Detangling Hairwork: A Study of Victorian Mourning Practices

by

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Abstract

During the Victorian Era, it was common for women to use hair from loved ones to create intricate pieces of jewelry and art, particularly for mourning mementos. This thesis endeavoured to answer the research question: "What can an object analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece tell us about Victorian mourning practices?" through an object analysis of a hair bracelet located in the Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (ALCTC). I used Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim's object-based research methodology and drew on three artifacts in external collections and three primary text sources: *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1830 to 1890, Mark Campbell's 1867 *Self-Instruction in the Art of Hair Work, Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, Braids, and Hair Jewelry of Every Description*, and Alexandra Speight's 1871 *The Lock of Hair: Its History, Ancient and Modern, Natural and Artistic.* The ALCTC hair bracelet analysis produced a number of conclusions: the object was handmade, its structure lends itself to frequent use, based on other jewelry surveyed and the plaiting techniques, the bracelet was likely made and worn between 1849 and 1863, and it was worn as a mourning or fashion piece. The popularity of mourning jewelry led to an industry of makers who specialized in hairwork and contributed to mourning jewelry evolving into a fashion object. Hair bracelets were considered a second or half mourning custom in 1849 to 1850 but merged into fashionable attire by 1858. Hair bracelets began waning in popularity in 1863, and, by 1871, hair jewelry was being advertised primarily as fashionable accessories rather than mourning jewelry. The research question, which was rooted in mourning practices, thus pivoted to suggest a shift in the use of hair jewelry and may suggest that the growth observed in the popularity of hairwork after the 1861 death of Prince Albert could correspond to the rise of hair jewelry as fashion objects.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Emma Carr. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Today we relish the fact that hair, as a part of one's body, can be modified daily and changed by fashion. What is less familiar to us is the fact that, severed from the body, hair is a type of material that can be made into a variety of culturally-significant artifacts. For those living in Victorian[1] England, hair was a familiar material used to create an array of objects, including body adornments. Victorians' lives—especially those of many women of different social classes—were dictated by a variety of societal customs and etiquette conventions. How Victorians engaged with death was no exception. For both the dead and those left behind, Victorians had highly developed object-based rituals, participated in by all social classes to some extent. One specific mourning practice, the art of creating jewelry from the hair of deceased loved ones, is the focus for this thesis. I pose the question: "What can an object analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece tell us about Victorian mourning practices?"

Though social norms and traditions are more fluid than periodization can account for, this research focuses on one aspect of the material culture of death, mourning hair jewelry, during the Victorian Era: an expression that is typically used to designate the years 1837 to 1901 in which Queen Victoria reigned. I focus primarily on the period from 1830 to 1890. The English-language sources I use to contextualize hairwork nonetheless cover over a century and are situated within the borders of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Objects made of hair and, more specifically mourning jewelry, have a long history that, within the confines of a master's thesis, will only be partially addressed. "Hairwork" (i.e., making objects

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[1] In this thesis, the term "Victorian" will refer to people in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America who lived during the Victorian Era. Oxford English Dictionary, "Victorian," accessed September 2, 2024, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/victorian_adj2.

with hair as a medium) was challenging work as it required tools, specialized knowledge, time, and the ability to tackle a difficult medium, yet it was typically undertaken by women in the upper echelons of society.[2] While the practice of hairwork can be defined as "the making of wigs, switches, and other articles from hair,"[3] a broader definition also places the focus away from the sartorial subterfuge behind objects like wigs to concentrate on the medium itself. In this thesis, the term hairwork will be used to address objects made of hair, and the research focuses on Victorian mourning hair jewelry between 1830 and 1890.

For my research, I further explore "articles made of hair" and conduct an object analysis of one specific hairwork artifact found in the University of Alberta's Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (ALCTC). I focus on a hairwork bracelet (Figure 1) that was not accompanied by a date, but likely dates from the Victorian Era. Its form and medium make it an ideal focus to help answer my research question. As the popularity of mourning jewelry reached its peak between the 1850s and 1880s,[4] this object is likely within the time period where hairwork, within a dress practice perspective, has been most discussed. To help me understand this object, I draw on three other hair artifacts with greater depth: two necklaces located in the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and a pair of earrings located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET). These additional objects do not lead to the same kind of in-depth object analysis that will be conducted on the bracelet. To conduct the one in-depth object analysis, I am relying primarily on Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim's expansion on Jules Prown's object analysis methodology. As part of the object analysis, I draw from three select primary sources to aid in

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[2] Shu-chuan Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair: Hair Jewellery and Ornamental Handiwork in Victorian Britain," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 12, no. 2 (May 4, 2019): 125, https://doi.org/10.1080/17496772.2019.1620429.

[3] *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "hairwork (*n.*)," accessed October 17, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hairwork.

[4] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124.

answering my research question: *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1830 to 1890, Mark Campbell's

1867 *Self-Instruction in the Art of Hair Work, Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, Braids,*

and Hair Jewelry of Every Description and Alexandra Speight's 1871 *The Lock of Hair: Its*

History, Ancient and Modern, Natural and Artistic. Through an in-depth material culture

analysis of one specific artifact and aiming to help contextualize the bracelet with other hairwork

artifacts and primary sources, I hope to better understand the use of hairwork in Victorian

mourning practices.

Figure 1. *Hair Bracelet*, second half of the nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and
Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

The seminal text for conducting an object analysis in material culture studies comes from art historian Jules Prown's 1982 article, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," which explains and considers material culture as an interdisciplinary field and proposes a methodology for actively using artifacts as evidence and as primary data. Thirty-three years later, dress historians Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim published their book, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion,* which built upon Prown's initial work. The following section will briefly explore material culture, address the concept of reading objects, explore the specific focus on historical fashion objects, and explain how Prown's work has been inspired by some and built upon by others, including cultural historian Ian Fleming, fashion scholar Valerie Steele, and Mida and Kim.

Within his fundamental article, Prown defines material culture as "the study through artifacts of the beliefs—values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular time."[5] Prown argues that material culture is important in part due to the inherent and attached value of an object. The inherent value is the value given to the material that an object is made out of, while the attached value is the value placed on an object by the people who made or used it.[6] Prown's concept of values is particularly important to my research as the material for mourning jewelry (human hair) and the jewelry itself both have significant inherent and attached value, but other thinkers have also broadened Prown's approach.

Ian Woodward, a scholar who specializes in material culture and consumption, echoes Prown's thoughts on material culture in *Understanding Material Culture* and describes two characteristics that "define the contemporary field": the premise that objects matter and, in his

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[5] Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (April 1982): 1, https://doi.org/10.1086/496065.
[6] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 3.

opinion, the assertion that objects have social lives.[7] A crucial tenet of a material culture outlook is that objects matter. This is important "because [objects] are involved in social representation or symbolism, and are recognised as containing important meanings for social actions."[8] Woodward explains that objects have a life and history outside of their time with us and go through many definitions and phases of their lives. As Prown and Woodward explain, object-based research, like the type I am undertaking for this thesis, hinges on the acceptance that objects can be "read" and will communicate information otherwise missed.[9]

The object analysis methodology Prown proposed is the linchpin of the modern-day material culture field and, since its publication in the *Winterthur Portfolio* in 1982, many scholars in the field have built on and expanded upon Prown's approach, which consists of three phases: Description, Deduction, and Speculation. Prown drew inspiration from cultural historian E. McClung Fleming's work published in 1974 titled "Artifact Study: A Proposed Method." In this work, Fleming puts forth the concept of a model that "utilizes two conceptual tools" consisting of "a fivefold classification of the basic properties of an artifact and a set of four operations."[10] Fleming's model requires that specific questions be asked about an object's provenance and function(s), which allows for a deeper exploration and insights into an object's role in its original era and invites other scholars to explore the ramifications of his approach.[11]

Steele builds on both Prown's and Fleming's work in her 1998 article "A Museum of Fashion is More Than a Clothes Bag." Whereas Prown and Fleming concentrate on all objects, Steele narrows in the scope to dress. It should be noted that although Steele and predecessors do

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[7] Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007), 27, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446278987.

[8] Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 28.

[9] Valerie Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," *Fashion Theory* 2, no. 4 (November 1998): 329, https://doi.org/10.2752/136270498779476109.

[10] E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 154.

[11] Fleming, "Artifact Study," 156.

not explicitly discuss jewelry, the term dress, in this instance, encompasses all forms of bodily adornment.[12] This quintessential article adapts the methodology developed by Prown, who taught Steele, to the field of fashion history.[13] Considered to be "one of the first fashion scholars to adapt Prown's methodology for the study of dress artifacts,"[14] Steele argues that "of all the methodologies used to study fashion history, one of the most valuable is the interpretation of objects."[15] While Prown's description of his object analysis approach resides primarily in the theoretical, Steele recounts her experience learning and subsequently teaching the methodology to other students and provides a more tangible and applicable description of object analysis.

Prown, Fleming, and Steele's work in object-based research were built on in Mida and Kim's 2015 book *Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion,* which I use to conduct my research. Their "practice-based framework for conducting object-based research in dress"[16] expands on Prown and Steele's work to create a standardized, "singular framework that offers a clear and systemic approach to the study of dress artifacts," which, according to Mida and Kim, was previously absent.[17] Their methodology is meant to assist in unlocking the "narrative embedded" in each artifact, "illuminate its cultural context, or answer a specific research question" and is structured slightly differently, in addition to having two checklists.[18] Like Prown's model, Mida and Kim propose three phases:

> Observation: Capturing the information from the dress artifact
> Reflection: Considering embodied experience and contextual material
> Interpretation: Linking the observations and reflections to theory.[19]

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[12] Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion* (London New Delhi New York Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 18.
[13] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 327.
[14] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 21.
[15] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 327.
[16] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 27.
[17] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 22.
[18] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 27.
[19] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 27.

While Prown refers to the steps of object analysis as "stages," for clarity from this point on I will borrow Mida and Kim's term, "phases," when discussing both Prown and Mida and Kim's object analysis steps.

Mida and Kim explain how, when a piece of clothing is worn either on or in close relation to the body, "the actions of the body become imbued in the cloth" or material.[20] Their phases consider how dress, including jewelry, differs from other objects that cannot be worn on or near the body. The third phase, Interpretation, allows for greater exploration and interpretation of all findings using other sources. I rely on guidebooks regarding hairwork from 1867 and 1871 and issues of *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1830 to 1890 and I incorporate knowledge from these primary sources to further my findings and discover the "narrative embedded" in the bracelet.[21] The specifics of each phase of my analysis will be explored further in the methodology chapter.

For my research, Mida and Kim's methodology of object-based research with its checklists is the most appropriate as it is specifically adapted to dress, unlike Prown and Fleming's methods, and provides better structure and guidance than Steele's adaptation of object analysis to dress. I use the "Checklist for Observation" and "Checklist for Reflection" provided in *The Dress Detective* but have adapted their framework to the nature of mourning jewelry and to address issues of positionality in my research.

Positionality

In line with the University of Alberta's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion commitment, it is important to me that I acknowledge my position as a researcher. The parameters of my sources

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[20] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 27.
[21] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 27.

and the artifacts I access also make me aware that race is a less explicitly described component of the research. Exploring positionality makes me ask: whose hair is being valued during the Victorian Era and how does this impact the suppliers, makers, and users of hairwork objects? My understanding of my sources is rooted in the fact that I am a Caucasian woman living in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, on Treaty 6 territory, "a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others."[22] My own hair is brown, smooth, and slightly wavy. My hair texture can be considered easy and optimal to use for hair art. Nonetheless, other twenty-first-century researchers with curlier or coarser hair textures would not have the same experience valuing their own hair and understanding its commodification in a Victorian art form. I thus feel the need to address in a basic way how the Victorian hairwork I will study elevated and imposed Caucasian, Eurocentric racialized beauty standards.

The practice of hairwork is also linked to class. The English writer Thomas Adolphus Trollope (1810-1892), while on his French travels to Brittany in 1840, described the sight of peasant girls "sheared one after the other like sheep" to supply dealers in hair.[23] While young girls standing on a platform in the middle of the marketplace may have been willing participants in this trade, others were not.[24] Until the 1850s, it was customary for the hair of individuals in British "prisons, workhouses and hospitals" to be part of the hair trade.[25] Dire need was also frequently a motivation for selling one's own hair (or the hair of family members).[26] In contrast,

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[22] "Land Acknowledgements | Centre for Teaching and Learning," accessed October 17, 2023, https://www.ualberta.ca/centre-for-teaching-and-learning/teaching-support/indigenization/land-acknowledgements.html.

[23] Emma Tarlo, "The Secret History of Buying and Selling Hair," *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 4, 2016, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/secret-history-buying-and-selling-hair-180961080/.

[24] *Harper's Bazaar*, 1873, quoted in Tarlo, "The Secret History of Buying and Selling Hair."

[25] Tarlo, "The Secret History of Buying and Selling Hair."

[26] Alexanna Speight, *The Lock of Hair: Its History, Ancient and Modern, Natural and Artistic* (London: A. Goubaud & son, 1871), 53.

in Victorian England, it was primarily women of the upper classes with the luxury of time who were able to create art pieces with the valued medium of hair.[27] As a middle-class, twenty-first-century individual, my understanding of the conditions under which a person is willing or forced to sell their hair is lacking but this will not be the object of my study.

Lastly, this research focuses on a medium that I now recognize can be elevated to an art form but that others may not see as such, thus creating a bias. I always thought of myself as someone who was bad at art, until I realized art was not restricted to painting and drawing. Redefining art for myself to include sewing, quilting, knitting, crafting, wire sculpting, and plaiting, I quickly realized I had been enjoying creating art throughout my life. I attempted hairwork once during research for this project, and I have some relevant experience with wire sculpting and plaiting that informs my understanding of hairwork and shapes my understanding of the research.

Victorian mourning hairwork is an excellent topic to address as a human ecologist specializing in people-centered research and, more specifically, in clothing, textiles, and material culture. Bubolz and Sontag explain that the human ecological perspective is, at its core, "the human ecosystem: the reciprocal relations of individuals and families with their near environment."[28] My study thus addresses in its own way the interactions between humans and their environments. In this case, the environment is their near physical objects (mourning hair jewelry), the greater social system, and how they mutually influenced each other. While as a twenty-first-century, middle-class, Caucasian, young woman I may not fully understand issues

[27] Sallie McNamara, "Production and Practice: Hair Harvest, Hairpieces, and Hairwork," in *A Cultural History of Hair in the Age of the Empire*, ed. Sarah Heaton, vol. 5 (Bloomsbury, 2019), 75, https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat03710a&AN=alb.9448154&site=eds-live&scope=site.
[28] Margaret M. Bubolz and M. Suzanne Sontag, "Integration in Home Economics and Human Ecology," *Journal of Consumer Studies & Home Economics* 12, no. 1 (March 1988): 3, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.1988.tb00462.x.

that pertain to profound grief as well as Victorian art, race, and class structures, the multi-faceted

nature of hair objects retains an immense fascination that I wish to explore through a unique

medium and specific perspectives.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the state of knowledge on Victorian mourning customs and hair-made objects, a literature review is necessary. The present chapter is organized by themes pertaining to mourning jewelry and will address how each theme influenced the cultural and social practices of the Victorians. The focus of this thesis is mourning jewelry made with human hair and, as such, when the words "mourning jewelry" are used, it describes mourning jewelry made of hair. If a piece of jewelry or body decoration made to commemorate death incorporates other body parts, such as teeth or bones, it will be specified. The literature review will first provide context for Victorian hairwork and mourning jewelry. It will then address the materiality of hair, the communicative power of hair, how Victorian guidebooks discussed hairwork, shifting mourning practices, perceptions of femininity,[29] Victorian mourning practices, impact of social class on mourning customs, and the demise of mourning jewelry. Finally, the review will explore the interdisciplinary nature of sources, potential gaps in the literature, and how the research may fit and push boundaries of knowledge.

