived next door to his fiancée Fanny Brawne, with only a thin wall between the two houses.⁶⁰⁴

This continues upstairs where both Brown’s and Keats’s bedrooms have been recreated using furniture and furnishings from period: ‘…very little of the original furniture owned by Charles Brown survives. The small table in Brown’s sitting room belonged to him, and the bed in this room dates from around the time that Keats and Brown lived here…The bed in Keats’s room is a four poster bed of the period.’⁶⁰⁵ An acknowledgement of the non-Keatsian history of much of the house is made by the last point on the tour: ‘If you leave the house by the front door you will see our fine iron doorknocker. We have found an entry for this knocker in a West Bromwich Iron Founder’s catalogue of 1840.⁶⁰⁶ This is twenty years after Keats left and probably dates to the works carried out by Eliza Chester. However, the significance of Keats and an early recognition of the house is given by a plaque on the wall:

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⁶⁰³ Ibid.
⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., side 3.
⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.
⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.
‘On the outside of the house you will see a plaque to John Keats. This was erected by the Royal Society of Arts in 1895...’

In a number of ways this interpretation sheet recognised the dislocation between the house as it would have been known by Keats and how this house could be experienced in the early twenty-first century. Nevertheless, reference was made to a number of themes, that is, the site being important to his literature, his love affair with Fanny Brawne, and the beginnings of the ‘death narrative’. This is achieved by highlighting a number of sensory markers, such as Keats’s inkstand, writing desk, and death mask, to be found in the house and which serve as an invitation to experience Keats’s ‘aura’.

An acknowledgement of Keats House acting as a cultural centre for themes beyond the literature of Keats is evident from the programme of events there in 2005 and 2006. The summer programme for 2005, entitled *Keats House presents MY DEAR FRIENDS - John Keats and his circle*, included a talk on *The Making of Joseph Severn* assessing new sources relating to Severn; an illustrated presentation on *I advanced my picture delightfully: Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)* who it is claimed inspired sonnets by Keats; and a lecture on *Leigh Hunt in Hampstead*. In 2006, the Keats House Poetry Reading Group met eight times between June and November but only one session was related to Keats. The house also hosted two events of the 8th Hampstead and Highgate Festival. These were *Imagining the past* with Tracey Chevalier talking about her biographical and historical novels, and *Shaping Life* with Kathryn Hughes discussing her biography of Mrs Beeton. These events are evidence

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607 Ibid.
608 Publicity Booklet *Keats House presents MY DEAR FRIENDS John Keats and his circle*, Keats House, Hampstead, London (Corporation of London, Summer Programme, 2005). Joseph Severn was the friend of Keats who accompanied him to Rome and who is a central figure in the Keats death narrative.
610 Ibid.
of what Geoff Pick referred to as the role of Keats House in interpreting Keats’s relevance in the twenty-first century and its role as a centre for poetry and creative writing.

The significance of Keats House and the themes surrounding its collections and interpretation were explored further with members of staff responsible for the site and collections. There being no museum service as part of the City of London, these duties, in turn, were split between visitor services and the care of collections. It was decided, therefore, to interview Stephanie Healey, Visitor Services Manager, Keats House, and Charlotte Shaw, Manager London Metropolitan Archives.

Whereas the curator at Newstead sought to broaden Newstead’s appeal through the promotion of other significant features of the house, at Keats House the officers responsible for its management saw this broader appeal as being very much focused on elements surrounding Keats himself. The difference is that Newstead is important as a house in its own right, whereas Keats House is significant only through its associations with Keats. Stephanie Healey viewed Keats House in terms of its relevance to the writer and a number of themes surfaced which revolved around how best to present Keats, albeit with reference to other narratives at the house. Healey recognised that very little of the house was ‘original’ to Keats. In fact she noted that changes had been constant and that presentation in the twenty-first century needed to take cognisance of legal obligations and to reflect its archival and conservation responsibilities: ‘It is quite different from the way it was when Camden owned it. They had a lot of manuscripts out and the shop in the basement, but we had to move it because of access requirements.’

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611 Although both houses are Grade 1 Listed Buildings, NMR records show 16 pages of entries for Newstead Abbey (NMR Red Box Collection Listing NGR: SK5416253770), while Keats House has one. In this one whole paragraph is given over to the fact that the house was once lived in by Keats (Listing NGR: TQ2710885666).
For her a central question was how a sense of Keats could be experienced, without attempting to reproduce the house as it was when Keats was in residence:

*Very little of the house is as it was when Keats lived here. The only room where we have knowledge of what it was like is the sitting room because we have the Severn painting. Everything else, because it has been used for other purposes is quite different. The emphasis when doing the tour [an option open to visitors] is that you have to imagine what this would have been like and how it would have been when he was here.*

For Healey this reliance on visitor imagination was realistic because a majority of the visitors already had a knowledge and interest in Keats:

*It is a place of pilgrimage for people. People who are really interested in Keats come here. They want to see what inspired him and to have a sense of nearness to him. Just the other day, for example, a lady came here and rang the bell in the morning and was broken hearted to find we don’t open until 1.00pm. So we decided to let her in. She was really moved by it. Just to be here and wander around. If they are really interested in a figure they already know tons about him. They are not coming here to learn something new. They are coming here to be here and be in the setting. It is almost like it takes you beyond. You have done all the reading and done all the research. It takes you beyond.*

Healey’s claim also showed that an important theme therefore was the house as a frame for Keats’s artistic production, something which she maintained was readily accepted by visitors. However, this appeared largely due to the type of visitor and their experience of the writer. Healey also maintained there was an ‘aura’ in the house linked both to Keats’s life and his works, but that this was dependent on the visitor:

*Most people who come here are those interested in Keats’s poetry and biography because this is a place where you have to make an effort to come to out of central London. You do not get that many people passing by and even if you do get tourists passing by there is not a huge sign outside. People have to*
have an interest as it takes an effort to actually find out where we are. Biography is what interests people a lot. People will start a conversation by asking about his life as opposed to his poetry and find much more of a connection with that.\textsuperscript{615}

However, Healey acknowledged that there were visitors who wanted more links to Keats, rather than just architectural spaces which he once occupied, and recognised that for these visitors sensory markers were required: ‘A lot of visitors, who don’t have a strong attachment to Keats, want to know why we don’t have more of his belongings here and why can we justify opening as Keats House because it is not exactly as it was.’\textsuperscript{616}

This is something that Healey thought was a shortcoming and acknowledged the influence of the management of the house by those whose prime concern was archives:

\emph{Most of the collections are kept in the archives. Because they are so valuable it is very difficult to get access to them...I wish we had more things here...[it] is that personal thing, people like to see something that he actually touched and to go and be near it. That has probably got more value and significance.}\textsuperscript{617}

But, again, Healey reiterated that in her experience ‘it was down to the individual visitor’ and she made the observation that many ‘pilgrims’ did not require sensory markers as such:

\emph{There are people who want to see authentic objects but it is quite strange, I would have thought that people who were into Keats would want to see real objects but it doesn’t happen like that. People who are really interested in Keats just love being here and they just want the opportunity to have a look at a few things, be in the house and the garden and get a sense of the place. It is people who don’t have a strong attachment who question the lack of real things.}\textsuperscript{618}

Healey also noted that interpreting Keats House to those visitors who were not necessarily ‘Keats pilgrims’ required broadening the themes of the house. She claimed that it was easier to interpret Keats’s biography than it was his literature:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{615} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{616} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{617} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{618} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
When we do a tour we vary according to their interests. With school groups we emphasise the personal aspects of his life which might relate to theirs, so they can form an attachment to him. I find it difficult to interpret his poetry to people without the analytical tools to understand it. So biography becomes important - his relationships with Fanny, his financial difficulties. Keats’s bedroom is associated with his death because this is where he was first ill.\(^{619}\)

In the discussions with Healey a tension became evident in the aims and objectives of the interpretation. On the one hand the visitor groups to the house appeared to be largely made up of ‘pilgrims’ wishing to experience an aura of the writer, on the other hand, there appeared a requirement to broaden the interpretation to become relevant to a wider audience:

\begin{quote}
In the latest visitor survey people always say they would like to see more of his [Keats] work here. So that is something that we really need to do, display his poetry a bit more prominently. Because at present the interpretation is very heavily based on biography.\(^{620}\)
\end{quote}

This can also be seen in the interpretation of the garden. A part of the garden had been named the ‘Nightingale Border’ due to its supposed proximity to where Keats has been inspired to write \textit{Ode to a Nightingale}. According to Pick the story appeared that the naming of the Border was due to the belief that was what Keats had called it. In fact the Border was first named as such by Geoff Pick himself in 2007.\(^{621}\)

Visitor expectations were also a central theme of the interview with Charlotte Shaw.\(^{622}\) Shaw, Manager of London Metropolitan Archives and therefore responsible for the Keats collection, acknowledged the need for sensory markers to meet visitor expectations and explained how this was achieved in practice:

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushright}

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As we had open rooms, and people do not like to visit empty rooms, we had a policy of furnishing them with furniture from the period. We also, where possible, included objects with a direct link to Keats, such as Leigh Hunt’s table - which Keats ‘may’ have sat at.\textsuperscript{623}

Shaw also claimed that because of the limited number of appropriate exhibits, the idea was to evoke a sense of Keats’s spirit in the spaces of the house: ‘…because of Keats’s life this is limited to things which belonged to his circle. So we are trying to re-create a feeling for Keats.’\textsuperscript{624} This view was echoed by Healey, ‘It is a place of pilgrimage for people … They want to see what inspired him and to have a sense of nearness to him.’\textsuperscript{625} A central theme which emerged during discussions was the importance of the history of the development of the house and collections.