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[29]Femininity, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "behaviour or qualities regarded as characteristic of a woman; feminine quality or characteristics; womanliness" and used in a depreciative way is defined as "feminine quality or characteristics as considered undesirable." These qualities may be defined in contrast to behaviours and qualities regarded as masculine. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "femininity, (*n*.)," accessed May 29, 2023, https://www-oed-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/view/Entry/69190?redirectedFrom=Femininity.

Themes in the Literature

Hairwork and Mourning Practices

While my focus is mourning jewelry, there were other objects made with hair prior to the surge in popularity of mourning jewelry in the 1850s. Hair portraiture of different sizes, hair tokens, and other less common sculptures were popular ways of preserving hair in the first half of the nineteenth century.[30] For instance, a "collection of 'likenesses' of the Queen, Prince Albert, and the children" made of hair were shown at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851,[31] and "a full-length, life-size portrait of Queen Victoria made entirely of human hair" was shown at the Paris Exposition in 1855.[32] Hair jewelry was prominently featured in some major international exhibitions. Hairwork specimens include "a large vase composed of human hair" shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and a "tea set made from human hair" displayed at the New York Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1853.[33] Each form of hair art has its own story to tell and would best be further explored in future writings. After Prince Albert's death in 1861, Queen Victoria wore many items of jewelry containing or made of his hair, which are said to have helped expand the popularity of hairwork and mourning jewelry.[34] The steadfastness of hair art at multiple exhibitions during the 1850s and Queen Victoria's uses of mourning jewelry demonstrates the popularity of hair as a medium during the Victorian Era.

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[30] Elisabeth G. Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination," *PMLA* 99, no. 5 (1984): 942, https://doi.org/10.2307/462145.

[31] Sarah Heaton, ed., *A Cultural History of Hair in the Age of the Empire*, vol. 5 (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 157, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ualberta/detail.action?docID=6388601; Deborah Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, And Death Culture," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39, no. 1 (March 2011): 129, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150310000306.

[32] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942; Heaton, *A Cultural History of Hair*, 5:70.

[33] Heaton, *A Cultural History of Hair*, 5:70.

[34] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 126.

Prior to the sentimental turn of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, literary, art, and cultural historian Christiane Holm indicates that mourning jewelry was characterized by its monetary value and "represented the social status of the dead."[35] She indicates that, as mourning jewelry became more popular and commercialized, it changed from being a *memento mori* (Latin for "remember you must die") to being defined by its "intimate and emotional value" rather than its economic value (for example, the cost of production and the value to the buyer).[36] Prior to this change, *memento mori* "acted as a sobering reminder of common mortality."[37] In her article "Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewelry with Hair," Holm explains that the shift in meaning demonstrates a transformation of ideas towards life and death, with the focus of mourning changing from the dead's economic and social status to "mourners and their mourning," which aided in the marketing of mourning jewelry as a fashion accessory.[38] Rather than serving as a reminder of death, mourning jewelry came to represent the life of a loved one who has passed away for the Victorians.[39] Holm refers to mourning jewelry as "remembrance jewelry" throughout her article, emphasizing this change that occurred between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.[40] This potential shift in the way mourning jewelry was perceived and used at the beginning of the nineteenth century may have contributed to the upsurge in popularity of mourning jewelry in the 1850s and the subsequent market for makers and jewelers.

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[35] Christiane Holm, "Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewelry with Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 139, https://doi.org/10.1353/ecs.2004.0059.

[36] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 139.

[37] Arianne Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment: Mourning Jewelry in Britain in the Eighteenth Century," in *Women and the Material Culture of Death*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2013), 28, https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2014970319&site=eds-live&scope=site.

[38] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 139.

[39] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.

[40] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.

The transformation of mourning practices led to the commercialization of mourning jewelry, which, in turn, created an industry devoted to jewelry made with hair. By 1870, the London *Times* reported on the increase in hair importation when they noted that "11,954 chignons were exported from France to England during the past year."[41] This increase may be due to the fashionable hairstyles of the time which "necessitated the use of a variety of hairpieces," attachments, and hair curls.[42] The exportation of chignons, or a coil of hair, is just one aspect of the economic trade impacted by the commercialization of mourning jewelry, marketed in magazines and newspapers primarily towards middle and upper class women.[43] Victorian literature professor Deborah Lutz explains that "the London jeweller Antoni Forrer, the best-known professional hairworker mid-century, kept fifty workers employed at his Regent St. shop."[44] Such evidence enabled her to trace the popularity of mourning jewelry, which created a flourishing industry of jewelers who specialized in hairwork.[45]

While further discussion of the production of mourning jewelry will be undertaken in later sections, it is interesting to note that, for many in the period, including author Charles Dickens, the intersection of fashion and mourning dress could be deemed a self-serving and "commercialized" activity.[46] Nonetheless, Strange indicates that the intersection of fashion and mourning jewelry seems to have been viewed with more solemnity.[47] This state of affairs could perhaps be due to the deeply personal medium used in mourning jewelry. Even if the piece of hair jewelry was enhanced with beads and jewels, or if the donor of the hair was not deceased, its

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[41] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 67.
[42] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 65; Heaton, *A Cultural History of Hair*, 5:10.
[43] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 75.
[44] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 129.
[45] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 129.
[46] Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914*, Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511496080.
[47] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914*, 3.

deep link to the human body separated it from mainstream mourning dress. While mourning dress was a crucial part of the public image of the grieving widow, including the British monarch, mourning jewelry occupied a liminal space between public and private grieving as the medium, hair, was imbued with deep personal connections. In spite of this, mourning jewelry was not immune to becoming a fashion trend.

The Materiality of Hair

The popularity of mourning hair jewelry as a fashionable adornment for the body, rather than the use of hair devoid of personal connection, is said to have reached its peak from the 1850s to 1880s.[48] Such mourning jewelry came in many forms including bracelets, necklaces, broaches, wreaths, flowers, rings, earrings, and watch chains.[49] Shu-Chuan Yan's article "The Art of Working in Hair: Hair Jewellery and Ornamental Handiwork in Victorian Britain" explores hair jewelry as both "a material for memory" and "a popular ornamental object of fashionable consumption."[50] Yan, whose research focuses on Victorian culture and literature, explains that jewelry pieces were made of human hair taken from a loved one before or after their passing[51] and the works were often decorated with gold or gems.[52] Prior to the Victorian Era, mourning jewelry was typically made up of a simple lock of hair placed in a ring or necklace, but, with the sentimental turn in the early nineteenth century, the jewelry became increasingly sophisticated.[53] Women would follow elaborate patterns and use intricate plaiting and weaving techniques provided by instruction manuals to create mourning jewelry.[54] Drawing from primary and

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[48] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124. Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942.
[49] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124.
[50] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 123.
[51] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 127.
[52] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124; McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76.
[53] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[54] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.

secondary sources, Yan explains the purpose of mourning jewelry was "as a material remembrance of love, friendship, or familial affection, as a memento of the deceased, or as a decorative item worn for personal adornment."[55] Her analysis of mourning jewelry, drawn from "a variety of sources from the Victorian print media," provides concrete examples of Victorian women's "consumption of material things" and the proclivity of hairwork.[56]

Literary, gender, and material culture scholar Deborah Lutz asserts that mourning jewelry went beyond material consumption and acted as a kind of talisman or token, a relic of the dead and a reminder for the wearer of their loved ones' forever-lost physical body.[57] As a result, these hair-mourning objects may have gone beyond material consumption to enter the spiritual sphere. That being said, across time, a lot of objects have been sold to believers that also fit within a different kind of material consumption. Nonetheless, in her article "The Dead Still Among Us," Lutz states that "when the keepsake is collected from the dead, it's a synecdoche of that weight of flesh, that moment of death, preserved from its decay yet referring to it endlessly."[58] Drawing on contemporary literature, Lutz assesses novels and poems from Alfred Tennyson, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, the Brontë sisters, and others to identify the importance of materiality in Victorian death culture. Lutz's work addresses how hair was "recognized as material origin, like a fingerprint" in Victorian literature (both novels and poems) and used to authenticate a character's identity, as will be explained in the following section.[59] This work by Lutz

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[55] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124.
[56] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 137.
[57] Esther Berry, "Hurricane Katrina Hair: Rereading Nineteenth-Century Commemorative Hair Forms and Fragments Through the 'Mourning Portraits' of Loren Schwerd," *Fashion Studies* 2, no. 1 (2019): 3, https://doi.org/10.38055/FS020101; Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[58] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 135.
[59] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.

demonstrates the importance Victorian literature placed on the materiality of hair and,

subsequently, on mourning jewelry and hairwork.

Nonetheless, hair as an authenticator of identity was not just a plot device for Dickens

and Hardy: Victorian anxieties around authenticity would swell in the 1850s as the mourning

jewelry trade expanded.[60] Men and women who sent their hair to a jeweler's to be turned into a

piece of jewelry feared the hair they sent in would be replaced with that of a stranger.[61] This

anxiety is echoed in Alexanna Speight's 1871 guidebook where it warns the reader that if the

hair brought to a tradesman is too short, they will mix in the hair of a "person…[they have] never

either seen or heard of."[62] The presence of this fear is signaled by other scholars covered in this

literature review, including Lutz, Yan, and Gitter.[63] Lutz attributes this situation to women's

guidebooks, craft manuals, and magazines, going so far as to suggest that the fear was induced

by guidebooks and craft journals, like *Family Friends, Godey's Lady's Book,* and the

Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, as there is little evidence of hair swapping actually

occurring.[64] After Speight cautioned of the dangers of trusting tradesmen with the hair of a loved

one, he proposes that the only solution to this problem is to "become his or her own artist in hair-

working."[65] Lutz explains that the idea of a piece of mourning jewelry being made with a

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[60] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.
[61] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.
[62] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 84.
[63] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.; Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair,"131; Berry, "Hurricane Katrina Hair," 9; Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942.
[64] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.
[65] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 85. McNamara and other secondary sources refer to Speight as a woman, using she/her pronouns. Yan refers to Speight with male pronouns. This discrepancy came to my attention while reading an advertisement in Speight's book, which states "A. Speight, Artist in Hair, Begs to inform ladies and gentlemen desirous of being…instructed in [hairwork], that he will…" —and thus signaling his male gender. McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76; Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 132; Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 123. Yan also cites an 1872 publication in the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* which refers to the "lessons of Mr. Speight" and acknowledges this "controversy" as an endnote in her article. Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 139. This information lends itself to more research that cannot be conducted in this thesis. For the purposes of my research, I will align with the two primary sources and use male pronouns.

stranger's hair would "take on the qualities of an unmarked grave and could represent the full

mystery of a disappeared and forgotten individual."[66] If this was the case, the mourning jewelry

would no longer serve its purpose of recalling past memories of the person who had died, a

sentiment shared by Speight. Ironically, most extant hair artifacts are anonymous if they were not

connected to a person of great importance or of historical significance.[67] It seems that, with the

passing of time, many artifacts' provenance has been lost and the Victorians' greatest fears have

been realized.

From a material culture perspective, Holm discerns that the *act* of cutting hair is what

transforms hair from a body part into a piece of material remembrance. She states that "the cut

edge of the hair in the material medium of remembrance marks the act of remembrance as the

very moment when its natural status was transformed into a cultural status, and when present

presence of the body is anticipated as a future absence."[68] Holm's combined material culture and

historical perspectives in her article work in tandem to explore how mourning jewelry was used

as a "powerful medium of memory."[69] Nonetheless, she cautions that "the sentimental

fascination with hair as a powerful medium of memory cannot only be explained as a technical

side effect of the development of mourning jewelry."[70] Rather, it is able to serve its function of

remembrance not solely because of its form, but, according to the author, because of what

memories and acts are embedded within.[71]

To explain the concept of medium of memory, Holm uses the example of a souvenir. A

commercial souvenir only becomes a souvenir once a story, memory, or experience is attached to

[66] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.
[67] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 143.
[68] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[69] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[70] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[71] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.

it.[72] Only then does it reach its true function of embodying that moment in time. Similarly, mourning jewelry does not achieve its function simply by its design and material, it needs to have a connection to a person and have a story or memory attached to it. This calls back to Holm's first point, that the cut edge of the hair is what marks the hair as a medium of remembrance.[73]

By the mid-eighteen hundreds, mourning jewelry became more complex, and, with it, the cut ends of the hair came to be hidden.[74] As previously mentioned, mourning jewelry prior to the 1850s was meant to principally represent death and to serve as a *memento mori*, or reminder that we will die. At this time, mourning jewelry was less elaborate, and hair was typically displayed as a complete lock, with the cut ends visible (Figure 2).[75] A change can be observed in photographs of mourning jewelry where the ends are concealed either in beads or on the backside of a piece of plaited hair inserted into a locket (Figure 3). Holm accounts for the "increased hiding or disguising of the material's bodily origin" as the wearer hiding both her personal memory attached to the piece of jewelry in addition to hiding it from the public.[76] While this is a viable explanation for the change in mourning jewelry, it is also possible that changing fashion, making preferences, or skill level influenced the ends of the hair being hidden.

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[72] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[73] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[74] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[75] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.
[76] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.

Figure 2. *Viscount Admiral Lord Nelson*, ca. 1805, British, Metropolitan Museum of Art
(50.187.3), New York. Photograph in the public domain,
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/200679.

Figure 3. *Hair Locket*, ca. 1890s, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (2021.6.1),
University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

The materiality of hair used as a medium in art is quite enthralling in comparison to most other mediums: it is compelling because it is a part of the body that remains long after the rest of the body has decomposed. It is a material connection to the physical body of a loved one. Something that their body created survives long after their body stopped breathing. In combination with the death culture and the sentimental fascination with hair, mourning jewelry became a way to publicly mourn the passing of a loved one while simultaneously maintaining a deeply private connection through a surviving part of a loved one's body.

Hair as a Signifier of Identity

In "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination," Elizabeth Gitter, a scholar in English literature who specializes in the Victorian Era, explores how Victorians perceived women's hair through undertaking an analysis of the period's literature and art.[77] She uses novels, poems, letters, mythology, folklore, fairytales, and artwork to establish the communicative powers of hair regarding identity and morality. One story Gitter draws on is the Brothers Grimm's "The Goose-Girl," wherein a princess is identified once her long, flowing, golden hair is revealed.[78] In this instance, her luscious golden hair identifies her as a princess and thus her hair becomes a signifier of "good" identity. In contrast, imagery of Medusa with wild snake hair identified her as "bad," creating a "range and contrast of values and significance" that "Victorian writers and painters were fascinated with."[79] The popularity of Greek mythology and the newly-anthologized collection of Brothers Grimm fairytales contributed to the Victorian's ambiguous use of hair (specifically golden hair) as a coded symbol. The popularity of these newly-accessible works contributed to the communicative power of hair for Victorians.

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[77] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 936–54.
[78] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 939.
[79] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 939.

According to Gitter, hair was incredibly powerful for the Victorians and represented one's identity both symbolically and physically, as demonstrated in the period's literature and provides a basis to understand how Victorians wrote about and placed communicative value on hair. The author touches on mourning jewelry/hairwork objects and the ways in which hair was transformed into merchandise and currency through the art of making.[80] She also mentions the fear that hair being brought to a jeweler would be swapped for someone else's hair, thus devaluing the emotional value of a piece.[81] This reinforces the idea that whomever controls and manipulates a hair object is, in a way, controlling and preserving the identity of the dead. Female characters' hair was described in detail in a vast array of literature from the nineteenth century, including attributes such as "length, texture, color, style, [and] curliness," which were imbued with deeper meaning for readers.[82] She explains that different hair styles were frequently assigned to different lifestyles, with licentious women described as having "disorderly hair," and "virtuous governesses" types sporting "brown, neatly combed heads"—tropes that are still cemented in Western culture.[83] Similarly, golden or blonde hair was used in literature and fairytales to signify a woman's "good" identity, sexuality, and wealth.[84] Gitter concludes that hair functions more broadly than just identifying personality traits of a character in Victorian novels, it is also used to identify their true social value.[85]

Similarly, Emma Markiewicz demonstrates the embodiment of identity in hair in her article "Performing Health and Beauty in Eighteenth-Century England: The Significance of Hair in the Creation of Appearances." This article takes a fashion history perspective and develops the

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[80] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 943.
[81] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942.
[82] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 941.
[83] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 941.
[84] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 943.
[85] Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 946.

concept of identity being performed through both wigs and natural hair leading up to the Victorian Era.[86] Markiewicz, who holds a PhD in History and specializes in the cultural significance of hair, examines the correlation of health and beauty and establishes that the "desirable beauty aesthetic was thick hair" and a more natural look were desired by the end of the eighteenth century.[87] This article establishes the significance of hair leading into the nineteenth century in addition to the desirable beauty norm of thick hair, which lends itself well to creating hairwork.

As a scholar in the twenty-first century, it is important for me to note, in a basic way, the role race played in the texture of desirable hair and portrayal of identity, despite the limited role this may have played at the time. While Gitter provides a thorough analysis of hair in Victorian literature that is beneficial to this research, she fails to acknowledge the racial implications of hair texture, in addition to the treatment of different races in Victorian England. Markiewicz similarly lacks a discussion around race and hair texture. A simple example of this is from Speight's book. Within the first few pages describing the correct types of hair to use for hairwork, Speight explains that curly hair in its "flattened" form is the most usable, while "cylindrical the most difficult."[88] The example Speight provides for this phenomenon is "the crisp wholly hair of the negro" which is then compared to the wool of sheep.[89] Gitter's lack of acknowledgment of the impact of race on the Victorian interpretation of hair and identity is glaring in the twenty-first century, but is perhaps not as out of place when we consider her article was first published in 1984. Of particular interest is the link between blonde, straight hair (a hair

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[86] Emma Markiewicz, "Performing Health and Beauty in Eighteenth-Century England: The Significance of Hair in the Creation of Appearances," *Fashion Theory* 22, no. 6 (November 2, 2018): 618, https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2018.1533340.
[87] Markiewicz, "Performing Health and Beauty in Eighteenth-Century England," 636.
[88] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 85.
[89] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 85.

colour and type naturally appearing nearly exclusively in people with Caucasian heritage) and

goodness both Gitter and Markiewicz emphasize in their articles. While I am not aiming to

explore the role blondeness and hair texture played in Victorian society and or in today's,[90] it is a

topic that can be flagged and could deserve further exploration outside the scope of this thesis.

Gitter and Markiewicz document in their work how hair was viewed as a signifier of

identity and the importance placed on women's hair specifically. The entwinement of perceived

personality traits with hair may explain some of the reasons why Victorians would treasure the

hair of deceased loved ones.

Hairwork in Victorian Guidebooks

In the Victorian Era, hairwork was primarily undertaken in the home by middle- and upper-class

women and "was akin to other types of 'fancy work'" practiced in the same period.[91] The

extensive collections of crafting manuals available during the Victorian Era were touted as being

very easy for women to learn from and, as long as they had patience, they would be able to

complete the hairwork projects featured in those publications.[92] As mourning jewelry and

hairwork grew in popularity, many jewelers created objects from the hair of their customer's

loved ones, friends, and family (living or dead).[93] Sallie McNamara, a cultural theory scholar

specializing in women in the media, does remind us that the hair trade was a lucrative business in

the mid-nineteenth century and many women were able to sell their hair to jewelers or object

makers for profit.[94] With the common fear that the hair in the jeweler's output would not be what

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[90] Tressie McMillan Cottom, "The Enduring, Invisible Power of Blond," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/19/opinion/the-enduring-invisible-power-of-blond.html.
[91] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 129.
[92] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76.
[93] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76.
[94] Heaton, *A Cultural History of Hair*, 5:211; McNamara, "Production and Practice," 67.

was originally handed-in by the customer, many women chose to create their own pieces at home.[95] Women creators could also sell their own mourning jewelry pieces, allowing them to profit from their domestic labour.[96] Evidence of this entrepreneurial spirit comes from guidebooks, advice literature, and diaries.[97]

McNamara's chapter "Production and Practice: Hair Harvest, Hairpieces, and Hairwork" places hairwork at the intersection of domesticity, creativity, and entrepreneurship. McNamara draws on Speight's 1871 guidebook, which, in addition to instructions, advertised tools and kits to create hair jewelry, with various higher quality upgrades available for a higher price tag.[98] According to Yan, some women had toolboxes for hairwork and used them like a portable work station within the home.[99] The tools offered in Speight's kit could include "curling irons, scissors, tweezers, prepared gum, wire, porcelain palettes, and other items necessary for production."[100] Guidebooks, like Speight's, were directed at women, and often targeted younger women specifically.[101] This may have been partly because it was easier to sell guidebooks and new tools to younger women or married women who had not gained much experience or had the time to collect the necessary tools. Speight's guidebook was one of many that sheds light into the role hairwork played for women in the middle-class domestic sphere.

While there were jewelers who made and sold hairwork, the amateur crafting of this product grew in popularity and the do-it-yourself model allowed women to earn money from their otherwise unpaid domestic labour. McNamara describes a path to entrepreneurship, drawing from the 1863 diary of an American woman named Harriet Smith: a neighbor of

[95] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 131.
[96] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 131.
[97] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 78.
[98] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76; Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 123.
[99] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.
[100] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76.
[101] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 76.

Smith's offered to make her earrings out of horsehair for fifteen dollars.[102] This example

demonstrates how women could use a domestic craft typically considered to be "fancy work"

(i.e., ornamental work meant to impress in contrast with "plain work") as a means of income

within a socially acceptable gendered framework supported by popular literature.

Yan's research draws on many examples of hairwork information in guidebooks,

magazine articles, and self-help books as well as other source material from the Victorian Era.

These primary sources tell us about the gendered nature of hair art and the way women interacted

with hairwork.[103] Examples of guidebooks include *Album of Ornamental Hair-Work for 1850* by

C. Olifier (1850), *Elegant Arts for Ladies* (1856), and Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859). Yan

points out that the existence of these guidebooks and advice literature "challenges our

understanding of hair jewellery craft as domestic and private in some way."[104] The handbooks

and guidebooks mention how hairwork is meant as a craft for leisure time and to pass the time by

making art that is "useful."[105] The interplay of mourning jewelry and fashion allowed for a space

where women could profit from otherwise unpaid labour and carve out a niche market for

themselves through skills acquired through publications like guidebooks.

How hairwork guidebooks were marketed to women conveys traditional views on

Victorian femininity, which includes the omission of any commercial applications. An excerpt

from the 1856 publication *Elegant Arts for Ladies* states that it "offers instruction in a variety of

useful and graceful occupations to those possessing the leisure and taste necessary for the

attainment of the 'elegant arts' […] and every other sort of mania on which a woman's pretty

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[102] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 78.
[103] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 136.
[104] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 136.
[105] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 130.

little head may run."[106] This excerpt is an example of the language used in guidebooks. What use may be drawn from the objects produced is not stated, but the quote is directed towards women who have the time to complete intricate tasks and do not need to profit from their art. The rising popularity of hairwork could make it a fad or movement, but the use of the word "mania" in the sentence denigrates women's interests, talents, and intellectual powers. The quote simultaneously places value on hairwork as an art while at the same time discounting the work. It exemplifies the way hairwork was marketed towards a woman of leisure, negating the art form and, indirectly, its market value. While guidebooks, instruction manuals, and booklets value mourning jewelry as a physical token of the dead, the potential for commercialization of hairwork and mourning jewelry is typically neglected.

Victorian Mourning Practices

Mourning jewelry, in the form explored for this thesis, emerged from decades of specific mourning practices conducted during the nineteenth century and prior. This section of the literature review serves to contextualize mourning jewelry by first establishing the prominence of death in the Victorian Era and, to a lesser degree, in the Georgian period (1714-1830) that preceded it. Second, this section will link the higher mortality rates to the rise of a death culture accompanied by culturally significant mourning practices that shifted over the course of the nineteenth century. Following a brief overview of women's status in the nineteenth century, I will concentrate on dress and garments worn by those in mourning, with particular focus placed on the widespread use of widowed attire that dominated Victorian mourning practices. The

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[106] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 130.

prominence of mourning dress and, subsequently, mourning jewelry demonstrate the interplay of fashion and death culture in Victorian England.

The nineteenth century in Great Britain was a perilous time for adults and children alike. The high mortality rate of the British population was due in part to an array of diseases, including "phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis or 'consumption'), typhoid, cholera, smallpox, measles, diphtheria, and diseases of the circulatory system," although smallpox is often considered the leading killer.[107] Other causes of death had origins in military endeavours, like the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Indian Mutiny (1857-1858), but, overall, issues like malnutrition, and other generally unsanitary conditions, which bred discontent and illness must be acknowledged.[108]

By 1868, the annual "overall death rate(s)" were at 21.8 people per 1,000 in England and Wales,[109] while the population was sitting at around 17.8 million.[110] An observable drop in the death rates began shortly after, reaching "18.1 [people per 1,000] in 1888" and by 1908, a few years after the Victorian Era ended, reducing to 14.8 people per 1,000: in other words, over the span of forty years the death rate lowered by 30 percent.[111] The high mortality rate previous to this decline impacted people of all ages, genders, and social standing, and it specifically led to an increase in widowed adults.[112] Pat Jalland, a researcher with a focus on the "social and cultural

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[107] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914*, 27.
[108] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124.
[109] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914*, 27.
[110] Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa A. Surridge, eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Prose 1832-1901* (Broadview Press, 2012), 14, https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat03710a&AN=alb.6014792&site=eds-live&scope=site.
[111] Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198201885.001.0001.
[112] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 230.

history of death, grief, and mourning in Britain,"[113] cites Michael Anderson's estimate "that about 19 per cent of marriages in the 1850s would have been shattered by death within ten years, and about 47 per cent within twenty-five years" in England.[114] Due in part to the death rates caused by war, most of the widowed were women, with widows over 35 accounting for the majority of cases.[115] Coinciding with the peak popularity of mourning jewelry in the 1850s,[116] nearly half of all marriages were ended by the death of the male spouse. The deaths caused by the prevalence of disease and the consequences of war reached its peak in 1868, dovetailing with the popularity of mourning jewelry and other death practices.

As the death rates began to decline in the 1880s, the interest in mourning practices waned.[117] McNamara notes that the British journal *Cornhill Magazine* announced that hairwork was no longer in fashion in July 1885.[118] While McNamara acknowledges this was premature, she notes that it "had all but disappeared from the market by the 1920s."[119] While the rise and decline of mourning jewelry is explored further on in this chapter, it is important to note the correlation of death rates and popularity of mourning practices and customs.

It is relevant to address the social and political climate middle- and upper-class Victorian women and widows faced before delving into mourning dress codes. During the nineteenth century, women experienced few rights and many restrictions. The feminist movement was in its infancy, with authors like Frances Power Cobbe and Josephine Butler battling to have their

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[113] The Australian National University, "Emeritus Professor Patricia Jalland," accessed October 31, 2023, https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/jalland-p.
[114] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 230.
[115] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 230.
[116] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300.
[117] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 78.
[118] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 78.
[119] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 78.

voices heard by the mainstream Victorian press.[120] They had much to oppose. Victorian women were not allowed to vote nor own property if they were married in the United Kingdom.[121] In fact, it was not until 1882 that the *Married Women's Property Act* allowed women the "right to all property earned or acquired before and after marriage," and not until 1886 when the *Infant Custody Act* legislated a "mother's right to custody of her children if their father dies."[122] Formerly, a father could select a guardian to take the children in the case of his untimely death.[123] Prior to this legislation, the 1839 *Infant Custody Act* was the first to permit custody of a child under the age of seven to the mother, with the stipulation that she "has not been found guilty of adultery."[124] With the death of a husband, middle- and upper-class women were at risk of losing their social status, financial security, and the recognition that came with their husband's career.[125]

In line with other mourning customs of the Victorian Era, widows were expected to wear very specific attire that could be codified in types and duration. They had to abide by "elaborate and detailed codes of dress that left women across society engulfed in black crape, bombazine and parramatta (light-absorbing mixtures of wool and silk)."[126] These customs originated in the eighteenth century with the British royals, and trickled down through social ranks as fashion practices are known to do.[127] Regulated mourning rituals like mourning dress reached their peak

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[120] Susan Hamilton, *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors: Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, 2nd ed. (Broadview Press, 2004), xii, https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat0371 0a&AN=alb.3021998&site=eds-live&scope=site.

[121] Hamilton, *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*, xi. It would not be until 1918 when the *Woman Suffrage Act* passed that wives or women who were homeowners over 30 could vote.

[122] Hamilton, *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*, xxiv-xxv.

[123] Hamilton, *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*, xxv.

[124] Hamilton, *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*, xxi.

[125] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 230.

[126] Jane Wildgoose, "'Beyond All Price:' Victorian Hair Jewelry, Commemoration & Story-Telling," *Fashion Theory* 22, no. 6 (November 2, 2018): 711, https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2018.1533345.