\textit{Our collection is disparate. It has come about due to what was initially inherited and then through things which had been offered and accepted. There had been no professional collection policy and not everything had been accessioned or catalogued. If anything new comes on the market we do not have the funds to buy it.}\textsuperscript{626}

Comments in the visitor books also seem to affirm the strategic objective of the managers:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{A beautiful house full of Keats’s spirit.}
\item \textit{A truly evocative monument to one of England’s greatest poets. Thank you.}
\item \textit{A dream fulfilled!}
\item \textit{I can feel the presence of Keats in this house.}
\item \textit{I felt a slight chill on entering Keats’s bedroom just thinking of what he had felt in those long months of illness.}\textsuperscript{627}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{623} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{624} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{625} Stephanie Healey, Visitor Services Manager, Keats House, interview by James Pardoe, Keats House, 19th August 2005.
\textsuperscript{626} Charlotte Shaw, Manager, London Metropolitan Archives, interview by James Pardoe, London Metropolitan Archives, 1st August 2006.
However, even though these themes were central to the presentation throughout the history of Keats House, they were not constants and different emphasis was given to each theme at different stages of that history. Owners used objects and spaces to cement associations between the house and Keats, while visitors sought out these environments as authentic links to be experienced. However, because this mechanism of management had to be applied to Keats House after a period in which the house had developed without associations with the writer, the owners imposed their own views of the significance of the house - influenced by visitor expectations - which had not existed during the writer’s occupancy. This resulted in the development of an interpretation which was divorced from any of Keats’s recorded experiences at this house.

**Keats-Shelley Memorial House**

**Piazza di Spagna 26 – KSMH: 1903-1997**

*I have touched and viewed thy precious relics, I have sat in thy very death-chamber and looked out of the windows on the very streets thy poor sick eyes saw in their last earthly vision...* 628

These words, taken from the diary of Harrison Morris one of the original Trustees of the KSMH in Rome, outline its central narrative: that is, the death and suffering of Keats, and also the death of Shelley. There is no reference to the house as an inspiration for writing here and no literary connections to writers, as there is at Keats House. So what is the motivation for the creation of the KSMH as a literary house?

*I shall soon be laid in the quiet grave, thank God for the quiet grave - O! I can feel the cold earth upon me - the daisies growing over me - O for this quiet - it will be my first... 
...on the twenty-third, about four, the approaches of death came on.
‘Severn - I - lift me up - I am dying - I shall die easy, don’t be frightened - be firm, and thank God it has come! I lifted him up in my arms.*

*(Letter: Severn to Browne, February 27, 1821)* 629

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This letter, an important reference in Keats’s first significant biography by Monckton Milne in 1848, highlights the motivation of the establishment of the KSMH as a literary destination for both the owners of the house and its visitors. The daisies, imagined by Keats, and recorded by Severn as Keats lay dying on 21\textsuperscript{st} February 1821, are today reproduced in a painting on the ceiling of the room where he died. The relative calm of his death on 23\textsuperscript{rd} February is reflected in a place of peaceful contemplation that the KSMH has presented since 1909 and which has been continually recognised by visitors.

There are records of a house on this site from the sixteenth century when the area became known as Piazza di Spagna after the rebuilding of the Spanish Embassy in 1567. The stone boat fountain known as the Barcaccia, just below the house in the Piazza is known to have existed in 1576, but was remodelled by the sculptor Pietro Bernini in 1627.\textsuperscript{630} (Figure 52)

This and the external redesign of Piazza di Spagna 26 in the 1720s were in place when Keats arrived in 1820, and remain to the present day.\textsuperscript{631} (Figure 53)

Internally the building was arranged over four floors each with a different set of apartments. After 1815 the area around Piazza di Spagna had become a centre for the English on the Grand Tour and it was here, at No. 26, that Dr James Clark found a modest apartment on the second floor for Keats and his friend, Joseph Severn in 1820.\textsuperscript{632} Severn became closely linked with Keats’s posthumous life through his descriptions of the latter’s last days and death, and also through later portraits of the writer. Severn was a portrait painter and, although not one of his closest friends, he was the only one who agreed to accompany the dying Keats to Italy.

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\textsuperscript{631} Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.

\textsuperscript{632} See Haslam in Brown, S, pp.76-80, Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
His links with Keats continued after his own death, in 1879, as his grave was placed next to Keats’s in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome.

For just over three months between 15th November 1820 and 23rd February 1821, this second floor apartment at Piazza di Spagna 26 in Rome, was home to Keats. Why did those responsible for the foundation of the KSMH in Rome adopt this house and how did they transform it into a visitor destination for both Keats and Shelley in Rome? In terms of associations it was the place where Keats died, but there is no evidence to suggest that Shelley set foot in the building, although he had lived in the area at Via del Corso and Via Sistina 65 in 1819. In terms of literature, no works were composed here and it did not influence any of their poems. People were aware that Keats had briefly lived and died here before its dedication as the KSMH in 1906 but throughout the nineteenth century the pre-eminent destination was the writers’ graves in the Protestant Cemetery. For example, Howitt briefly mentions that: ‘They [Keats and Severn] first went to Naples, and afterwards to Rome, where they occupied the same house, at the corner of the Piazza di Spagna.’ Although Hawthorne lived nearby at Via di Porta Pinciana in 1858, he did not refer to the house or visit it. In fact, the building was in private hands, so it was much easier to make pilgrimage to the Cemetery which was a public space.

The central episode in the posthumous narrative of Keats’s life was the pathos of his death. This appeared almost immediately, as epitomised in his obituary in the London Magazine which stated that: ‘… [he] has at last died, solitary and in sorrow, in a foreign land.’ His illness and early death underpinned the idea of his sensibility and vulnerability, linked to his

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creative genius in what Jennifer Wallace calls, ‘the metaphorical connection between Keats’s life or body and writing.’ As Wallace notes, the narratives surrounding his frailty and death have been influential in deciding the way his literature has been read and his biography developed. Crucial to this is Severn’s account of Keats’s last weeks culminating in his description of Keats’s death scene, of which his detailed first-hand account of Keats’s last dying moments became the defining scene. Numerous versions of sketches of Keats on his deathbed became models for subsequent posthumous paintings of the writer and the death masks of his face and hand led to an iconography surrounding the subject which became widely available. (Figure 54) Consequently, the place where this scene was acted out took on a central significance within the narrative.

As Motion notes, a myth surrounding Keats built up from the moment of his death. It became a ‘posthumous existence’ which blurred the ‘reality’, a Keats of the other worldly, ‘not having a body, fading away, dying young.’ Severn’s idealised view of Keats’s death was reinforced by Shelley’s elegy Adonais in which Keats is considered to have been driven to death by bad reviews of his work (1821), and by Leigh Hunt’s Lord Byron and Some Contemporaries (1828). By the time of the publication of Keats’s first full-length biography in 1848 by Monckton Milne, this posthumous existence was already well-established. Despite Monckton Milne’s attempts to portray a more realistic version of Keats, his avoidance of important events such as Keats’s affair with Fanny Brawne reinforced the view

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642 Motion, p.xix.
643 Ibid.
of Keats as the sensitive, stricken romantic. As Motion further highlights, this view persisted into the second half of the nineteenth century: William Rossetti saw him as the pitiful outcast, and Oscar Wilde called Keats the youngest of the martyrs. This was the well-established image of Keats when Piazza di Spagna 26 came on the market in the early twentieth century, and has remained the dominant narrative at the literary museum ever since.

The development of Shelley’s biographical narrative had much in common with that of Keats. He too was identified by his suffering and early death and by the image of his other-worldliness, what Richard Holmes called his ‘angelic personality of popular myth.’ This popular myth was in part helped by Mary Shelley’s editions of her husband’s *Posthumous Poems* (1824) and *Poetical Works* (1839), with their biographical prefaces and notes, and later Lady Shelley’s *Shelley Memorials* (1859). Also, the major Shelley biographers, Leigh Hunt and Thomas Medwin in the 1820s and 1830s, and Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Edward Trelawny, and Edward Dowden, in the mid-to late Victorian period, promoted the ‘Shelley myth.’ As Julian North contends, ‘All Shelley’s biographers glamorised an angelic or eccentric other-worldliness in the poet and thereby made his views and behaviour more palatable for their readers.’

One of the most important parts of the Shelley legend was the narrative surrounding his death and the disposal of his remains. As Lee notes, the first-hand accounts of Trelawny and Leigh Hunt were given a certain amount of credence by biographers, despite their unreliability - both men had a tendency to exaggerate their own significance and change their version of events accordingly. Edward Dowden particularly relied heavily on Trelawny and Hunt. Trelawny had met Byron and Shelley in Italy and had become a friend of the two poets. He was a central figure in their death narratives, having

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645 Motion, p.xx.
646 Cited in, Lee, pp.10-11. Also see Holmes.
647 North, p.104.
648 Lee, p.16.
identified Shelley’s body and removed parts of it from its cremation, and later arranging for
Byron’s body to be returned to England from Greece.\textsuperscript{650} An important appropriation of the
legacy of Keats and Shelley by Trelawny surrounded the burial of their remains at the
Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Trelawny changed Severn’s plans for Keats’s grave and
insisted that Shelley’s ashes be moved to a site near Keats. He also chose the wording for the
tombstone.\textsuperscript{651} Therefore a link was created between the two writers in death and, significantly,
a link between the two writers in Rome. Shelley’s death was not associated with a particular
place as he was drowned at sea and his surviving body parts, from his cremation, dispersed.
However, although, in life, no one place could be definitely connected to Shelley, in death, he
became intimately linked with Rome.

There is evidence that Piazza di Spagna 26 had been a place of pilgrimage, from as early as
the 1840s when Elizabeth Barrett Browning recorded details of a visit in her journal.\textsuperscript{652}
However, even more people visited the graves in the Protestant Cemetery, which had been
the centre of attention throughout the nineteenth century. The American N.P. Willis wrote of
his visit to the graves as early as 1833, as did Auguste Barbier in 1838.\textsuperscript{653} Oscar Wilde visited
the graves a year after the unveiling of a memorial tablet in 1876 and Thomas Hardy visited
the graves in 1887.\textsuperscript{654} None of these are recorded as visiting the house, and yet by the
twentieth century a clear picture emerges of the house developing as a destination for visitors
interested in the two writers, despite the fact that it has no actual connections to Shelley and
only limited connections to Keats in terms of his life and literature. Nevertheless, the KSMH,
as the place where Keats died, had significant associations with him and perpetuated the
pilgrimage tradition of the visiting of the graves.

\textsuperscript{650} Trelawney had travelled with Byron to take part in the Greek War of Independence.
\textsuperscript{651} See also Beck-Friis, J \textit{The Protestant Cemetery in Rome} (Malmo: Allhems Forlag, 2003), pp.34-35.
\textsuperscript{652} Brown, S ‘An Echo and a Light unto Eternity – The Founding of the Keats-Shelley House’, in Brown, S
\textsuperscript{653} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{654} Ibid, p.51.
The motivation for the creation of the KSMH at Piazza di Spagna 26 was to provide a memorial to the writers, and also to establish a library, archive and study centre. The setting up of a memorial was logical in the case of Keats as it was the place of his death. The library, archive and study centre also provided the opportunity to memorialise the lives and works of the writers even though the house had not been a centre of literary production or a site of inspiration for literary works. In 1903, Sir Rennell Rodd, Chairman of the Keats-Shelley Memorial Executive Committee, set out its objectives: ‘The object of this movement is to make a memorial to Keats and Shelley in the form of a library on the floor occupied by Keats and Severn…’ It was to be a place for the quiet contemplation of Keats’s life, and his work, and also a place where other writers, notably Shelley and Byron, could be experienced through their work - Byron being added because he had lived at Piazza di Spagna 66 in 1817. Therefore, the KSMH differed from Keats House in that the dual objectives of the owners - to create a memorial and a study centre - were in place from the outset. It was these objectives, rather than the events which took place at the house in 1820 to 1821, which defined the KSMH. What is also important is that these objectives established between 1903 and 1906 can be evidenced to the present day.

There is limited documentation on the first twenty-five years of the KSMH; however, detailed accounts do exist for its purchase and creation, as well as the memoirs of Catherine Morris Wright, daughter of one of the original Trustees Harrison Wright, which were published in 1981-82. Moreover, extensive visitor books were kept from the opening of the house, which provide a rich source of evidence. The KSMH was created as a memorial. A decade earlier Dove Cottage had set the precedent for creating centres dedicated as writers’ houses with the founding of the Wordsworth Trust in 1891. The founders of the Keats-
Shelley Memorial Association (which was also to take over guardianship of the writers’ graves) sought to create a similar institution. Work to this end began in 1903 with the establishment of the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, led by a group of people who had their own literary pretensions, but who also came from wealthy backgrounds.\textsuperscript{657} For example during the process to save the KSMH the Chairman of the Memorial Association Committee, Rennell Rodd, was an influential participant of the process. He was Chargé d’Affaires at the British Embassy, poet and a scholar, and a former friend of Shelley’s daughter-in-law Lady Jane Shelley. On 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 1903, the anniversary of Keats’s death, Rennell Rodd called an informal meeting on the setting up of the memorial,

\begin{quote}
The object of this movement is to make a memorial to Keats and Shelley in the form of a library on the floor occupied by Keats and Severn, and to entrust to the managers of the memorial the perpetual care of the graves of the two poets and their companions.\textsuperscript{658}
\end{quote}

From the beginning literature and the death narrative were important symbols in the motivations of the Association and its Committee. It was also implied that a danger existed to the sites linked to the writers:

\begin{quote}
Sir Rennell Rodd informed the committee that he had twice succeeded in defeating the intent of the Roman authorities to move the grave of Keats. To do this he once had to enlist the personal interposition of Queen Victoria.\textsuperscript{659}
\end{quote}

The leading figures in the Committee were Rodd (later to become British Ambassador in Rome) as Chairman, Harry Nelson Gay, Secretary, and Robert Underwood Johnson (later US Ambassador in Rome) Head of Fundraising. Over the next three years sufficient funds were

\textsuperscript{657} Morris Wright, C, 1981, p.52.
\textsuperscript{658} Rodd, R ‘Speech to Keats-Shelley Committee 23rd February 1903’, printed in, Morris Wright, C, 1981, p.70.
\textsuperscript{659} Ibid.
raised and the purchase of the house completed. As Johnson was to note in December 1906 on the completion of his work,

*In this time of apparently less receptivity in poetic matters, it is encouraging to note the cordiality with which so many have greeted a project appealing to the pure and simple love of poetry. Not only writers of every class, artists, literary clubs, literary departments in colleges, connoisseurs, and “general readers”, but even men of business not identified with literary affairs, have contributed to erect this new altar to Poetry, upon which may be kindled and kept alive the sacred flame...*  

The rhetoric implies a shrine-like status for the house and its potential as a destination for literary pilgrimages.

One Mary Haslehurst and her mother were living at the house when the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association took it over. They had been allowing people to visit the room where Keats had died and, as Catherine Morris Wright notes, ‘Mrs Haslehurst wanted to buy and resurrect this shrine in which she felt she, too, lived and suffered…’  

This is an early use of the word ‘shrine’ to describe the house and also an early reference to empathy with Keats. In this case the reference is to the death of Mrs Haslehurst’s husband. This is a useful point to note as it mirrors some of the sentiments expressed by the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association and is evidence of the prevalence of the Keats death narrative at this time. The condition of the house was so poor that Mrs Haslehurst did not have sufficient funds to buy and restore it.  

However, the Haslehursts had also created a precedent whereby visitors could access the house and experience it at first hand.

The language which began the proceedings of the opening ceremony of the KSMH in 1909 is important to note. It revealed that the main aim for the acquisition of the house was the

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661 Ibid., p.52.
662 Ibid.
protection of the endangered building, similar to the objectives of those behind the establishment of Keats House a decade later. The building itself had no architectural merit and would not even have come to the notice of those who saved it if it had not been the place where Keats spent his last weeks. (Figure 55) Rodd’s speech on 3rd April 1909 states the objectives of the new KSMH:

[The Executive Committee] ...decided to launch the enterprise of acquiring this house which has been for nearly a century a sacred place to all who speak the English tongue, to guard it against all possibility of future desecration by dedicating it to the memory of the two great poets... The King of Italy endorsed the ambition:

...and now they [Keats and Shelley] are united together in this shrine from today forward consecrated to the memory of both, a shrine which England and America have erected and which Italy, her King to witness, embraces with reverence and affectionate memory.