[127] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300.

in the 1840s to 1850s, but remained popular until the end of the nineteenth century.[128] There

were books and etiquette guides, like the aptly titled *Etiquette for the Ladies* (1837) and *Manners

and Social Usages* (1884), available to middle class and elite women that detailed the

appropriate mourning garb and provided timelines for the expression of their grief. The strict

etiquette for mourning permeated throughout the layers of middle- and upper-class Victorian

culture and disproportionately impacted women's dress, requiring them to abide by these

guidelines.

Visual arts scholar Sonia A. Bedikian indicates that, as with any social convention,

widows risked being ostracized, more so than they already were, if they did not comply with the

expected mourning rituals.[129] Bedikian's research for her article "The Death of Mourning: From

Victorian Crepe to the Little Black Dress" involved examining and photographing surviving

mourning costumes from the Victorian period, as well as visual sources like memoirs and

fashion magazines.[130] Jalland's research concurs when she states that, despite potential anxieties

and insecurities, a widow was not allowed to accept formal invitations, save for those from close

relatives, during the first year after her husband's death.[131] She adds that, by the same token,

women were expected to avoid public places during the first period of mourning, which lasted

two years.[132] Since widows were easily identifiable in society by their mourning fashions and

dress customs, their presence was noticeable. Dressing in ways that were contrary to the

expected norms could put a widow at risk of further social exclusion and create more problems

for her during an already challenging time.

[128] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300.
[129] Sonia A. Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning: From Victorian Crepe to the Little Black Dress," *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 57, no. 1 (August 2008): 38, https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.57.1.c.; For information on the author, see p. 51.
[130] Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning," 36.
[131] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 301.
[132] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300-301.

The appropriate garments worn by women to express mourning were referred to as "widow's weeds." Bedikian describes these as "an ensemble of black dress, veil and bonnet," which were expected to be worn for a minimum of two years, followed by six months of half-mourning.[133] Jalland specifies that, for those with significant resources, the elaborate gowns made of black "crape" (i.e., crepe or crêpe, a fabric made from highly twisted yarns, typically of silk fiber, with a wrinkled surface)[134] and "parramatta" (i.e., typically a light fabric with wool weft and silk warp)[135] were to be worn for the first year of mourning, "followed by nine months of dullish black silk, heavily trimmed with crape, and then three months when crape was discarded."[136] She then explains that, after two years of wearing heavy, light absorbing black fabrics, widows were permitted to wear "colours of half-mourning" which included grey, lavender, and white.[137] Crape and other fabrics used to construct mourning dresses were expensive, and, in the 1870s and 1880s, a shift in priorities to be more economical created a decline in demand for extravagant mourning costumes.[138] Women were encouraged by publications like the *Queen* magazine in 1875 to "use their common sense and discretion…a plain black dress is by no means inordinately costly."[139] In the latter half of the nineteenth century, women were encouraged to choose mourning dresses that could be altered and worn again, and some chose to dye their everyday dresses black when they had to be in mourning.[140] The encouragement of women to be cautious of the cost of mourning dress in the 1870s is, I

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[133] Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning," 38.
[134] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "crape (*n.*)," accessed October 31, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/crape_n?tab=meaninganduse. Isabel Barnum Wingate, *Fairchild's Dictionary of Textiles* (New York : Fairchild Publications, 1979), 162, http://archive.org/details/fairchildsdictio00wing.
[135] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "parramatta (*n.*)," accessed October 31, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/parramatta_n?tab=meaning_and_use#31890872.
[136] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300.
[137] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300.
[138] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 304.
[139] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 304.
[140] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 305.

would argue, demonstrative of the beginning of the downward use of mourning and death fashion and is in sharp contrast to how the etiquette guides of the 1850s and 60s were positioning mourning attire. The stringent rules around mourning customs demonstrate how prominent death and mourning were to Victorians and how mourning hair jewelry was able to become established as a popular fashion.

It is important to note that, while guidebooks and etiquette manuals are plentiful and detail similar mourning rituals, it cannot be asserted that such prescriptive literature was followed or celebrated by all Victorians. In fact, Charles Dickens' writings denouncing many mourning practices as over-consumption and a way to show off wealth provide evidence that a section of the population found these rituals to be unnecessary.[141] While it is possible that some would participate in mourning practices to demonstrate their place in the social order, other motivations may have been present. The use of dress practices by women, particularly when they fall in the domain of fashion, has often been criticized. The use of elaborate mourning dress, including jewelry, could be one such instance where women's interest in fashion and dress is being used to discredit their experiences, a tactic that can been seen throughout history.

Overall, mourning dress was a requirement of upper- or middle-class Victorian women who experienced a loss and was relatively standardized for all who had to abide by the custom. Queen Victoria herself chose to remain in her widow's weeds after the death of her husband, Prince Albert, until her own death in 1901.[142] In contrast, mourning jewelry allowed for more freedom, subtlety, and personalization for the wearer.

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[141] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914*, 3.
[142] Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning," 40.

Gender and Mourning

From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, hair jewelry began to transition from acting as a "sobering reminder of common mortality" to being "associated with sentiment" and, during this shift, mourning began to be fashioned as feminine.[143] Arianne Fennetaux's chapter in *Women and the Material Culture of Death* addresses the shift that occurred from mourning jewelry as *memento mori* to what she terms "*memento moveri*" which approximately translates to "a reminder of sentiment" in the lead up to the rise in popularity of mourning jewelry.[144] With it came a shift in how mourning and sentiment were gendered. Fennetaux draws on literature, private letters, jeweler's papers, and extant mourning jewelry to address the shift in mourning practices from a focus on death to a focus on remembering life.[145] From private letters, Fennetaux establishes a sentimental need for mourning jewelry for men. One such letter sent in 1818 from James T. Power to his love, Julia Woodforde, details Power's purchase of a "Diamond Mourning ring," which he had his hair placed in and on which he had engraved "James T Power, died…" for Woodforde to insert his eventual date of death.[146] In the letter, he requests for Woodforde to send a piece of her hair to place in the ring, stating "will it not be a pleasure in my last moments to think you possess such a memento."[147] This letter and others that Fennetaux includes demonstrate the existence of the sentimental practice of mourning jewelry by both men and women in the early nineteenth century, a custom that was nonetheless gendered in other ways.

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[143] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 28.
[144] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 28.
[145] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 28.
[146] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 32.
[147] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 32.

During this same time, pattern books and guidebooks were used to circulate mourning jewelry patterns and most often included images of women mourning. Fennetaux explains that, while "the practice of ordering or wearing" mourning jewelry or hairwork was not gendered, "the iconography used to express the conflation of grief and sentiment…was almost exclusively feminine."[148] Fennetaux links this shift to a number of different events, one being the backlash and fear of unmanliness that culminated in the 1790s following the popularity of the "Macaronis," stating that "the bejeweled flair of the macaronis marked to some extent the flamboyant demise of jewelry for men."[149] Essentially, the practice of men wearing jewelry became linked with the construction of femininity prior to the rise in popularity of mourning jewelry and subsequently impacted the gendering of mourning practices in the mid-Victorian Era.[150] Women were constructed as being more sensitive than men and thus more outwardly sentimental with their grief and emotions.[151] Like Fennetaux, Holm draws parallels between the iconography of female mourning and the making and wearing of mourning jewelry, the latter becoming, according to Holm, a female task. Similarly, Holm addresses the culture shift of the sentimental turn in the late 1700s that "effected a fundamental division between female and male spheres and labor" and had reverberations for Victorian mourning customs.[152] Mourning continued to become more aligned with femininity from the early 1800s and, by the time mourning jewelry began its peak popularity in the 1850s, it "became unambiguously linked to women rather than men, both in its aesthetics and its practices."[153] The perceived femininity or gendering of mourning allowed for mourning jewelry and hairwork to embody femininity.

[148] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 36.
[149] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 46.
[150] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 46.
[151] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 43.
[152] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 139.
[153] Fennetaux, "Fashioning Death, Gendering Sentiment," 46.

The article "The Art of Working in Hair: Hair Jewellery and Ornamental Handiwork in Victorian Britain" by Shu-chuan Yan focuses on the embodiment of femininity in hairwork and the blurred lines it creates between production and consumption, as the female producers were often the consumers. Yan examines handbooks, newspapers, advice columns, guidebooks, and manuals from the Victorian Era as sources for her article.[154] The author explains that "the making of hair jewellery in Victorian Britain was considered a fashionable craft that grappled with some fundamental issues of women's feminine virtues, sentimental labor, and self-display."[155] This quote from Yan demonstrates the many feminine qualities were communicated through the production and wearing of hairwork.

Yan's work also touches on how production and consumption of Victorian hair art was linked to modern consumerism, domesticity, feminine beauty, and social status. As hair art became a newly popular pastime, Yan argues it imposes a sense of modern living as it allowed women to "participate in commercial enterprise and work outside the domestic sphere."[156] Additionally, she posits that since hairwork was primarily for the middle and upper classes, it became an embodiment of middle-class domestic ideals.[157] She explained that domesticity to the Victorians entailed self-discipline, which hairwork and mourning jewelry required as it was a time consuming and tedious activity.[158] Thus, hairwork was conflated with being a good homemaker and its teaching was a way to provide women with skills they needed to have in the home.[159] Lastly, as mourning jewelry became a fashionable accessory, Yan stipulates that it came to communicate ideals of feminine beauty and social status.[160] In this way, hairwork

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[154] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 125.
[155] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.
[156] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 125.
[157] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.
[158] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.
[159] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.
[160] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124.

evolved to be designed for the public rather than the private gaze from both a fashion and sentimental standpoint.[161] According to Yan, then, mourning jewelry (both the production and consumption of) communicated the feminine qualities of modernity, class, and fashion sense.

Fennetaux, Holm, and Yan all address the gendered differences associated with mourning. According to Yan, for women, creating and wearing mourning jewelry allowed them to grapple with their grief through sentimental labour and outwardly perform their female identity through fashion, domestic skills, and social status.[162] As Fennetaux points out, while mourning jewelry was used by both men and women, the iconography of mourning remained rooted in the feminine. Interestingly, the gendering of mourning was due in part to a change in how objects related to mourning were gendered and the attached sentiments to those objects followed suit.

Mourning Customs and Social Status

Mourning customs were contingent on social status. As detailed in Julie-Marie Strange's monograph *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914*, the poor and working classes experienced death far differently from the upper echelons of society.[163] Strange is a historian whose research specializes in the Victorian working-class, death, and grief. While much of the comments presented thus far on the lower classes' grieving process discounts them as being cold towards experiences of death and loss, Strange challenges that notion. She is "not arguing for a single working-class culture of death and bereavement," but rather is "working within a framework which configures the working-class culture of death as Other."[164] Strange further

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[161] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 127.
[162] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 128.
[163] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914*.
[164] Julie-Marie Strange, "'She Cried a Very Little': Death, Grief and Mourning in Working-Class Culture, c. 1880-1914," *Social History* 27, no. 2 (May 2002): 144, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071020210128373.

explains that "working people were perceived and perceived themselves as removed from a prosperous middleclass culture."[165] She draws from "medical officer of health and municipal burial board reports," novelists, contemporary social commentators, autobiography, and oral history to explore death and grief in the working-class culture and, in so doing, broadens our understanding of death cultures and class.[166] So, while the working classes did participate in mourning customs like other Victorians, they were automatically "othered" by their social class. With perspicacity, Strange argues that, although poor and working-class peoples could not take time off work or participate in yearlong mourning rituals, this did not mean they did not experience profound grief.[167]

It is important not to conflate possible lack of external grieving signs with a lack of emotions. Strange states that while the working classes were naturally more familiar with death, it should not be "confused with ambivalence and/or fatalism."[168] Documentation of the upper classes disregarding the humanity and emotions of the working-class is prevalent. Strange includes an example of a "Liverpool journalist in 1883 [who] commented that death and disease were so familiar to the poor that they merely represented mundane incidents in life rather than personal tragedies."[169] Despite such assertions, working-class people did participate in some mourning rituals like mourning dress—albeit in a more curtailed manner than the upper classes—and, importantly, could partake in the production of mourning jewelry. Such material culture-based practices could be interpreted as signifiers of an emotional need to process grief. While much of the historical resources available today are provided from the perspective of the

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[165] Strange, "'She Cried a Very Little,'" 144.
[166] Strange, "'She Cried a Very Little,'" 144.
[167] Strange, "'She Cried a Very Little,'" 144.
[168] Strange, "'She Cried a Very Little,'" 145.
[169] Strange, "'She Cried a Very Little,'" 145.

middle to upper classes, Strange makes a case for reinterpreting these findings. What the upper classes may have perceived as coldness, could have been rooted simply in poverty and an urge to honour loved ones regardless of social caste.

Mourning and death culture leaned towards the sentimental and was aimed towards the remembrance of the deceased for Victorians, in contrast to mourning in the eighteenth century, which prioritized the communication of status of the dead over sentiment. Unlike in previous centuries, the Victorians prioritized the status of the bereaved rather than the deceased. This can be seen in the shift to more extravagant mourning practices, including fashionable dress and accessories for women.

"The Death of Death"[170]

The love of mourning jewelry and body adornments made of hair faded as the nineteenth century came to a close. Yan points to an 1885 article in *The Cornhill Magazine* which laments about the bygone days of mourning jewelry and hairwork jobs, but did not expand on why this decline may have occurred.[171] Lutz attributes the decline of mourning jewelry to a rise in secularism and refers to what literature, film, and feminist studies scholar Diana Fuss dubbed "the death of death."[172] As rates of death began to decrease, Western culture shifted to disparage keeping bodily relics of the deceased, due in part to an increase in concern and awareness of hygiene practices.[173] Lutz is keen to point out that another factor in the decline of death memorabilia and mourning jewelry was the emergence of more readily affordable photographic surrogates.[174] While mourning jewelry or death relics served the purpose of being a tangible link to both the

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[170] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 127.
[171] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 136.
[172] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 127.
[173] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 79.
[174] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 135.

body and the memory of a loved one, photographs could do both in addition to providing a visual of the person.[175] McNamara describes how, in addition to the increased inclusion of photographs in mourning customs, hairwork was also incredibly time consuming and fiddle-some, making it unsustainable as women gained more roles outside of the home in the twentieth century.[176]

Lutz and McNamara were two of the few authors who went into detail about the demise of mourning jewelry and hairwork. This is particularly interesting because photography was introduced and growing in popularity at a time when mourning hair jewelry was still at its peak of popularity. It is very likely that changes in photographic technology must be explored further to understand the impact of photography in mourning practices, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. From the materials covered for this literature review, not much attention has been given by scholars to the intermingling events that contributed to mourning jewelry falling out of fashion.