However, the KSMH was not only a shrine, it was also a serious centre for study as the growth of collections showed: ‘The Keats-Shelley-Byron-Hunt Library which has been founded in the Memorial House … contained 1,000 volumes in 1910; it now numbers 4,000 volumes of which the following is the classified inventory…’ Nevertheless it was to be a centre which reproduced parts of the house where Keats had lived and died, ‘The rooms, now furnished in a manner appropriate to their occupation by Keats and Severn…’

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this ‘appropriate manner’ was not one taken from the records of the early nineteenth century but one created anew in the early twentieth century. There was a major dislocation with how the building looked when Keats lived there and although the external appearance of the house and its immediate environs had changed little since the 1720s, internally the building was very different.\(^668\) Therefore, the KSMH had to be reconstructed within a building that had been substantially altered. During Keats’s time, the floor occupied by the KSMH had been two separate apartments, which were now visitable as one entire floor. What was put in place, and has changed very little since, was an early twentieth century representation. The Library was refurnished with bookcases, curtains and chandeliers giving the appearance of a Victorian library. (Figure 56) In terms of the collections, due to quarantine laws of the time, everything belonging to Keats when he died had been burned; consequently, nothing survived from Keats’s occupation. Although Severn recorded in great detail the event of Keats’s death in the apartment, he left no description of the apartment itself to inform its future re-installation.\(^669\)

When the KSMH opened as a museum and library on 3\(^\text{rd}\) April 1909 objects in the collection were drawn from a variety of donations. These objects connected to the writers had no actual associations with the house and the few pieces of furniture placed within the building to represent the rooms that had been occupied by Keats were reproductions.\(^670\) The original collections were largely based around documents which were classified into three groups:

> The documents which follow group themselves, from the character of their contents, into three divisions, each of which offers valuable material for the biography of the poets in whose memory the archives and the library of the Memorial have been established.

\(^668\) Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
\(^669\) Ibid.
\(^670\) Ibid.
These groupings indicate some of the early objectives of the KSMH and its interest in biographical material associated with the writers and their circle. Other early donations were also of a biographical nature. By 1914 Johnson, who had returned to the United States of America, had handed over the affairs of the KSMH to another of the Trustees, Harrison Morris, but still had time to be involved with donations. On 23rd December 1914 Johnson announced a new acquisition:

*I have with me ready to mail it by registered post, a portion of the lock of Keats’ hair which was in the Morgan Library and which “young” J.P.M. at my request has given to the Keats-Shelley Memorial; i.e. he has given us a portion of one of the two locks he has. It is…a lovely soft brown colour and a very fine texture - just the right sort for a poet of his combined delicacy and robustness, not the “robustness” of the present day, but the vigour of truth.*

(Figure 57)

Gay was responsible for the day-to-day running of the house, and care for the graves of Keats and Shelley, practically on a voluntary basis, until his death in 1932. An important part of his duties was thus keeping the death narrative central to the workings of the memorial. In 1933 the post of Curator was created and Vera Signorelli (later Cacciatore) was appointed. During

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672 Morris Wright, C, 1982, pp.41-42.
Gay’s time the house had gained both a number of donations and a reputation for scholarship, hosting literary and cultural events, as well as receiving visitors. The museum was confined to the second floor with the other apartments in the house being rented out. The house continued to be a cultural centre in Rome under Cacciatore’s curatorship, but with the coming of war in 1940 it closed down. During the war the collections were removed to Monte Cassino but were fortuitously returned to Rome before the siege of the monastery commenced. The house remained closed to visitors until 5th June 1944, the day after the Allied troops entered Rome. Over the next two and a half years, a great many of these troops visited the house, as Catharine Morris Wright was to note in December 1946:

"...The Librarian of the Keats collection at Harvard tells me that a great many young soldiers are coming in there, having seen the Memorial House while in Rome in the Army; and there is new and aroused popular interest in the subject..."

After World War Two, the house went into decline - there were some modifications: in 1953 the crystal chandeliers in the Salone and Severn Room were donated by Commander Gustav Rodd - but difficulties with the rents from the other apartments and falling visitor numbers meant that income was barely adequate to keep the museum open. In 1976, Vera Cacciatore retired and was succeeded by Sir Joseph Cheyne, a former soldier and diplomat. Cheyne noted that apart from scholars and Keats enthusiasts, visitors were not actively encouraged, so he set about broadening the audience base and increasing income. He had some success, through forging close links with the British Council and increasing the visits of school parties, thanks to his energetic promotion of the site. When he retired in 1990, aged 76,

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visitor figures had increased to approximately 11,000 per annum. However, Cheyne’s role had set a precedent in that he was a semi-retired, albeit enthusiastic, amateur with no formal museum experience in interpretation. So despite his successes little had changed in the presentation of the house since the 1910s.677

Cheyne’s successor was Bathsheba Abse who improved the physical appearance of the interior of the house with new floorings and re-wiring, and also continued Cheyne’s cultural activities. These included an annual poetry competition for schoolchildren and a lecture series. For the bi-centenaries of Shelley’s birth in 1992 and of Keats’s birth in 1995, Abse organised numerous celebrations. However, no changes were made to the interpretation and visitor figures dropped from 11,000 in 1990 to 6,000 in 1996. Catherine Payling became curator in 1997 and oversaw a major modernisation of the house and its interpretation.678

From the outset, visitors to the KSMH have responded positively to its environment as a memorial to Keats in particular, despite its lack of ‘authentic’ objects from his time there.679 An empathy with Keats appears to have attracted many to the house. Examples of the house viewed in reverential terms with frequent comments on its peaceful nature and of Keats’s spirit being in evidence can be found in the visitor books from the opening of the house onwards. One early visitor felt moved to comment in 1910, ‘He faded in his early bloom – yet left a fragrance rare - The music of his song is stilled – yet lingers on the air!’680 Others continued in this theme and also opted to include their own verse, as one visitor in 1911 wrote:

677 Obituary for Sir Joseph Cheyne, Bt., The Daily Telegraph, Saturday 24th March 2007, p.29.
679 KSMA Visitor Books, Vols.I –XVIII, 13th February 1908 – 6th July 2006. This is a point verified by Payling who noted that in the 1990s there was a decline in visitor figures despite there being significant anniversaries - 1990-91 saw 11,000 visitors but in 1996-97 there were only 6,000, Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
Keats, thou art justly with the saints of fame;
A miracle has justified this shrine;
For when in water thou would'st write thy name
Thy writing turned the water into wine.

W.S. Campbell Oklahoma

Campbell was Professor of Literature at Oklahoma University and reflected the quasi-religious responses of many visitors. The literary and suffering narratives presented at the house continued through the inter-war period. In 1933 an anonymous visitor wrote,

Elegy
Written in the room where Keats died
Faint as a shadow of forgotten life,
Sad as a longing after youthfulness,
Always He lingers where He passed from strife
to nothingness.
A light is streaming from the deep blue sky,
Warm in the sun the walls are shining red,
Children are playing on the steps near-by,
and I am dead.

During World War Two, the Visitor Book became a veritable roll call of the British and American military units passing through the city, with over 5,000 servicemen and women leaving signatures between June 1944 and December 1945. Many of these left dedications to their sweethearts and appeared to take comfort and inspiration from the two writers: ‘And gaze deep into her peerless eyes. Soon I hope’. The ‘aura’ of the writers and their inspiration for visitors was still commented upon here in the mid-1990s and was epitomised by a comment from 1996:

To taste a little of what

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aspired such great poets
a sweet sense of their essence
is to be found here.\textsuperscript{685}

These visitors’ reactions to the experience of visiting the KSMH, highlights its apparent power to evoke the presence of both Keats and Shelley, even though their actual presence here was either limited or non-existent.

**KSMH: 1997-2006**

Catherine Payling, the current curator at KSMH contends that; ‘this is a memorial site and the value that people derive from a visit is to gain a sense of the tragic early death of Keats.’\textsuperscript{686} In the ‘Introduction’ to the 2006 guidebook there is a quotation which reads:

\begin{quote}
O he will mourn over every circumstance to me whilst I cool his burning forehead – until I tremble through every vein in concealing my fears from his staring glassy eyes – how he can be Keats again from all I have little hope.

*Joseph Severn to Charles Brown, 17\textsuperscript{th} December 1820*\textsuperscript{687}
\end{quote}

It is this account of Keats’s terminal illness which is stressed in the first paragraphs of the guidebook, continuing the theme of the house as a shrine and reinforcing the point that this house has its focus as being the place where Keats died. In addition, as Shelley, the great nomad, has no memorial site of his own, his early death can also be acknowledged and remembered here. But the house is also a place of research and study, and the 2006 guidebook emphasises this in its description of the collection.

Since 1997 Payling, whose marketing skills have increased visitor numbers from approximately 6,000 per annum to over 23,000 has been given virtual *carte blanche* in the interpretation policies of KSMH. During this time, Payling has overseen a number of

\textsuperscript{685} Lorraine Douglas, 14th October 1996 in KSMA *Visitor Book Vol.XV, 16th April 1996 - 9th March 1999.*
\textsuperscript{686} Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
refurbishments to the house, particularly in 2002 and 2003, which have enabled a re-assessment of the presentation of the collection, accompanied by the publication of the new guidebook in 2006.