Reflection on the Works Surveyed and the Gaps in Knowledge

The literature reviewed in this paper comes from different fields of study, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of material culture studies. Although history is the primary field of study and a common link between authors, there are many different scholarly approaches to studying hairwork and mourning jewelry. The sources explored come primarily from history, art history, material culture, fashion studies, literature, modern craft studies, and gender studies. Literature on the anthropological and biological considerations of hair and mourning jewelry, though potentially relevant, were not included. Specifically, Fennetaux, McNamara, Holm, and Yan took a material culture and historical approach to their research, while Lutz and Gitter drew on

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[175] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 135.
[176] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 78.

literature. The interdisciplinary research on mourning jewelry creates a diverse collection of literature that is necessary for an artifact that can hold an array of meanings. Simply approaching mourning jewelry from a single discipline would be doing a disservice to both history and the people, now gone, who made and treasured these objects.

Overall, the literature I assessed contained many parallels and was consistent with the facts pertaining to mourning jewelry, yet there are three gaps in the literature which may present limitations to the research: loss of provenance, geographic reach, and the decline of mourning jewelry. As much of the literature was deeply grounded in the historical, few authors touched on the current anonymity of extant mourning jewelry and hairwork pieces in most collections, something I am mindful of throughout my research as the subject of my object analysis has little provenance. Second, most of the sources are very general when referring to the geographic locations where mourning jewelry and hairwork were popular. There were mentions of hairwork and mourning jewelry being worn in France, Germany,[177] and North America,[178] but these are for the most part mentioned in passing and any geographic differences in style or usage preference are missing. This gap in knowledge limits the research as it is unclear if there were aesthetic features of mourning jewelry between North America and Europe. Third, little attention was given to when and why mourning jewelry fell out of fashion, with only Yan, Lutz, and McNamara offering insight into why interest in mourning jewelry began to wane. While I am not able to address these gaps in the scope of this thesis, they are engaging topics that deserve further attention.

My own research follows in the footsteps of the works presented in that I take a material culture approach, and draw from history, literature, and gender studies as well as fashion studies,

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[177] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 141.
[178] McNamara, "Production and Practice," 66.

aligning with my prior experience in these disciplines, but with the addition of the in-depth object analysis on one hairwork piece from the ALCTC. It is my hope that the literature reviewed here, in combination with the results from my object-analysis, help to answer my research question.

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, mourning practice shifted to reflect evolving cultural norms. While both mourning dress customs and mourning jewelry uses began prior to the Victorian Era, their popularity increased with the sentimental turn and the adoptions aimed to represent more than the social status of the dead. I addressed a selection of literature organized thematically to best present the current, most relevant research on Victorian mourning jewelry as it pertains to my research question. Beginning with the materiality of hair, the way hair signified identity in Victorian literature, gender perceptions of mourning jewelry, the prominence and use of prescriptive literature and guidebooks, how mourning jewelry was impacted by social status, a survey of Victorian mourning practices, and the decline in popularity of mourning jewelry. After addressing the themes in the selected literature, I identified gaps in the literature pertaining to geography, the emotional component of mourning jewelry, and the current anonymous state of numerous extant hair artifacts. Overall, during a period when death was an important and inevitable part of the Victorian experience, mourning practices and death rituals became an established part of life and deeply influenced the Victorian ethos.

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

To answer my research question, "What can an object analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece tell us about Victorian mourning practices?" I believe a material culture methodological framework leads to interesting findings. To support the object analysis, I drew from different, yet related, methodological approaches and from select primary sources, including surviving artifacts.

I relied primarily on Mida and Kim's material culture methodology from their 2018 publication, *The Dress Detective,* where they expanded upon Prown's own framework. I focused on one ALCTC artifact but drew on others in the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) for comparative purposes. The Mida and Kim framework is in many ways similar to Prown's but was of greater use because it is focused on dress, provides greater structure, invites reflexivity from the researcher, and helps to explore artifacts often found without provenance.[179]

To conduct my object analysis, I drew from three primary sources and experiential knowledge. Two of my sources are guidebooks: Speight's 1871 *The Lock of Hair: Its History, Ancient and Modern, Natural and Artistic* and Mark Campbell's 1867 *Self-Instruction in the Art of Hair Work, Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, Braids and Hair Jewelry of Every Description*. Both helped in interpreting evidence gathered from Mida and Kim's Observation phase and brought forth proper terminology as well as construction and spatial understanding of my object. Issues of *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1830 to 1890 were also used to investigate the use of hairwork objects as fashion items, which was a growing Victorian practice. During the

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[179] Fleming, "Artifact Study," 157; Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 330; Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 31.

Interpretation phase, the authors encourage the researcher to "draw widely from their experience…to synthesize the material gathered during the Observation and Reflection phases."[180] As a result, I drew on my academic training and experiential knowledge, which includes a 2021 workshop on Victorian hairwork organized by Crafting Communities, a "resource hub for makers and educators interested in nineteenth-century material culture."[181] The use of nineteenth-century guidebooks and magazines and twenty-first-century experiential knowledge generated historical and observational data that helped me answer my research question from a variety of perspectives.

The rest of this chapter will first provide an overview of object-based research. I will begin by comparing the three steps of Prown's methodology with Mida and Kim's own. This comparison will explain my use of Mida and Kim's work. I will then expand on the parameters of the primary source research and will conclude with an exploration of the strengths and limitations of my methodological approach.

Object-Based Research Framework

To conduct object-based research, Prown proposed his now well-known three phases of inquiry: Description, Deduction, and Speculation.[182] The mindset that "objects created in the past are the only historical occurrences that continue to exist in the present" is prominent throughout Prown's account of the three phases of object analysis.[183] For him, it is imperative that all three phases remain separate from one another and are conducted in sequential order.

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[180] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 31.
[181] "Crafting Communities," Crafting Communities, accessed November 1, 2023, https://www.craftingcommunities.net.
[182] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 7.
[183] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 3.

The first, Description, is "restricted to what can be observed in the object itself," beginning with the broadest observations and ending with the most minute.[184] Accuracy and guarding "against the intrusion of either subjective assumptions or conclusions derived from other experiences" are most important.[185] Prown also placed great emphasis on the reduction and near elimination of biases. His second phase, Deduction, "moves from the object itself to the relationship between the object and the perceiver."[186] This phase involves the researcher physically interacting with the object and musing on "what it would have been like to use or interact with the object" in the world represented by the artifact.[187] The deductions must be reasonable, and, if they are not, they should be set aside for the third phase, Speculation.[188] The first two phases of Prown's object analysis cover the observations and relationships of an object and focus on the researcher's physical interactions with the artifact being studied, while limiting deductions to what can be extrapolated from the object.

The final phase, Speculation, encourages creativity and "the free association of ideas and perceptions."[189] Prown encourages using the "insights afforded by our cultural and historical perspective, as long as we do not make the mistake of assigning intentionality or even awareness to the fabricating culture."[190] To effectively complete this phase, he advises the researcher to review and summarize the information gathered in the previous two phases, followed by incorporating other methods and techniques as a "plan for scholarly investigation" of the research question.[191] This third phase is where the uniqueness of a material culture approach

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[184] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 7.
[185] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 7.
[186] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 8.
[187] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 8.
[188] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 8.
[189] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 10.
[190] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 10.
[191] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 10.

shines through as the researchers are able to infuse their own experiences and cognitive artistry into an otherwise systematic approach that echoes traditional methods of inquiry.

Prown's approach has added strengths but also limitations. His methodology explores what it is that determines an object's survival and how that affects what objects survive. His deduction phase draws heavily on reasoning without external sources and thus forces the researcher to go beyond minutia and "connect the dots." There are, however, limitations to this methodology including the impossibility of removing all biases from the description and deduction phases. Nonetheless, Prown's overall methodology provides an important basis for object analyses, but he remains a man of his time.

Mida and Kim's three phases share similarities to those created by Prown but are focused on dress and offer a variety of methods and checklists. The first phase, Observation, involves describing the artifact using their "Slow Approach to Seeing," which encourages the researcher to slow down and observe the smallest of details.[192] A crucial step is recording enough "factual information" about the object to be able to create a rich description afterwards. Unlike Prown, they describe a variety of methods including sketching, photographing, direct handling, assessing the cut, construction, and fit of a garment, and noting wear and repairs.[193] They also include two checklists, one for the first and the other for the second phase, Reflection. They posit that Prown's second phase, Deduction, is too difficult and they thus make changes here; the most influential being the inclusion of contextual materials in the second phase instead of waiting until the third phase.[194] Mida and Kim's second phase, Reflection, is also where "the researcher is invited to pause and reconsider their experience of examining the garment" using all their senses.

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[192] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 29.
[193] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 35, 37, 62.
[194] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 63.

It is during this phase that the researcher should consider personal biases—as was the case for Prown.[195] Mida and Kim want the researcher to collect any provenance on the object and compare it to similar artifacts to gather information during the Reflection phase. The third phase, Interpretation, is where "the researcher is expected to synthesize the descriptive information with the emotive and sensory information gathered" to create a hypothesis.[196] Like Prown's third phase, Mida and Kim encourage creative and imaginative thinking in this phase, and, like Steele, they note that this phase can be the hardest as the path forward is up to the discretion of the researcher, something I valued for my own work. The first and second phase of Mida and Kim's methodology reveal factual, personal, and relevant contextual information, while the third phase allows for greater exploration and interpretation of all findings.

Steele's article, as previously discussed, details the process of applying object analysis to dress artifacts and the aspects the author found to be lacking or challenging in both Prown's and Fleming's work. For the latter, Steele points to the risk of including too little or too much information in the Description phase and the challenge of not sounding self-indulgent during the Deduction phase.[197] As Prown explains in his Deduction phase, and Steele echoes in her article (with added caution), it is important to handle, lift, and imagine using an object and, if possible, "experimen[t] physically with the object."[198] Steele adds that "although Prown does not explicitly say so, the comparison of objects is also an important part of this methodology," while noting that Fleming encourages the comparison to other objects.[199] This was applicable to my research as the focus was on a single artifact, the hair bracelet, but comparison to other objects

[195] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 31.
[196] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 31.
[197] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 329–30.
[198] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 8; Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 330.
[199] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 330.

was crucial as it underlined the differences between techniques and styles of mourning jewelry and uses for hairwork.

Furthermore, Steele highlights Flemings' musing on function, as "it is, of course, crucial to be aware that clothing is not simply (or perhaps even primarily) 'functional,' at least not in the concrete sense of the word."[200] Function in terms of mourning jewelry can be quite abstract and fluid as it was not functional in the way a pen or a candle are, but in the way, for example, a photograph functions to elicit memories of the past or to prove that something once existed or happened. The comparison of Prown and Fleming's work provided by Steele underscores why the development of an object analysis technique specific to dress artifacts was needed.

Steele's perspective is invaluable for both its application to fashion studies and material culture as a field. A portion of her article that was especially striking to me is the role of the researcher in the research process. While both Prown and Fleming stress the importance of the researcher, the stark way Steele approaches it gave me pause. When explaining her process of analyzing a dress in Prown's class, Steele observes that while "another student might have analyzed the raw materials and construction techniques… I was interested in issues of gender and the relationship between clothing and the body" and compared the dress with other pieces.[201] To me, this sentiment embodies what makes a material culture approach unique from others and the correct choice for my research, in that the researcher is included and valued as part of the research process. At times, the nature of research can feel repetitive or redundant on a grand scale, as though my role in the process is replaceable by another person in another place or time, but Steele's anecdote reminded me of the uniqueness individual perspectives can lend. I have not been thoroughly trained in the textile sciences and my interest does not lean towards a chemical

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[200] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 331.
[201] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 331.

analysis, for instance. While this research is important and there is room for it to be conducted, my interests lie in the humanness of mourning jewelry from both a material and functional perspective, topics I explored through my research.

Interacting with mourning jewelry and hairwork on multiple levels allowed me to gain a targeted understanding of the object. My experience in English literature and training in textual analysis meant that I was inclined to turn to the written word from the period as a primary source to support any findings that arose from my object analysis. Finally, my training in a Human Ecology graduate program focused on material culture, and on the significance of dress and fashion and how they interact with the body, provided further perspectives on my research topic and process. In my work, the body was double-cast as it contributed the material for mourning jewelry and was the method of display. A material culture methodology was both valid and necessary for this research as it valued reflexivity and the individual perspective brought in by the researcher.

Primary Source Method

To complete my object analysis, primary source research was required for the third phase, Interpretation. While there are other guidebooks and primary sources on hairwork, as mentioned in the literature review, I selected three Euro-American English-speaking sources, two guidebooks and one magazine which differ geographically and by date, to aid in further exploring findings produced in the first two phases of my research. English language sources were chosen for their accessibility. These sources helped me to understand how the object may have been worn and made. I briefly address here my rationale in the selection of primary sources and my approach to using them.

The first book, Speight's *The Lock of Hair*, was published in London in 1871 and was selected in part due to its length of 130 pages, its detailed descriptions of hairwork techniques, and the opines of the author. Both a reprinted physical version of the book and an online edition were financially accessible, and the brevity allowed me to conduct meticulous rereads as needed. Campbell's guidebook, *The Art of Hair Work*, was published in New York in 1867, four years before Speight's own work. Campbell's book was chosen as it was easy to access online, of reasonable length, incredibly thorough in its instructions on how to create hairwork, and complimented *Godey's Lady's Book's* American perspective.

The *Godey's Lady's Book* magazine was published monthly from 1830 to 1898 and featured poetry, sheet music, articles, garment patterns, and hand-tinted fashion plates.[202] *Godey's* became the most widely circulated women's magazine in America until the Civil War began in 1861.[203] The magazine chose not to publish any news of the war, leading to a steep decline in readership and subscribers.[204] I chose to use *Godey's*, an American periodical, due to the complete and continuous magazine archive being accessible online, its popularity amongst American women, and the broad timespan of publication. Being that the magazine spans nearly seventy years, I chose to do a search for keywords relevant to the research as the nature of this research did not allow for me to read each issue. Like today, American culture closely followed European fashions in the Victorian Era, and *Godey's* continuous nature allowed for a more complete picture of rising hairwork trends compared to an incomplete or intermittent British magazine source.

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[202] "Godey's Magazine 1830-1898," Internet Archive, accessed July 10, 2024, https://archive.org/details/pub_godeys-magazine?tab=about.

[203] Anne C. Rose, *Voices of the Marketplace: American Thought and Culture, 1830-1860* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 75.

[204] "Godey's Magazine 1830-1898."

The use of multiple primary English-language sources allowed me to flesh out the object analysis results from the angle of both making and fashion. On their own, each source was rich with information, but it was the combination of different points of view originating from different times and places that illuminated further avenues of analysis.

Strengths and Limitations

Qualitative methods were appropriate for my research. As dress scholar and sociologist Yuniya Kawamura points out, the "qualitative approach is inductive with the purpose of describing multiple realities, developing deep understanding and capturing everyday life and human perspectives," all purposes aligned with my research goals.[205] Qualitative research relies on multiple methods to fill in gaps and limitations present in a single method. The object analysis method was necessary to discover the "multi-layered and complex dimensions" of mourning jewelry, but other methods were useful to further explore its role in Victorian culture.[206] As mentioned previously, Steele explains that objects can reveal information otherwise concealed from a modern researcher.[207] It is for this reason that an object analysis of hairwork was necessary to answer my research question as it was able to suggest more about how the jewelry was worn and treated in the mourning context by the original makers and/or users.

Limitations to my object analysis included a potential lack of provenance for the objects I observed. This included not knowing if the objects were in fact used by their owner for mourning or for fashion or memento purposes, if they were made by the owner/wearer or by a jeweler, and lack of specific dates they were made and possibly worn. While this did limit my research,

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[205] Yuniya Kawamura, *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods*, 1st ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 104.
[206] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 22.
[207] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 329.

studying objects without provenance is not a new feat, as Mida and Kim discuss in *The Dress Detective*. One specific case study included in their book is that of a yellow woolen pelisse that lacks provenance.[208] They explain that, while the dress lacks provenance, its study can offer "a chance to formulate a picture of the type of woman who wore it" and can "reveal much about its original use and successive 'lives.'"[209] While I rarely uncovered the history of the specific people who came in contact with the hairwork pieces I analysed, I uncovered valuable information about the production and consumption of mourning jewelry, in addition to what it may have communicated about the wearer(s).

Limitations to my primary source research included the possibility that primary sources had missing information and differences in geographic trends. With the *Godey's* research, I was relying on accurate microfiche scans and there were times when words had not scanned correctly and therefore did not appear in my keyword search. The primary research was not exhaustive, but rather followed only a narrow scope of writings on hairwork and mourning jewelry. While this thesis did not allow for it, the information available in *Godey's* made it possible to track the purchasing trends of different styles of mourning jewelry. Nonetheless, they provided valuable insights into the trends of both making and wearing hair jewelry and helped to create links between information gathered in the research process to allow for an analysis of our object in the Interpretation phase.

In Kawamura's book, *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods*, she warns the reader that "the danger of object-centered methodologies is that they may be restricted by too close a focus on aesthetic or physical considerations."[210] The

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[208] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 84–101.
[209] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 84.
[210] Kawamura, *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress*, 92.

word dress is used here very broadly to describe any type of garment, accessories, hairstyles, and grooming practices. The use of the word fashion adds a timely aspect to the world of dress. Because dress is so broad, there is of course a risk, which can also occur with any research becoming too narrow in its focus. To mediate this risk, I made sure to follow Mida and Kim's guiding questions, encouraged myself to zoom-out of focus when appropriate, and sought archival records, historical research, written documents, and literary sources to ensure I was able to properly answer my research question and further explore discoveries made in the research phase.[211]

Conclusion

I chose a material culture methodology to approach my research and surveyed the work of different authors who have guided my approach. Prown's seminal work has three distinctive phases that are echoed in the Mida and Kim methodology, which I chose for its focus on dress artifacts, its introduction to various methods, its checklists, and its encouragement of intersectionality. Their methodology could be used for the object analysis of a bracelet made of hair that can be both a wearable accessory and a much more complex object. I chose three primary sources to help synthesize the information from the first two phases of Mida and Kim's methodology and to aid in creating hypotheses based on the object analysis.

Victorian mourning jewelry is a type of object that simultaneously embodies different human realities from its initial creation—that of the donor's hair, the maker, and the wearer/owner (the latter of whom may be one and the same)—and signified mourning and fashion concurrently. I would hypothesize that, while in a state of mourning in Western culture,

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[211] Kawamura, *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress*, 103–7.

it can be frowned upon to seem concerned with physical appearances and trends, it may be that the Victorians embraced grieving and made it a valued part of their aesthetic expressions. It is in this way that mourning jewelry may embody elements of Victorian interpretations and social performances in relation to the managing of death and why a material culture methodology can embrace the complexity of such an object.

CHAPTER IV - PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of my analysis of a piece of jewelry to help answer the research question: "What can an object analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece tell us about Victorian mourning practices?" The analysis of the artifact (Figures 4 and 5), based on Mida and Kim's object-analysis framework, included the Observation, Reflection, and Interpretation phases. The Interpretation phase will draw on external primary materials, including two guidebooks on hairwork, a fashion magazine survey, and other hairwork artifacts located in the ALCTC, the V&A, and the MET.

Figures 4 and 5. *Both Sides of the Hair Bracelet*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.
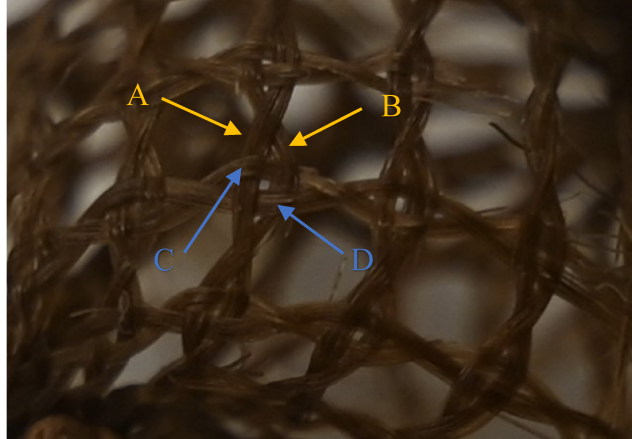
Observation

Construction

The object is made primarily of five components: eight flexible human hair ellipsoids (i.e. imperfect spheres), two gold-coloured and engraved metal oval beads, one gold-coloured and engraved middle oval bead in which a metal fastener is inserted, seven gold-coloured tubular metal beads, and a doubled string covered with plaited yarns (material unclear) that runs through the piece. At its widest, the changing (because of the flexible ellipsoids) outside diameter of the object measures 7.5 cm. The inside changing diameter measures between 5.5 cm to 6.5 cm with an average inside circumference of 19 cm.

The hair used is brown in colour and smooth but waxy to the touch. The ellipsoids immediately adjacent to the oval beads are visibly smaller (~1 cm in width and length) than the other six (varying between 1.5 cm to 1.7 cm in length by 1 cm to 1.5 cm in width by 1 cm in height). A number of individual strands of hair have been joined together to create a yarn. These yarns work as a group, in this case in pairs of two.[212] The pairs work together diagonally to first cross over themselves before interlocking with a pair on the opposing diagonal. As seen in Figure 6, yarn pair AB first cross over each other and then intersect with yarn pair CD, with A first crossing under C and then over D at the intersection. The open space between four of these connection points forms an octagon. The hair ellipsoids are separated by the tubular metal beads (Figure 7).

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[212] Sara J. Kadolph, *Textiles*, Twelfth edition (Pearson, 2017), 317, https://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat0371 0a&AN=alb.7534416&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Figure 6. *Detail of Ellipsoid Structure*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

Figure 7. *Detail of Tubular Metal Bead*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

In order to further understand the structure of the ellipsoids, I consulted *The Primary Structure of Fabrics* by Irene Emery, an art historian and textile anthropologist. Emery's manual on fabric structure points to the object being made from "one set of elements" which share a fixed "common starting point."[213] The structure most reminiscent of the ellipsoids is "double oblique twining" (Figure 8) in which "pairs of elements moving on an oblique course enclose elements moving on the opposite diagonal as they twine about each other" and a "diamond pattern will be formed in the centre of the fabric," akin to the octagonal shape formed in the object.[214] Rather than have a warp and weft, the object consists of many pairs of yarn beginning from a central location which cross over each other to create a textile which is then manipulated into the ellipsoids.

Figure 8. *Double Oblique Twinning*, "Diagrammatic construction of double oblique twinning (twinning on both diagonals) when one twining pair encloses another." Photograph from Irene Emery, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1995), p. 64, Figure 79.

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[213] Irene Emery, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics: An Illustrated Classification* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications/The Textile Museum, 1995), 60, http://archive.org/details/primarystructure0000emer_l9w1.
[214] Emery, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics*, 64.

The two oval beads (1.4 cm in length including loop and 0.8 cm at their widest point) have their outermost openings as the starting points of the hair yarns that form ellipsoids (Figure 9). They are similar in size, although not identical. The oval beads each have a soldered loop (jump ring) on one end that attaches them to the respective components of the fastener. Their other end is open and secures the hair yarns within their centre.

Figure 9. *Detail of Oval Beads*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

The object's fastener (Figure 10) is made up of two pieces: A pinch lock mechanism (male end) (0.2 cm in length of what is visible) that is inserted into the locking mechanism (female end) concealed in the engraved hollow bead (2 cm in length including loop and pin and 0.7 cm at its widest point). Both pieces of the fastener have soldered jump rings that are attached

to the oval beads. Other than being slightly larger in size (0.6 cm longer and 0.1 cm wider), the

engraved oval piece is visually nearly identical to the two oval beads. The oval beads and

fastener have similar floral, leafy, or paisley-style patterns that are likely engraved onto them.

Figure 10. *Detail of Fastener*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

Between each hair ellipsoid is a gold-coloured metal cylindrical bead – seven in total

(Figure 7). They have slight inconsistencies in size (0.4 to 0.5 cm in length). There are scratches

and markings on the cylindrical beads, but they have no seam. Some areas are smooth and matte

rather than shiny, and tarnishing is visible. The edges of the cylindrical beads are roughly cut and uneven. These visible components are concealing a string covered by plaited yarns.

Two strands of string covered with brown single or double plaited yarns that may be human hair or silk[215] run through the object in between the oval beads. The string is a lighter shade of brown than the ellipsoids and plaited cover and may be comprised of two strands or one strand doubled back on itself. This string adds structural strength to the object. Currently, the string is broken in some sections and its plaited cover has frayed in certain areas. The doubled string is only visible through three of the ellipsoids. From one end of the bracelet to the other, the measurement is 19 cm.

Overall, many of the structural aspects of the object are concealed. The ends of the hair yarns used to create the ellipsoids are hidden within the two engraved beads. There are no ends of the hair yarns that were left intentionally visible. The string that runs throughout the object is well disguised and is most easily visible in areas where the ellipsoids are broken, exposing the internal structure of the bracelet.

Two deductions can be made based on the physical characteristics of the object. The presence of the sturdier string and the average circumference of 19 cm – which is enough to encircle my wrist measuring 15 cm – means it most likely would have been intended to be worn as a bracelet, as described in its cataloguing entry.[216] Based on the inconsistent size of the hair ellipsoids and the oval and tubular beads, it is highly probable this object was hand-made, which

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[215] Mark Campbell, *Self-Instructor in the Art of Hair Work, Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, Braids, and Hair Jewelry of Every Description* (New York: Mark Campbell, 1867), 134, https://archive.org/details/selfinstructorin00camp.

[216] *1987.69.138 - Bracelet*, n.d., Photograph, n.d., Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection, https://search.museums.ualberta.ca/13-4654.

is consistent with the nature of Victorian hairwork. While I did not attempt to open the bracelet, the fastener would have been used to open and close the bracelet.

Textile

The bracelet is partially made from brown human hair, which is plaited into a textile in the shape of a circular casing that can likely extend and contract. The length of this casing at rest is much longer than the base string. When the string is pulled, the casing is contracted and tubular beads in gold-coloured metal can anchor it to the string. This process creates hollow ellipsoids that likely respond well to impact as a form of soft sculpture. The responsive structure of the bracelet means that its size could fluctuate depending on wrist size, as the ellipsoids could be shape shifting. This impact resistance would be important as part of a bracelet's function. The string of the bracelet will keep the size of the bracelet the same, while the ellipsoids can shape shift to change their original volume.

The hair yarns may be protected with a finish and its colour and texture may point to its origin. The hair feels stiff and almost waxy to the touch, as though it had been treated or coated. It is reminiscent of the feeling of hair sprayed with an aerosol hairspray today. With only a visual analysis, it is unclear if any other finishing processes have been applied. The brown hair is straight and could be from someone of Caucasian decent based on its colour and texture. Based on the impact resistance of the plaited textile and the finishing applied, a deduction can be made that the bracelet is designed to be resilient, lending itself to regular use.

Label

There are no maker labels or any markings to specify ownership.

Use, Alteration, and Wear

Based on the less than perfect state of the object and its previously mentioned size, it was likely worn as a bracelet. Its examination did not produce any evidence that it was purposefully altered. There is wear on the bracelet on both the ellipsoids and the tubular beads. Out of the seven ellipsoids, one remains undamaged, one is complete but slightly compressed, and the remaining five have holes in the hair textile (Figure 11). The holes on all five of these ellipsoids are on the inside portion of the bracelet closest to a person's wrist. The hair fibres that are broken and protruding are of varying lengths. The tubular beads are tarnished and some of the gold on the metal seems to have been worn off in spots. As the fastener was too delicate to be tested, its current functionality was not analyzed.

Figure 11. *Detail of Damage to Ellipsoid and Tubular Bead*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

Reflection

Sensory Reactions

To the touch, the hair textile is tacky, stiff, and incredibly light. When picked up by the fastener, the bracelet's ellipsoids retain their shape and do not collapse on themselves. The hair medium, while firm and sturdy, would still be easily susceptible to catching on other garments or jewelry as a plaited textile. Before handling the bracelet, I thought it would be comparable to the feeling of holding an extremely thin wine glass at a high-end restaurant, something both fragile and delicate. While the bracelet is intricate and fine, it is not frail and did not feel easily breakable. The open structure is susceptible to snagging and it would be possible for dirt to build up in the ellipsoids. There were no discernible smells. The hair could have made a soft rustling sound if it encountered other clothing items. The lightness and flexibility of the textile lends itself to physical comfort and would likely allow the wearer a modicum of nonchalance over fear of damaging or breaking the bracelet, despite its intricate nature.

The weight of the beads is in stark contrast to the hair textile when lifting the bracelet. The engraved scrolling designs on the oval beads may be purely decorative. The engraved oval beads and fastener, as the heaviest part of the bracelet, would have fallen to the lowest point of the arm when being worn. There are discernible ridges where the oval beads have the engraving, whereas the divider circular beads are smooth. When being worn, the beads may have made noise if they contacted something hard or metal. The weight of the beads and fastener may have caused some annoyance to the wearer and may have pulled on the bracelet over time.

Personal Reactions

The contrast of the lightweight ellipsoids and the heavy beads is of interest. Why design a bracelet with a structure that supports durability and ease of wear to then offset it with heavy beads and a fastener, which may damage the structural integrity of the object over time? When imagining wearing the bracelet, the first thing I notice is that it would be too big on me and would dangle into the palm of my hand. I wonder if this was always the case or if, despite the string inside the ellipsoids, the bracelet stretched over time. My wrist measures 15 cm while the approximate circumference of the bracelet measures 19 cm. If the string was made shorter the bracelet could be made shorter or, if the string was longer, it could be extended to fit a bigger wrist. In either case the hair textile could contract or extend to accommodate the changes. To wear the bracelet comfortably in its current dimension, I would have to be cognizant of my arm's position to keep it from slipping or getting in the way. The box clasp design likely allows the bracelet to be put on and removed easily by the wearer without needing another person's help.[217]

While I find the bracelet beautiful, I do not think I would wear this or another piece of hair jewelry. To me, it would be a constant reminder of the person who gave the hair for it to be made. While typical heirloom jewelry can still carry the memory of a person, there is separation between you and them as the material used did not come directly from their body. With this bracelet, and hair jewelry in and of itself, there is an inescapable reminder of the physical body that is gone. With that being said, I could see how a person with no reminders of a deceased loved one's physical body and form could find comfort in a piece of mourning jewelry, especially at a time when photographs were difficult to acquire.