Unlike the presentations at Abbotsford, Newstead and to an extent Keats House, there is no attempt to suggest that the house that Keats knew has survived. Instead, in each of the four rooms open to visitors the guidebook gives a brief description of what the house was like during the writer’s time. (Figures 58 & 59) When describing ‘The Keats Room’ (where Keats died) an attempt at reconstruction is made, but primarily to evoke a sense of the writer’s death, details of which should be familiar to those with a knowledge and interest in Keats. The guidebook illustrates the point thus:

*Vatican law decreed that after Keats’s death everything in this room, including the bed and curtains, should be taken outside and burned. It was mistakenly thought at the time that this would prevent the spread of infection. The fireplace, however, is original and is where Joseph Severn used to heat up food for Keats. The sounds that Keats would have heard, whilst lying in his bed, are similar to the sounds heard today – the running water of the Barcaccia fountain and horses’ hooves striking the cobbles. The most recent significant addition to the Museum’s collection, in 2003 – the centenary of the founding of the Keats Shelley Memorial Association – is a period bed for this room. The bed dates from around 1820, is made of Italian walnut and with its plain but graceful design is a classic letto a barca ‘boat bed’. (Figure 60)*

Each of the four rooms open to the public is given a separate chapter and theme. After the initial description of how the room would have appeared in Keats’s time, there is information about the objects on show in the room, and no attempt is made to suggest that it resembles the apartment in Keats’s time. If it did so it could be argued that this would go against the central narrative, as the complete physical loss of any elements linked to the writer is considered as

689 Ibid., p.13.
part of the narrative.’ In fact, absence is a central theme within the KSMH. Two rooms are given over entirely to Keats; ‘The Severn Room’ (the life of Keats), and ‘The Keats Room’ (Keats’s last days in Rome); one room, ‘The Salone’ is themed around the posthumous reputations of Keats, Shelley and Byron; and the final room, ‘The Terrace Room’ is where the lives of Shelley and Byron are presented. Most of the objects in the collection are portraits, manuscripts, first editions, letters and prints. Very few come from the writers themselves, although there are locks of hair from Keats and Shelley and an alabaster urn containing a fragment of Shelley’s jaw bone from his cremation. All of these are labelled as ‘Relics’, reinforcing their memorial status. The history of the KSMH as a site of memorialisation is revealed through a list of visits by well-known people including ‘Jean Cocteau, Nancy Mitford, Sir Alec Guinness, Alberto Moravia, Princess Elizabeth (in 1952), T.E. Lawrence and Seamus Heaney.’

The concept that this is a memorial to Keats, and to a lesser extent Shelley, and not a reproduction of their time in Italy, is reiterated by Payling,

*Biographical meaning is 99.9% of the value that people derive from a visit and the most poignant part of the visit is to go into the bedroom where Keats died. People are often moved to tears by going into that room. So his biography in the sense of the life and the death is very strong, and the tragedy of the life.*

She emphasised that unlike many other literary houses this was not a place of literary production:

690 Author’s own observations during research visits, 12th July 2005 and 10th July 2006.
692 Ibid., p.22.
693 Ibid., p.30. T.E. Lawrence’s entry in the visitor book was unearthed by the author during research visit in July 2006. The unearthing of the visit by T.E. Lawrence - Lawrence of Arabia - was the subject of newspaper reports in 2006.
694 Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
[this house has] no meaning in terms of the setting of works. Keats wrote absolutely nothing when he was here. He did write a famous letter, written in December 1820, which was basically saying goodbye to a friend. This presents us with an interpretation problem with visitors because they want to know what he wrote when he was in Rome. How do we get this across and pre-empt any disappointment that there isn’t a manuscript of a poem that he wrote when he was in Rome. This is not something that other writers’ houses have a problem with - our situation is slightly unusual.695

Although Keats’s literary output at this site was extremely limited, the famous letter acknowledging that he was going to die does support the death narrative of the house. Payling stressed things which would have been familiar to Keats: ‘The exterior is identical. The setting is identical because the Spanish Steps were constructed in the early 1720s. The fountain was there and the surrounding buildings are architecturally the same.’696 This outlining of the environs of the house is important as it contributes to the death narrative, that is, what Keats would have known but also what he could hear, as reported by Severn. This also enabled an ‘aura’ of Keats’s last days to be experienced by visitors. Payling went on to focus on Piazza di Spagna itself: ‘The dimensions have not changed in the building. Structurally the lay out - the arrangement of rooms - is very similar to the way it was when Keats was in Rome.’697 Payling also pointed out what was different, in particular the lack of reproduction at the house both in terms of the structures and the objects contained in the collections: ‘In respect to the interior, the museum itself, which is on the second floor looks very different from when Keats was here. In Keats’s time it was two separate apartments. Now it is one entire floor.’698 She continued to explain the difficulties the lack of sensory markers caused for interpretation of Keats’s narrative, particularly the sense of his death:

695 Ibid.
696 Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005.
697 Ibid.
698 Ibid.
[we] have a problem…all the stuff and things Keats came into contact with [here] got burned. This is a potential area for disappointment for our visitors. We have nothing that he had when he was here and...although Joseph Severn records in great detail the events that took place, he doesn’t describe what the apartment was like.

The absence of collections can make it difficult to meet visitors’ expectations:

An important part of our interpretation is overcoming that obstacle and I think people expect to find more in the way of material culture, particularly in relation to Keats. In fact we have more objects and relics with links to Shelley and Byron than we do Keats.

In reality there is not much in the collection with a direct link to Shelley either - an alabaster urn with a fragment of his jaw bone, a tin box containing essences used in Shelley’s cremation, a lock of his hair, and two letters from Shelley to Horace Smith dated May 1822. To mitigate against the paucity of physical links to Keats and Shelley at the house, Payling explained how they had developed an interpretation policy based on explaining the life and works of Keats, Shelley and to a lesser extent Byron and other Romantics. This was to be a place of study, a depository of knowledge on the writers. Part of this policy justified grants from the Rome authorities, as the house is acknowledged as an important resource in Italy for English Romantic literature. However, the policy also came from a desire to inform:

Any writer’s house has to assume that visitors may only have a limited knowledge of the subject…My philosophy is to broaden the visitor base and get people in and tell them about Keats, Shelley and Byron. We have to assume that visitors need to be told things: Keats was born in London, he was not well received by critics, he got TB, came for a cure and died in Rome. However, I firmly believe you can give them complex information and expect them to read a lot. I refuse to dumb down and our visitors seem to respond warmly to that.

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699 Ibid.
700 Ibid.
701 Ibid.
702 Ibid.
To some extent Payling’s attitude acknowledged the visitor base of the house. Despite being in one of the prime tourist spots in Rome it is not on a major tourist itinerary so, as with Keats House in London, visitors make a special journey to the house: ‘We are never going to be a place of mass tourism. No writer’s house is ever going to be like Madame Tussaud’s. People who do make time in their itineraries are entitled to expect a higher level of interpretation.’

The impact of the house on visitors is something which Payling endeavoured to promote. In 2006 she received a note from the son of an American World War Two soldier asking for information about the house. His father had recently died and although, apparently, he had seen a good deal of active service during the War, he had only ever spoken about the KSMH and its atmosphere of quiet contemplation.

In line with Payling’s approach, and perhaps as a justification for it, a large number of visitors have been encouraged to leave more than their personal details in the visitor books. This commenced with Volume XV which began in April 1996. In response visitors have shown their appreciation of the house:

To feel his presence is to feel pure love
God bless Keats and all who walk
through this sacred place.

Many of the sentiments expressed demonstrate extremely strong feelings,

Twenty five years ago I read my first poem by John Keats. I’ll never forget it. It split my heart in twang. Now that I am in this museum I can end my life.

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703 Ibid.
704 Author’s observation, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, 10th July 2006 (as this letter was of a very personal nature the Curator was reluctant to have the details of the correspondence passed on).
It is not known whether this intention was carried out but the language used does infer a sense of pilgrimage, something which was related to Shelley on the same day,

\[
\text{In memory of my sister,} \\
\text{Shelley Newton Poitlock} \\
\text{named after P. B. Shelley ...} \\
\text{we visited here for her — 707}
\]

However, the house does have some critics:

\[
\text{Very disappointing [sic], this is a library –} \\
\text{was I wrong to think I would get} \\
\text{to see the actual house, including sleeping quarters and the likes?} \\
\text{Oh well, you are making money – That’s all} \\
\text{that is ever important in our ideal riddened world} \\
\text{Chaio — 708}
\]

Another disappointed visitor questioned the representation of the writers via the display of their physical remains:

\[
\text{View a lock of Keats hair, the toenail} \\
\text{scratchings of Byron – pay your respects in} \\
\text{life, in wine. To be a ROMANTIC} \\
\text{Do you know what that means? 709}
\]

Others wanted to see a broader interpretation of the poets’ lives:

\[
\text{Shelley and Byron were revolutionaries} \\
\text{- but it’s hard to tell from this} \\
\text{exhibition! Romantics in early} \\
\text{18th century Europe were more than} \\
\text{dreamers… 710}
\]

Although this visitor was in error over the dates of Shelley and Byron, his view on the Romantics as being more than literary figures was shared by others:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{With respect for those enslaved by tyrants and that liberty for which Byron and Shelley fought!} \\
\text{Peter Burley Paris}
\end{align*}
\]