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[217] Hilary Halstead Scott, "Types of Jewelry Clasps & Closures," Halstead, December 9, 2014, https://www.halsteadbead.com/articles/types-jewelry-clasps; Dondero, "Types of Jewelry Clasps: Which Are the Most Secure?," Dondero Diamonds and Fine Jewelry, February 16, 2023, https://www.donderojewelry.com/blog-post/types-of-jewelry-clasps-which-are-the-most-secure.

The construction of the bracelet is intriguing in its intricacy and the concealment of internal structural elements. As previously explained, hair was used to create a yarn, which was then plaited into a cylindrical hair textile before being threaded into tubular beads to force the creation of the ellipsoids. If that is the case, the tubular beads may be primarily structural, rather than decorative. With their uneven size and cut edges, the tubular beads are the most simplistic aspect of the bracelet and operate in contrast to the oval beads and fastener. While the beads are gold in colour, it is unclear what metal was used. Both gold and brass were popular in the Victorian Era for metal working, but identifying the metal used is outside the scope of this research. The intricate scrolling floral leaf pattern that winds around the beads and seems to mirror itself could be a paisley (i.e. a "teardrop- or feather-shaped figure") design which gained popularity in the nineteenth century as the town of Paisley, Scotland, became the leading producer of the paisley shawl, which was a popular fashion item during most of the nineteenth century.[218] Uneven cut marks are visible and it is most likely that the beads' engraved designs were done by hand initially, but it is possible that a mould of the bead was made and then used to reproduce the design. The popularity of patterns similar to those on the beads points to the beads being in line with popular fashions of the mid-nineteenth century. The bracelet contains the potential to function as both a fashion piece and/or a token of a deceased person.

Contextual Information

The hair bracelet did not have any provenance records that came with it, other than the name of the donor. There are three other hairwork artifacts in the ALCTC that I was able to examine, including a necklace made of hair and a locket which includes a photo, and both employ

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[218] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "paisley (*n.*)," accessed July 8, 2024, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/paisley_n.

different hairwork techniques. The MET has a dozen or so pieces of hair jewelry from the 1800s accessible on their online database. Of particular interest is a pair of earrings that use a similar technique as the hair bracelet and is dated 1850 to 1860 (Figure 14). Similarly, the V&M online database lists ten pieces of jewelry dated to the 1800s which use hairwork techniques. This brief survey of other prominent collections supports that, while not scarce, extant hair pieces like the ones found in the ALCTC are not common. Furthermore, the pieces support preliminary findings that the object was made using techniques popular by mid-century, in addition to supporting literature review findings that this style of hair jewelry was popular at the same time. This information will help further the next phase of the object analysis, Interpretation.

Interpretation

Our object's plaited structure, material, and wear patterns all offer clues for an in-depth analysis. From the evidence gathered from the literature review, the object analysis, and other contextual information, many avenues of research have emerged. For the purpose of this thesis, I will further explore two deductions using selected primary sources: the object's potential date and use as a fashionable item.

Object Date

Based on the plaited structure, the date of the object can be hypothesized using similar examples that have better provenance from other collections: necklaces from the V&A made in the 1850s (Figure 12) and late nineteenth century (Figure 13), and earrings from the MET dated 1850-1860 (Figure 14).

Figure 12. *Cross Necklace*, hair likely obtained before or on September 30, 1850 and made into an object within the next decade, Scotland. Photograph ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London (T.136.1963), https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O139447/necklace-unknown/.

Figure 13. *Necklace*, made in the late nineteenth century, possibly from England. Photograph
©Victoria and Albert Museum, London (AP.12-1889),
https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1126590/necklace/.

Figure 14. *Earrings,* 1850-1860, British, Metropolitan Museum of Art (C.I.37.20a, b), New
York. Photograph in the public domain,
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/105557.

The cross necklace (Figure 12) was made with human hair sometime in the 1850s in Scotland, and from a visual analysis has a similar structure to our object. This is supported by the provenance record, which states that it is "made from braided hair forming 35 hollow mesh beads woven in diamond mesh."[219] The hollow diamond structure of the necklace is similar visually to our object, whose octagonal plaited structure can look like diamonds before closer inspection. A seemingly intact string runs the length of the necklace, comparable to the broken string observed in our object. The portion of string that attaches the mesh cross to the necklace appears to have a plaited covering the same colour as the "hollow mesh beads."[220] A similar plaited covering on the string is visible in both this necklace and our object (Figure 15). The necklace is fastened with a "gold barrel and spring clip" and the ends of the hair are concealed in two beads, which are attached to the clip.[221] Like the barrel and spring clasp, our object's box and pin clasp are reliable and sturdy. There does not appear to be any metal cylindrical beads separating individual hair ellipsoids in the necklace. What contracts the textile is the same colour as the ellipsoids. While it is not feasible within the scope of this research to physically examine the necklace and confirm its structure, this preliminary visual analysis from the photograph available suggests that some similar techniques were used in both the construction of our object and the necklace.

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[219] Unknown, *T.136-1963 - Necklace*, 1850s, braided hair, 1850s, Victoria & Albert Museum Textiles and Fashion Collection, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O139447/necklace-unknown/.
[220] *T.136-1963 - Necklace*.
[221] *T.136-1963 - Necklace*.

Figure 15. *Detail of Plaited Covering on String*, second half of nineteenth century, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection (1987.69.138), University of Alberta. Photograph by Emma Carr©.

The techniques used in the construction of the necklace can help to hypothesize the date of our object. According to the provenance records, "the donor states that the necklace was 'made from the hair of Jessie Cassels who died in 1850 in Scotland of turbocolosis aged 23. Her family are well off and adored her and remembered her by portraits, busts, and several of these necklaces.'"[222] While the hair was obtained in 1850, the record indicates that the necklace was made at some point during the subsequent decade and not necessarily in 1850. This record attributes the making of the necklace as a piece of mourning jewelry while also providing a year

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[222] *T.136-1963 - Necklace*.

of the loved one's passing and its geographic location. Further research revealed a book printed in 1870 titled *Records of The Family of Cassels and Connexions*, which details the history of the Cassels family. Over fourteen pages, the illness and subsequent death of "Janet Cassels" on "30th September 1850, aged twenty-three years" are detailed by her father.[223] Interestingly, her father notes that: "We have good likenesses of [Jessie], but a cast has been taken since her death for a bust, which, I hope, will be successful, and if so, we can have copies."[224] The details of this primary source align with the donor's statement in the museum's records. While it must be noted that donor statements can propagate wrongful information and should always be reassessed, we can also recognize that the record comes from an established institution with a history of credibility and, as such, allow us to know that plaited hair techniques like those present in our object were used in the 1850s. While the ALCTC bracelet does not obviously convey religious iconography, the V&A necklace does via its cross, and this could warrant future research.

I will briefly address a V&A plain necklace (Figure 13) and the MET earrings (Figure 14). Both lack a detailed provenance in their online record. The necklace has been given an approximate date of late nineteenth century and is described as potentially of English origin.[225] Made from brown human hair, the hollow hair ellipsoids are visually nearly identical to those in our object and the cross necklace. Unlike the latter but like our object, this necklace has tubular beads separating sections of the ellipsoids and appears to have a clasp similar to the cross necklace. The late nineteenth-century date placed on this necklace could thus apply to our object

[223] Robert Cassels, *Records of the Family of Cassels and Connexions* (Edinburgh, Scotland, 1870), 69, https://digital.nls.uk/95363491.
[224] Cassels, *Records of Cassels*, 83.
[225] *AP.12-1889 - Necklace*, late 19th century, late 19th century, Victoria & Albert Museum Young V&A Collection, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1126590/necklace/.

but, as such assessments remain vague and without documentation, the access to this necklace serves mostly to document that our object is far from unique.

The 1850-1860 British MET earrings are made from brown human hair (Figure 14).[226] Each earring consists of three different sized ellipsoids ranging from smallest to biggest and, like our object, the cross necklace, and plain necklace, appear to be formed from a plaited hair textile. Like our object, the earrings have gold tubular beads separating each hair ellipsoid. The length of this thesis does not allow for an in-depth assessment of all similar hair-work pieces from other collections, but, from this brief visual analysis of select hair-work pieces from recognized organizations which used similar construction techniques to our object, it could be reasonably hypothesized that our object heralds from a similar time period as the pieces discussed.

If the cataloguers of these objects, and the familial oral histories they are often relying on, are to be trusted, this suggests that the bracelet may have been made sometime between 1850 and the late nineteenth century, lining up with the known peak of mourning jewelry's popularity as a fashion item.[227] To address the issue of dating further, I used Speight's 1871 guidebook *The Lock of Hair: Its History, Ancient and Modern, Natural and Artistic* for clues. Speight introduces their book as being separated into "two very distinct points of view," the first being a history of hair on the head and "varying fashions of the day," beginning with the Greeks and Romans and meant to provide amusement.[228] The second part details the use of hair "off the head" and is meant "by means of easy explanations and illustrations, to bring the art of working in hair within the reach of every one."[229] The first half of Speight's book offers a detailed and humorous

[226] *C.I.37.20a, b - Earrings*, 1860 1850, Photograph, 1860 1850, C.I.37.20a, b, Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/105557.
[227] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300; Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124; Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942.
[228] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 2.
[229] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 2.

nineteenth-century perspective on the history of hair and provides insights into the mind of the author and their perspective. This is beneficial when assessing the second half of the book for this research, which will be our primary focus.

Speight's account of the history of hair reveals insights about their own beliefs and views on Victorian customs. While historical episodes and primary sources are shared, they must be extracted between Speight's sardonic quips intended to mock Victorian customs and the upper-class.[230] Specifically, women's fashion and mourning fashions like widow's weeds, which Speight believed "spoil many a pretty face in these more mournful days of ours."[231] Insights on nineteenth-century hair practices include: men's and women's hair lengths were distinct from one another[232] and much of the hair used in the hair trade came from peasant women in Brittany, France, who were paid "a few sous or a bright-coloured cotton handkerchief."[233] Furthermore, Speight's biases included a belief that using any false hair (i.e. wigs) was immoral and a falsehood against nature[234] and a disdain for vanity, specifically women and girls who spend time on their hair.[235] The making process of Speight's book is aimed at young women and teens,[236] although there are a few mentions of the guidebook being used for "his or her own artist in hair-working."[237] It should be noted that the intention of this book, while marketed as a friendly and helpful guide, is to sell hairwork products. Nonetheless, Speight's services as a jeweler and sales techniques are also present.

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[230] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 5, 8, 10-11, 29, 68.
[231] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 10.
[232] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 5.
[233] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 55.
[234] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 68–69.
[235] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 11.
[236] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 88.
[237] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 85.

This source can apply to our object as the length of the hair used may point to women, the hair medium could be from a loved one but may also be an imported product, hair use in jewelry could be a socially-acceptable practice if wigs and hair attachments were frowned upon, and hairwork is a popular enough activity for young women and teens to be the subject of scorn by an author who writes for this very audience. Given that men and women wore their hair at distinctly different lengths, with women's hair being long enough to allow for different up-dos while the fashionable style for men was "fairly short,"[238] and our object is approximately 19 cm in length, it is more likely that the hair is from a woman than a man, though it is not possible to know for certain. Speight's corroboration that hairwork pieces were made both from hair of loved ones and from hair procured from the hair-trade means our object may have been made as a mourning piece from the hair of a loved one or perhaps produced as fashion object.

The second half of Speight's book explains how to make hairwork using three different techniques and covers the ideal materials to use. To begin, Speight details how to cleanse the hair of grease and grime using hot water and "two small pieces of borax and soda" and then scraping off any impurities.[239] The technique that Speight's book focuses on is called "palette work," where a porcelain palette (similar visually to those used by artists for paint) is placed on a table and used as the foundation for shaping the hair into a textile. Directions on curling, plaiting, and flower techniques are all described, with a focus on creating miniature sculptures to be placed in jewelry rather than transforming the hair into jewelry itself. The use of gum is described as a necessity to the making process.[240] It is used to fix the hair to the palette to aid in the plaiting process, for coating the hair to ease manipulation, and for finishing the ends of hair, among

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[238] Heaton, *A Cultural History of Hair*, 5:13.
[239] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 87.
[240] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 113.

others. The tacky substance noted on our hair object in the object analysis could be due to the use of some gum to coat the hair.

The descriptions of substances and tools used to make hairwork are plentiful, but what stands out are the descriptions of hair as a medium and the construction techniques. Speight addresses the qualities to look for in hair to be used for hairwork. The author is aware that, in the selection of hair, "tenderer feelings than mere suitableness will force themselves upon the amateur artist in hair."[241] In any case, length and fineness are the two biggest concerns. These are "very desirable" but not "absolutely essential," with children's hair from the nape of the neck being the most desirable as it is easier to work with.[242] The maker does not need to be alarmed if the hair selected is "too short" for one design as it can be adapted into another or by blending smaller strands into the palette design.[243] The strength of hair and its "elastic" and "extensible" qualities are also noted. Overall, the easiest hair to work with is long and fine. Not yet knowing if stands of hair can be superimposed to extend the yarns' lengths, we can surmise that, while it was possible to make use of short hair, long hair provided the freedom of choice when deciding which jewelry style to make.

The final step to making hairwork is mounting the designs, which Speight describes as "usually to be found mounted in the black enameled gold used for mourning."[244] However, they recommend a "plain or burnished gold" instead, or better yet, to mount the hairwork in a frame rather than jewelry.[245] An example of a framed piece of hairwork can be seen in the ALCTC and is dated 1889-1899 to substantiate this outlook.[246] This may be a sign that other hairwork trends

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[241] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 121.
[242] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 121–22.
[243] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 122.
[244] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 122.
[245] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 122.
[246] *2015.5.1 - Victorian Hair Wreath in Shadow Box*, 1899-1889, Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection, https://search.museums.ualberta.ca/13-213314.

are beginning to emerge as the reader is being discouraged from wearing the hair as jewelry by 1871, when Speight's book was published. Speight's book also provides insight on how hair was viewed and discussed during this period and gives information on some techniques used in hairwork. Additionally, it confirms what was explored in the literature review, which is that hairwork and hair jewelry could be used to create mementos of loved ones. It also marks a potential shift in fashion trends with a focus on hairwork being displayed in the home rather than on the body. As our object uses plain gold rather than black enameled gold, this could suggest it is more in tune with the trends described in Speight's 1871 volume or not made specifically for mourning, but the gold clasps of other objects presented thus far, including the 1850s V&A cross necklace, offers conflicting data on this front.