All of these examples show how many visitors have strong views on how the writers should be interpreted. As Marsh notes, presentations can detract from the atmosphere of the house, but the curator is at pains to point out that these types of sentiments are far outweighed by those who appreciate the present interpretation. This point is supported by those whose personal relationship is so strong that any interpretation seems superfluous:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I never dreamed that I would walk where he once walked or come so close to breathing the same air, my heart is filled with both sorrow and joy.}
\end{align*}
\]

The comments continued in this vein after the 2003 restoration. In 2006 Elizabeth Robertson of Colorado felt inspired to write, ‘still haunted by the daisies over John’s bed.’ The painting of these flowers on the ceiling of what was Keats’s bedroom has moved a number of visitors. An American visitor to Keats House in the previous year had been determined to visit the London house after visiting the one in Rome. Here he expressed the feeling of wonderment at having actually seen the last thing that the dying Keats would, he thought,

\(712\) See Marsh, K, p.xiv.
\(713\) Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005. Although it should be pointed out that the curator admits that there is a certain level of censorship applied to the visitor books which are removed from display when it is feared they will not be used appropriately.
have also seen.\textsuperscript{716} Of course this is not the case as those paintings now on the ceiling are much later restorations. Whether or not the visitor was aware of this fact, the point is that he felt himself to be experiencing what Keats had experienced.\textsuperscript{717} Other visitors have responded to the restorations in a positive manner:

\begin{quote}
Very touching and sympathetic restoration!\textsuperscript{718}
Thank you for preserving the heart and soul of the Romantics for the Romantics amongst us. Thank you Keats!\textsuperscript{719}
\end{quote}

Others appear to support Payling’s view that many come to the house as pilgrims: as one visitor commented in April 2006, ‘A long pilgrimage comes to its end. His words have never left me and shall never.’\textsuperscript{720}

More than the managers of the other houses considered in this thesis, those responsible for the KSMH have used their curatorship of objects and spaces not only to solidify, but also to create associations between the site and the writers. They have successfully established the KSMH as the pre-eminent centre in Rome for Keats and Shelley, in particular, and for Romantic literature in general. Since its inception the interpretation at the KSMH has remained constant, with Keats and his death as the central focus. A relevant further factor here may be its political and financial autonomy: the KSMH has income streams - such as legacies and rents from the other apartments in the building - which have remained constant

\textsuperscript{716} Author’s observation of anonymous visitor Keats House, 19th August 2005.
\textsuperscript{717} Catherine Payling, Curator, Keats-Shelley Memorial House, interview by James Pardoe, KSMH, 12th July 2005. Author’s observations during research visits, 12th July 2005 and 10th July 2006.
since it was opened to the public in 1909. Even when a downturn in income led to financial
difficulties in terms of running the house, it had minimal curatorial impact.

Piazza di Spagna 26 is no stately home set within parkland such as Newstead, nor an
architectural creation of a great writer such as Abbotsford is, and yet, even an ordinary
apartment, where one of the associated writers lived for such a brief period and within which
he happened to die, can give the visitor a memorable and moving experience. That experience
does appear to be related to visitors’ prior knowledge of Keats, Shelley, the other Romantics
and their works, but it nonetheless demonstrates the power of place in the imagination.721

Conclusions

In offering these examples of literary museums emphasis has centred on the motivations of
the owners of each house. Neither of these two houses was publicly associated with Keats
and Shelley immediately after they died. In addition, there is no evidence of widespread visits
to these houses as the main destination sites of the writers before they were taken over and
formally curated by organisations. Although limited awareness of their significance
remained, few people are recorded as going inside the houses. Thus, when they were opened
as ‘literary houses’, neither had collections directly connected to Keats’s brief time in each.
Research into Keats House and the KSMH shows that both sites have witnessed changes in
ownership, structural alterations and the dispersal of associated objects since they were
occupied by Keats. Despite this, the various owners and visitors to the houses, consider both
to be important in understanding the lives and works of Keats, and in one case that of Shelley
as well. Unlike Abbotsford and Newstead, where Scott and Byron’s own descriptions of their
associated houses are accessible, there is no evidence of Keats’s emotional attachment to

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721 A high proportion of visitors to KSMH do have extensive knowledge of the Romantic poets, Catherine
either site. Both houses are, in essence, memorials to the writers with any sensory markers being created nearly a century after the writers’ deaths.

In the twenty-first century Keats House is presented as being significant as the place of Keats’s most important literary works, and as a distinctive site for meaningful phases of his biography. The KSMH’s interpretation is focused on two elements of memorialisation: the ‘tragic death’ narrative of both writers - with an emphasis on Keats - and as a major site for Romantic literature in Italy. These illustrations of the two writers have developed as a result of long histories of changing narratives.

In an attempt to establish a link to the writers, sensory markers have been accumulated and created at both houses. At Keats House these spaces and markers have undergone a number of changes, due to different owners, and different themes have been given greater or lesser emphasis at different stages of the house’s history. An understanding of this history is therefore required. A major part of the KSMH’s success has been its reliance on visitors being able to ‘read’ the house’s significance in relation to the death of Keats, and also its success as a centre of literary study. Again, to understand how this has been achieved an analysis of the history of the house is required.

Both Keats House and the KSMH, demonstrate Hendrix’s notions of memorialisation as a ‘portal’ to a writer’s life and work. They also reflect Marsh’s focus on the use of sensory markers in order to evoke and reproduce events in the life of Keats. Butler’s forms can be acknowledged, particularly where homage is paid to both locations: as a site of literary production for Keats House, and as places where notable biographical events took place for both houses. The suggestions of Busby and Klug that many of these types of site are re-interpreted by others and Herbert’s work which highlights literary places as conduits to the past can also be applied to these cases.
However, a greater significance for the findings of the research into these two houses is achieved when analysing them within the wider debates surrounding the establishment of authenticity and its impact on visitor motivation and expectation. A major focus of the interpretation of the writers at both houses is based upon the perception of the curators that an ‘aura’ of the writers - especially of Keats - can be experienced therein. At the KSMH the curator, Catherine Payling, has an in-depth knowledge of the Romantic poets and the narratives surrounding their lives and works. She is particularly a scholar of Keats and maintains that the main attraction of the house is its ‘aura’, specifically activated by the space where Keats died.

A counter argument is that Payling’s proximity to the subject is such that she, too, ‘reads’ the house in a way as to experience an ‘aura’ of Keats at the house for herself. Additionally, to enhance the ‘aura’ of Keats at the house a reproduction bed was placed in Keats’s bedroom in 2003 - like at Newstead, a tacit acknowledgement that the ‘aura’ may require something more than spaces once occupied by the writer to help visitors to experience it. The example of the KSMH also supports the theories advanced by Latour and Lowe that aura of a subject from the past is not inherent in the spaces once occupied by that subject or objects once used by them, since at the KSMH most objects are reproductions and Shelley never went inside the building. Evidently at the KSMH, and as proposed by Latour and Lowe, ‘aura’ is experienced through an emotional response encouraged by the presentation but also dependent upon the viewer’s expectations.

The study of Keats House brings this point into sharper focus. Examples can be seen with the conscious effort to reproduce the external look of the building as it was in Keats’s time. This created a situation enabling visitors to experience an environment of a similar nature to that Keats experienced when writing *Ode to a Nightingale*. This continues inside the house where, for example, the sitting room has been filled with sensory markers to replicate an event in
Keats’s life so that visitors may encounter his ‘spirit’. In addition, from the 1970s Camden Council included a number of replicas and reproductions, such as Keats’s ‘tent-bed’, to achieve a closer link to the writer. However, an analysis of the perceptions of the officers responsible for Keats House in the twenty-first century leads to other conclusions. In this context, Healey implicitly acknowledged Latour and Lowe’s standpoint when she noted that many visitors require prompts to gain a connection with Keats: ‘A lot of visitors, who don’t have a strong attachment to Keats, want to know why we don’t have more of his belongings here and why can we justify opening as Keats House because it is not exactly as it was.’

Similarly Shaw observed that more was required to enable visitors to gain a clear understanding of Keats: ‘…people do not like to visit empty rooms, [so] we had a policy of furnishing them with furniture from the period. We also, where possible, included objects with a direct link to Keats, such as Leigh Hunt’s table - which Keats may have sat at.’

Keats House and the KSMH show signs of being turned into monuments manipulated to physically express particular narratives. This was carried out at a time completely divorced from any direct association between the writers and the houses. Both Keats House and the KSMH reflect Hendrix’s ideas and show the interpretation and appropriations of the later generations who continued and perpetuated their existence. At both houses, although the owners hoped to create an ‘aura’ of Keats - and at the KSMH to a lesser extent of Shelley - based on episodes from their lives, it is the audience which ultimately creates the ‘aura’. This is an aura which is derived from two centuries of biographical publication and image-making. In both houses the continuing importance of ensuring healthy visitor numbers has meant that meeting visitor expectations has been a central objective for their interpretation.

CONCLUSION

Analysis arising from my research confirms a range of points already covered in the literature but takes the study of literary houses in a new direction in several ways. What my research into these four houses shows is that the link between the writers and the audiences is less important than the link between audiences and those responsible for the houses since their adoption as literary destinations. The legacy of each of the writers is filtered through those who are, and have been, responsible for the houses: in my shorthand, the ‘owners’. The result of this filtration process has been found to be dependent upon the notion of ‘aura’, which is itself dependent on which narrative is fashionable at any given time according to what the owners wish to legitimise and what visitor expectations are. These different layers of narrative and expectation - and the interaction between the two - in turn have their own legacy. The histories of the houses are therefore critical in understanding how each of the writers are interpreted and viewed at each of these sites.

Although the four houses chosen for this thesis have much in common, a number of differences can be identified, not least resulting from their respective histories over the past two centuries. The ties attaching Abbotsford and Newstead to their respective writers were strong, while at Keats House and the KSMH they were limited. Scott was linked to the Borders area from his early childhood (in 1773 when he was aged two) and through family ties. These associations were cemented through his legal and administrative role (from 1799) when he also began to produce some of his important literary works. He strengthened his connections to the area by setting up a permanent home from 1804. When he bought, named and built up his house and estate from 1811 Abbotsford gradually became a focus for historical references linking Scott, his family and Scottish national history. It also became a vehicle for his literary works and Scott designed the layout of the house to act as a visitor
destination. All these elements could be sourced through Scott’s Journal, his letters, Reliquiae Trotcosienses, and through the thoughts of his contemporaries.

Newstead undoubtedly played a role in Byron’s life, both whilst he owned the estate and after its sale in 1817. It stood as a symbol for his long line of aristocratic ancestors, and it was the subject of his letters and verse from 1803 until 1823, particularly On leaving Newstead Abbey (1803), to Elegy on Newstead Abbey, The Adieu and To an Oak at Newstead (all 1807) and Newstead Abbey (1811). These works have been interpreted both as examples of Byron’s attachment to his home and as valuable sources that describe the house during his residence. However, the most extensive descriptions of Newstead occur in Cantos 13 and 16 of Don Juan (1823), although it has been argued that these verses are evidence of regret at the sale of Newstead and have also been used as sources to describe Byron’s house.

In contrast, although there is no denying Keats wrote some of his finest works while living at Keats House, there are no sources to suggest he had any particular attachment to the house, and it is not the subject of any of his verse. In Rome Keats did not produce any literary works and, as far as is known, Shelley was not familiar with the building with which he is now linked. Instead, all attachments to these sites were proposed by posthumous narratives advocated by others. We are dealing, therefore, with four houses whose links to their writers differed significantly and where issues of authenticity, aura and interpretation have to be addressed in different contexts.

The unbroken narratives at Abbotsford and Newstead have enabled both owners and visitors to discover authentic ‘Scott’ and ‘Byron’ houses while the disjointed histories of Keats House and the KSMH have resulted in the need for ‘reproduced’ narratives and artefacts. In both sites, sensory markers are deployed to authenticate links to Keats and Shelley. By contrast, we find sensory markers at Abbotsford and Newstead which have been in place since the
writers’ time. For example, the public rooms at Abbotsford have largely remained intact with objects such as Scott’s iconic desk and chair remaining in place in his Study and artefacts relating to Scottish history in the Entrance Hall; at Newstead the Byron Relics can be seen in the house, some, such as his bed, in the places where Byron used them, albeit in an adapted form, and others such as the paintings of his dogs now found in the house but in different locations from where they were reputedly hung by Byron. However, the sensory markers encountered at Keats House, now include a new external decorative scheme and the aligning of a new path to follow the route to the entrance of the house which would have been used by Keats. The aim is to create a link with the environment where Keats composed *Ode to a Nightingale*. Inside, original life and death masks, an inkstand and writing desk trigger narratives of Keats’s life at the house, his literary production and the onset of his terminal illness. At the KSMH the markers all relate to the atmosphere of the locality surrounding the Spanish Steps, with specific reference being made to what Keats may have heard from outside, for example the Barcaccia fountain. The death narrative is demonstrated through Severn’s death-bed portrait of Keats above the 1820s ‘boat-bed’ (purchased in 2003) representing Keats’s own bed, and a print of the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. The death narrative continues through the display of an alabaster urn containing a fragment of Shelley’s jawbone taken from his cremation. Physical links to the two writers are provided through locks of their hair.

It is important to recognise that all four houses are more than simply literary houses. Throughout its history Abbotsford has had to manage a dual role as a literary destination and a house representing a Scottish history. Newstead is important for its long history from medieval times and as an example of Gothick architecture, as well as for its association with Byron. Keats House and the KSMH are now active study and creative centres, outwith their links to Keats and Shelley. However, if we focus on the purely literary associations of the
houses a number of comparisons can be made. Abbotsford, Newstead and Keats House were all sites of literary production, and all four houses are important sites for the interpretation and display of literary objects, themes and histories.

At Abbotsford, the impact of this post-writer history can be seen in the fact that despite an enduring emphasis by the owners and some visitors on the ability to recognise Scott’s house physically frozen in time at the point of his death, what resulted from the period between 1832 and 2004 quite openly challenges this assertion. The physical evidence of Scott’s house was replaced by a co-produced representation, in that Abbotsford developed from a symbolic form of Scott’s self-portrayal to an image fashioned by the interaction of the subsequent owners and visitors.

At Newstead, the survival, conservation and reproduction of the ‘Byron elements’ over the approximate 200 year history of the post-Byron house has generated a range of competing responses surrounding the make-up of the house as a Byron literary site. The majority of responses to Newstead since Byron sold the house in 1817 have questioned how much of Byron could be experienced at the house. A key, and highly contested, question raised therefore has been whether Newstead was, and is, Byron’s House or a Byronic House. This thesis has shown that despite the possibility of evidencing a substantial Byron house, this could only be achieved by metaphorically peeling back the layers of the Byronic House, and it is the latter which is the reality in the twenty-first century. In addition Newstead, both as a private house and as part of a museum service, has had another story to tell in response to the need to have wider appeal. This is the story which focuses on the whole 850 year history of Newstead, including its life as a monastic conversion and as a High-Victorian country estate.

With Keats House and the KSMH, to be able to analyse the ways in which they became recognised, adopted and adapted as representations of Keats and Shelley, it is important to examine the construction of the status of the two writers. Once the houses were ‘created’ as
literary destinations they then established histories of their own, divorced from Keats’s and Shelley’s own experiences at these sites. It is the culmination of these histories which are presented today.

This study shows that the post-writer histories at each of the houses were influenced by visitor expectations, which in turn were fashioned by these visitors experiencing the spirit of the writers and a sense of place. This is linked to discussions surrounding how current curators perceive aura to be intrinsic to the sites, whereas analysis leads to the conclusion that this is actually dependent upon visitors’ expectations. The curators - Wright at Abbotsford, Jackson at Newstead, Healey at Keats House and Payling at the KSMH - all bring this spirit of the associated writers into their interpretation of the houses in that this sense of place is within their own experience and expectation. This is because each of these curators has reference points which are extremely well informed in relation to the associations of the writers at these houses. This underlines Marsh’s point that if the writers’ personalities, lives and works - and what influenced them - are known, then imitations can be evoked by sensory markers. Hence at Abbotsford, Wright constantly referred to how much of the house was original and authentic to Scott, enabling an evocation of what he experienced at this site. At Newstead, Jackson made the point that by analysing Byron’s handwriting on his original works - which are on display at the house - an insight into Byron’s thoughts at the time can be gained. With Keats House and the KSMH, for Healey and Payling an experience of authenticity is achieved through a sense of place which is evoked through a reproduction of events in the life of Keats, for example at Keats House the replication of the *Ode to a Nightingale* garden border, and at the KSMH the daisies painted on the ceiling of Keats’s bedroom and the replica bed.

Owner motivation during the post-writer histories of the houses was also influenced by economic factors. These were linked to prevailing visitor expectations. At Keats House from
1925, Newstead from 1931, and Abbotsford since 2004, examples can be found of the owners having to adapt their narratives and interpretation to make their houses more popular to a wider selection of visitors. However, even for the owners of Abbotsford and Newstead, prior to 2004 and 1931 respectively, and at the KSMH from 1909, when income was not a prerequisite for attracting audiences, their motivations were: at Abbotsford a sense of duty to make available Scott’s significant legacy to the public; at Newstead as reverence for Byron and to enhance the family’s status as part of a neo-feudal political statement; and at the KSMH to act as guardians of the building, the writers’ memory and their connections to Italy. Therefore, even though the reasons for appealing to visitors changed over time, visitor expectation was influential in how the writers were presented.

One of the most noticeable conclusions reached by a study of these four houses is that a new perspective on Abbotsford and Newstead may be postulated, with greater emphasis than hitherto on the impact of owners and visitors in the post-writer period. Additionally, Keats House and the KSMH may legitimately be used as case studies within the boundaries of this discourse. In the case of the latter two houses they have been studied in this way for the first time. New levels of complexity have also been provided for the study of literary houses in general. We have seen that the post-writer history of the houses is very important for their interpretation, as is the filter of owner-visitor interaction between the house and the writer. This investigation has also brought to light an example of how Latour and Lowe’s rejection of Benjamin’s theory on aura is sustainable.

My research has found that each of the four houses is different in terms of its meaning to the writer, its intrinsic merit beyond the writer, its subsequent ownership and presentation history and its funding context. Nevertheless, key similarities between them can be determined: the post-writer history still impacts today, visitor expectations over time have shaped current presentation, and visitors seek ‘aura’, whether or not there are physical remains associated
with the writer. However, this aura is dependent on whether the houses in the twenty-first century can ‘speak’ to their audiences. As the works of these writers are read less and less then the owners need to adapt their language to one which is within the visitors’ experience. Failure to do so will ultimately lead to the failure of the houses as heritage destinations in the twenty-first century.
Figure 1. Location of Abbotsford. Two miles south west of Melrose in the Scottish Borders.

Figure 2. Abbotsford. An example of Scottish baronial style. View of South Court with main entrance through the stone porch in the centre.
Figure 3. Plan of Abbotsford after Scott’s works post-1825. Present position of Shakespeare’s bust marked by the letter ‘A’.

Figure 4. Abbotsford. Entrance Hall. Arranged to impress visitors, this room included many antiquarian features, such as a cannon ball from the siege of Roxburgh castle (1460), shown next to the fireplace in the foreground. A view of Scott’s Study can be seen through the open door. The Roman camp kettle is placed between the chairs and side table.
Figure 5. Abbotsford. Byron Urn as shown in 2007 guidebook. Placed on porphyry table in Library. The table was designed and made to display the Urn.

Figure 6. Abbotsford. Library East End. The niche where the bust of Shakespeare was positioned in Scott’s time is now filled by a bust of Scott. In the foreground is Scott’s four-sloped reading desk as noted by Crockett in 1905.
Figure 7. Abbotsford. Study. Doorway to Scott’s private quarters.

Figure 8. Abbotsford. Study. Scott’s writing desk and chair are in the foreground. These are facing the doorway to the Entrance Hall. When the door was closed Scott could shut himself away from the ‘public’ areas of the house.
Figure 10. 1897 Plan of Abbotsford. The expansion of the house in the 1850s can be identified and the private and public parts of the house are clearly shown, including the visitor entrance.
Figure 11. Drawing of Abbotsford taken from the title page of Lockhart’s biography of Scott. Illustrations of Abbotsford were frequently used in portrayals of Scott.

Figure 12. Abbotsford. Bronze death mask of Scott. Placed in small turret room known as the “Speak-a-bit” in the south east corner of the Study.
Figure 13. Abbotsford. The changing position of the Byron Urn. Here shown on the sideboard in the Dining-Room.

Figure 14. Abbotsford Drawing-Room. Cabinet without the Byron Urn.
Figure 15. Abbotsford Drawing-Room. Cabinet with the Byron Urn.

Figure 16. Abbotsford. Dining-Room. The window alcove where Scott died. The room reverted to a dining area for the family and was incorporated into the private part of the house.
Figure 17. Abbotsford. Contents of Scott’s writing desk as displayed at least since 1905.

Figure 18. Abbotsford Library. Hardie’s painting of the 15-year old Scott meeting Burns.
Figure 19. Newstead. Ground Floor Plan showing the evolution of the house from the late twelfth century to the early twentieth century. The areas marked in brown were developed after Byron sold Newstead.

Figure 20. Newstead. First Floor Plan showing the evolution of the house from the late twelfth century to the early twentieth century. The areas marked in brown and blue were developed after Byron sold Newstead.
Figure 21. Newstead. Cloister Garth. The upper floor was built by the Byron family as part of their conversion of the Priory to a house. The ornate fountain in the centre of the picture was removed from the forecourt and placed here by Wildman.

Figure 22. Newstead. Byron’s Bedroom showing the bed he brought from Trinity College. The bed was cut down by Wildman after he had the ceiling lowered.
Figure 23. Newstead. Virgin and Child in gable niche of Priory church façade as described by Byron in *Don Juan*.

Figure 24. Newstead. View of west front by John Coney, 1820. This is how the house would have looked during Byron’s ownership.
Figure 25. Newstead. View of west front by Waterlow, 1859. By this date the house had been extensively re-designed by Wildman. Note the fountain in the forecourt has been removed, the entrance is now at ground floor level, and the Sussex Tower has been added (to the right of the picture).

Figure 26. Newstead. Cloister Garth in the early nineteenth century. Note the lack of the ornate fountain in the centre of the courtyard.
Figure 27. Newstead. The Chapel with Gothic decorations dating to the Webb period.

Figure 28. Newstead. Byron’s Study. The round table is the one at which, according to Wildman, Byron wrote *Childe Harold*. 
Figure 29. Newstead. Phillips Portrait of Byron c.1813.

Figure 30. Newstead. Great Hall decorated in Gothic style by Wildman. This was the architectural epitome of Wildman’s politics.
Figure 31. Newstead. The Great Hall c.1870s. Although the hunting trophies are a Webb addition, the panelling, suits of armour, and banners date to Wildman’s period. To the right of the fireplace mailed arms, extended, holding candelabras (as described by Hawthorne) can be seen at the top of the panelling. This photograph formed part of the 1981 Gatty Gift.

Figure 32. Newstead. Watercolour of the Library dating to the 1850s. This formed part of a group of twenty-five watercolour views of the interior of the house and gardens. It was used as a basis for the restoration project of 1988.
Figure 33. Newstead. The Library post-1988 restoration. This room houses part of the Byron collection and was restored using photographs from the 1981 Gatty Gift and the 1850s watercolour (see figure 32). It includes some of the more important Byron objects such as the ‘Byron Helmet’ and his wedding ring.

Figure 34. Newstead. Byron’s Dining-Room as displayed in the twenty-first century. This represents the room as it looked during Byron’s period of residence.
Figure 35. Newstead. The Salon (Wildman’s Great Drawing Room) displayed in nineteenth-century style.

Figure 36. Keats House. North elevation of Wentworth Place in 1815 (showing 1839 extension).
Figure 37. Keats House. Plan drawn by Charlotte Brandon-Jones for the 1980 guidebook. The Ground Floor Plan shows the split between the Brawne side of the house, and the Brown-Keats areas. The Eliza Chester extension is also shown.
Figure 38. Keats House. Keats Listening to the Nightingale on Hampstead Heath by Joseph Severn (painted c.1845). Keats House is nowhere in sight for the representation of this iconic moment.

Figure 39. Keats House. Royal Society of Arts plaque to Keats. Erected 1895.
Figure 40. Keats House. North View of Keats House in the 1920s.

Figure 41. Keats House. Locket containing a lock of Keats’s hair. Part of the Dilke Collection.
Figure 42 (above). Keats House. The Keats Sitting-Room. Note the position of the two chairs in the foreground which matches those depicted in Figure 43.

Figure 43. Keats House. Portrait of Keats in the Sitting-Room at Wentworth Place by Joseph Severn.
Figure 44. Keats House. Gold Brooch in the form of a Greek lyre, with strings made from Keats’s hair.

Figure 45. Keats House. Keats’s Inkstand.
Figure 46. Keats House. The Chester Room. A portrait of Eliza Chester hangs on the far wall and specially designed display cases can be seen to the left and right of the photograph.

Figure 47. Keats House. Brown’s Sitting-Room with ‘sopha-bed’ which overlooks the garden. An information panel can be seen on the wall next to the door.
Figure 48. Keats House. Brown’s Bedroom.

Figure 49. Keats House. Keats’s Bedroom.
Figure 50. Keats House. Entrance Gate. Keats House is a place easy to miss.

Figure 51. Keats House. North View. Note the accessible pathway made from York stone.
Figure 52. KSMH. Piazza di Spagna and the Barcaccia, engraving by G.B. Falda.

Figure 53. KSMH. KSMH and the Barcaccia, 1935.
Figure 54. KSMH. Portrait of Keats on his death-bed by Severn, 1821.

Figure 55. KSMH. Exterior of the house, c.1909.
Figure 56. KSMH. The Salone in 2005. The bookcases, curtains and chandeliers represent an early twentieth-century idea of a Victorian library.

Figure 57. KSMH. Locks of hair of Shelley, Keats and Leigh Hunt. KSMH Collection.
The house today consists of four ‘modest’ rooms.

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<tr>
<th>The Terrace Room</th>
<th>The Salone</th>
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<td>The lives of Shelley and Byron</td>
<td>The posthumous reputations of Keats, Shelley and Byron</td>
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Keats-Shelley House Floor Plan

Entrance

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<th>The Keats Room</th>
<th>The Severn Room</th>
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<td>Keats’s last days in Rome</td>
<td>The life of John Keats</td>
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Figure 59. KSMH. The house in 2003 following refurbishments. The red banner on the side wall announces the Centenary of the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association.
Figure 60. KSMH. The Keats Room. The case holds Keats’s death mask by Gherardi and the daisies on the ceiling are just visible at the top of the picture.
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