Another guidebook published in 1867, *Self-Instruction in the Art of Hair Work, Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, Braids and Hair Jewelry of Every Description*, written by Mark Campbell, offers information relevant to my research question.[247] He provides detailed instructions "to all [social] classes"[248] and offers 112 plaiting techniques, which allowed me to identify several that may have been used to make our object. While it is not possible to decipher which specific pattern was used, the maker of our object has followed similar patterns with the primary difference being the number of hair strands used. One example of a potential plaiting technique called "Fancy Lace Braid" can be done "over a round stick" and transferred from the

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[247] At this point it is important to note differences in the terminology of making hairwork. While Campbell uses the term 'braiding,' Speight refers to the technique as 'plaiting.' Consulting Emery once again, the term "plaiting" has been defined in contradictory ways as synonymous with, including, and as a form of braiding. Likewise, it has been defined as synonymous with weaving. While 'braiding' is likely the more accurate term for Campbell, because of our contemporary understanding of fabric structure terminology and access to Emery, I have chosen to use the term plaiting when referring to all hairwork making techniques, as it is the broadest terminology available. Emery, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics*, 60.

[248] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 8.

stick to a mold, boiled in water and dried for use (Figure 16).[249] While not as elaborate as the

plaited textile in our object, this technique bears some structural resemblance to it.
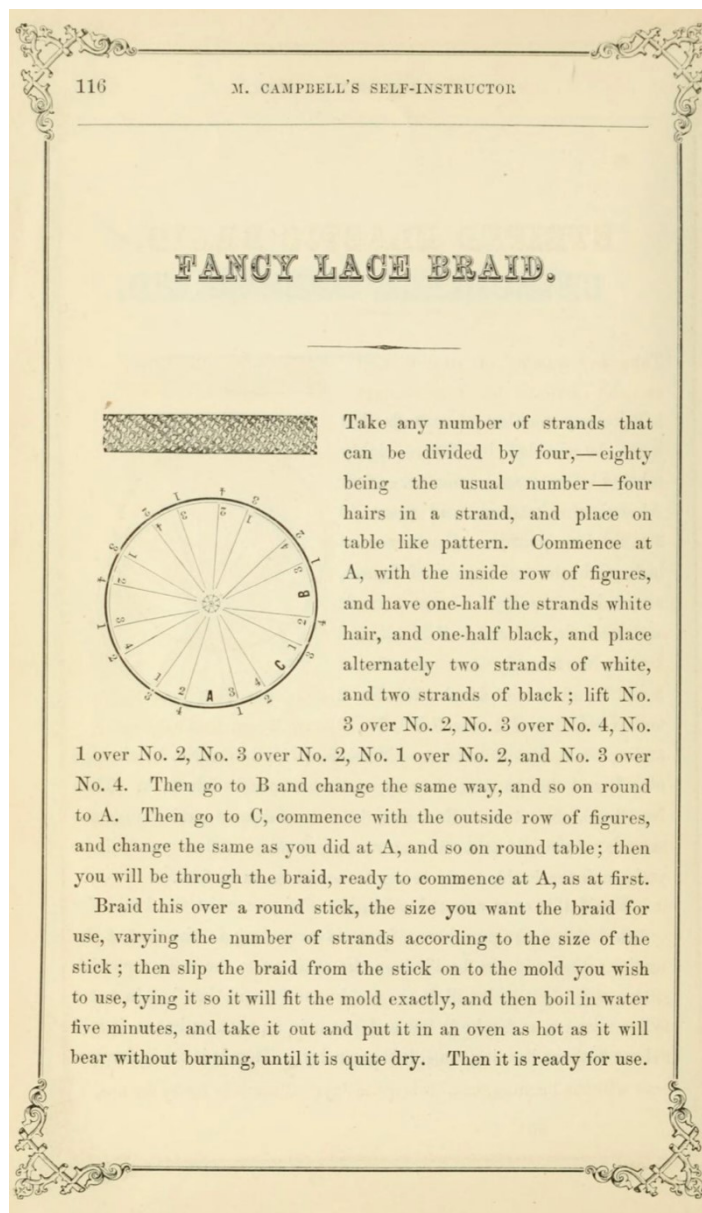
Figure 16. *Braiding Technique,* "Fancy Lace Braid," from Mark Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, (New York, 1867) p. 116.

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[249] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 116.

A jeweler and hair dresser from the United States of America, Campbell proclaims this

work "the only book ever published in the 'Art of Hair Work'" and states that few people in

America know about the technique as it is new there, but is a business "that is rapidly increasing,

and is now almost doubling itself each year."[250] Technically rich and detailed, Campbell's book

begins with the plaiting patterns and inserts instructions on how to use a "braiding table" in

between the pattern instructions and fifty pages of jewelry designs.[251] The jewelry designs

include a pattern comparable to the chain portion of the V&A's cross necklace, but no patterns

that matched the ALCTC's bracelet.[252] Campbell's book does not provide as detailed instructions

on plaiting techniques and how to work with hair as Speight does, although it is positioned as

revealing "the most ordinary comprehension."[253] Campbell notes that the most valuable qualities

of hair are its length and fine texture, as well as colour.[254] His book seems better suited to

competent makers, while Speight's book is aimed at novices. I would not feel confident taking

on an elaborate hairwork project after reading Campbell. My experience with these two books

may point to a lack of knowledge on my part that was innate to people in the 1860s and 1870s.

This is of interest as the target publication of Campbell's 1867 book (i.e. United States of

America) may be different in comparison to Speight's (i.e. Great Britain), where it is published

five years later. This may demonstrate that there was still a demand and Speight may have been

trying to improve upon Campbell's book, although the latter is never mentioned.

Both Speight's and Campbell's books reveal that the hair was not necessarily given to

jewelers in its raw form, but could be plaited by the customer at home and then brought to a

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[250] Mark Campbell, *Self-Instructor in the Art of Hair Work, Dressing Hair, Making Curls, Switches, Braids, and Hair Jewelry of Every Description* (New York: Campbell, 1867), 260, http://archive.org/details/selfinstructorin00camp.
[251] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 124.
[252] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 204.
[253] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 5.
[254] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 260.

jeweler solely to be mounted.[255] Additionally, both books encourage the use of high quality

metals like gold to be used for the mounting process and provide a selection of mounts that may

be purchased directly through them by way of mail.[256] Interestingly, both encourage the idea that

the mount for the hair is equally important, and reflective of how valuable the hair and thus the

person the hair came from is to the maker.[257] This revelation expands our previous understanding

of the jeweler's role. It may be that raw hair was brought to the jeweler for plaiting and

mounting, or plaited hair could be brought for final mounting, and both may have led to fears

that it could be replaced. In the case of the later, fears may have been heightened as customers

were bringing in not only the hair of a loved one, but a piece they had already spent time

plaiting. This step may have been necessary as few individuals had materials and know-how to

finalize the piece.

While more research can be done in museum archives, the research produced thus far can

confirm the presence of hairwork for a twenty-one-year period beginning in the second half of

the nineteenth century. The V&A cross necklace may place hair jewelry of this style as early as

1850s. This places our bracelet as likely being made or worn sometime between 1850 and 1871.

As Yan informed readers that the trend for mourning jewelry was popularized by Queen Victoria

after the death of her husband Prince Albert in 1861,[258] we can see from Campbell's 1867 work

and Speight's 1871 work that it remained in favour. Hairwork was popular and trending as an

activity to create "ornament or memento" when Campbell's book was published in 1867,

implying popularity for a number of years before that.[259] Speight's 1871 book can attest to their

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[255] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 84; Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 136, 262.
[256] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 128–32; Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 136, 262.
[257] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 84; Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 136.
[258] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 126.
[259] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 262.

continued popularity and likely helped to extend it. Speight's book also produced evidence that by 1871 hairwork and hair jewelry specifically were less desirable as mourning objects, with Speight encouraging readers to select gold beads over black, as black beads designated mourning. Moreover, rather than advertise hairwork as an item exclusively for mourning, Campbell describes it first as an "amusing and entertaining"[260] activity or a way to pass time during "a long winter evening or summer afternoon,"[261] and second, as an item for sentimentality and remembrance.[262] Although the beads on our bracelet appear gold today and may point towards it being made as a sentimental piece, we cannot know for certain when this bracelet was made and it is unclear if earlier mourning jewelry trends had different preferences for metal. That being said, from Speight and Campbell's texts, we can deduce that if this bracelet could have been worn in 1871 and, if the beads are their original colour, it likely would have been perceived as a fashion or sentimental piece, rather than mourning jewelry. In summary, evidence on hairwork presented thus far suggests that, between 1850 and 1871, it was an accepted practice that evolved to be less associated with memento mori and more with a general sense of entertainment as supported in the literature review in the work of Holm, Yan, and Strange.

Use of the Object as a Fashionable Item

To address the use of our ALCTC bracelet as a fashion piece, I searched the American periodical *Godey's Lady's Book* online in issues from 1830 to 1890 for four terms: "hair work," "hair jewelry," "hair bracelet/s," and "mourning jewelry," respectively. This search produced 344 results for "hair work," 41 results for "hair jewelry," 66 results for "hair bracelet/s," and 5 results for "mourning jewelry" where the term was mentioned and/or depicted. This part of the primary

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[260] Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 264.
[261] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 2.
[262] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 90; Campbell, *The Art of Hair Work*, 1867, 10.

source research was helpful to trace the potential trending of hairwork, but it can also be helpful

to understand earlier nineteenth century uses. The following section presents a summary of the

findings from this research, before applying these findings to our ALCTC bracelet.

The first mention of the term "hair work" in the 1830 to 1890 *Godey*'s search is in

volume 41, issue 6, published at the end of 1850 in a section that introduces hairwork as an

optimal pastime:

> "Of the various employments for the fingers lately introduced among our countrywomen,
> none is, perhaps, more interesting than that which we are about to describe, viz., hair
> work; a recent importation from Germany, where it is very fashionable. Hitherto almost
> exclusively confined to professed manufacturers of hair trinkets, this work has now
> become a drawing-room occupation, as elegant and as free from all the annoyances and
> objections of litter, dirt, or unpleasant smells, as the much-practiced knitting, netting, and
> crochet can be."[263]

This article, titled "Hair Work" in *Godey's* includes directions on how to prepare the hair, how to

use the table, two bracelet patterns, and two chain patterns. Addressed primarily at women, they

are encouraged to test out this new "art" as it will allow them to create "bracelets, chains, rings,

ear-rings, and devices" out of the hair of "beloved friends and relatives," with the added benefit

that the women will know for certain whose hair they are wearing.[264] A continuation of the

hairwork patterns were included in volume 42, issue 2, published in early 1851 and includes

three more patterns. An advertisement for Campbell's book appears in an edition of *Godey's* in

1867.[265] Nearly all subsequent mentions of "hair work" appear as part of a permanent

advertisement in a section of *Godey's* titled "Philadelphia Agency" and "Fashions" where

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[263] *Godey's Lady's Book 1850-12: Vol 41 Iss 6* (Open Court Publishing Co, 1850), 377,
http://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1850-12_41_6.
[264] *Godey's Lady's Book 1850-12*, 377.
[265] *Godey's Lady's Book 1867-08: Vol 75 Iss 446* (Open Court Publishing Co, 1867), 187,
http://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1867-08_75_446.

customers could write-in and order clothing, accessories, and patterns, until the advertisement disappears in early 1883.

The targeted search for "hair work" in *Godey's Lady's Book* tells us that this practice was included sporadically as a pastime and advertised consistently as a mail-in purchasing option from 1850 to 1883. Notably, the term "hair work" appears only in the context of instructions on the making process of hair jewelry or when referring to objects made of hair in the broadest sense. To gain a better understanding of the role of our bracelet as a fashion piece, more specific terminology was required.

From 1849 to 1863, there was mention of "hair bracelet/s" in nearly every volume in the section where the "Philadelphia Agency" would respond to mail-in requests and confirm shipping of people's orders, but few references to hair bracelets were found afterwards. After 1863, there are few mentions of hair bracelets; requests for hair bracelets in 1871 and 1873, and brief mentions in fictional stories in 1869 and 1879. Although requests for the broader "hair work" are still present in the "Philadelphia Agency" section, from 1863 to 1871 there are no requests for hair bracelets specifically. As noted in the methodology, the readership for *Godey's* began to decline in 1861 due to the start of the American Civil War. While the decline in readership likely did have some effect on the amount of customers who ordered through the magazine, there is not a drastic decrease in orders for other objects the way requests for hair bracelets diminished. This evidence suggests a more likely 1849 to 1863 production date for our ALCTC bracelet. Furthermore, the data on hair bracelets was more prominent in 1849 to 1863, indicating its heightened fashionability during this period and its lingering presence later on.

While not all hairwork and hair jewelry was meant for mourning, hair bracelets (a sub-section of hair jewelry) are mentioned twice in *Godey's* in the context of mourning. The first

usage of "hair bracelet," published in 1849, states: "For second mourning, there is a pretty style

of hair bracelets, with a clasp of gold with black enamel, and a brooch to match, enclosing a

braid of hair; a plain gold belt-buckle and watch-chain may be also worn."[266] This description of

a mourning hair bracelet supports what Speight described, that gold with black enamel was used

for mourning jewelry, and links hair jewelry to the second phase of mourning wear, which began

nine months after the first year of mourning and allowed women to "omit some of the heavy

crepe from her dresses and add jet jewelry and trimming to her outfits."[267] A second example

from 1850 is from a fictional story where a woman admonishes her servant for bringing her "a

half-mourning bracelet instead of [her] blue enamel."[268] Half-mourning occurred after the first

two years (including the nine months of second mourning) of mourning were complete and

allowed for women to wear appropriate colours like "mauve, white, and grey."[269] Though not

specifically mentioning that the bracelet is made from hair, the previous 1849 quote links hair

bracelets and second mourning and helps support this assessment. These two *Godey's* references

establish that hair bracelets were being worn as second/half mourning jewelry in 1849 and 1850.

While the nature of this thesis did not allow for me to research the inclusion of other

specific jewelry pieces (i.e. earrings, necklaces, watch chains, etc.) which fall under the category

of "hair jewelry," a broader search for the term produced a notable finding. From 1830 to 1890,

"hair jewelry" was used only twice in *Godey's* outside the confines of an advertisement or mail-

in order for hair jewelry. The last mention, in 1881, is only a passing reference to a character's

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[266] *Godey's Lady's Book 1849-07: Vol 39 Iss 1* (Open Court Publishing Co, 1849), 83,
http://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1849-07_39_1.
[267] Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning," 39.
[268] *Godey's Lady's Book 1850-11: Vol 41 Iss 5* (Open Court Publishing Co, 1850), 300,
http://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1850-11_41_5.
[269] Bedikian, "The Death of Mourning," 39.

job in a fictional story,[270] but the first use of "hair jewelry" in 1858 describes a *parure* (set) of

hair jewelry "formed of beads or balls of hair, set in bands of black enamel, edged with gold. The

[set] comprises earring-brooch, an ornament for the front of the corsage, and a bracelet."[271] The

description of "beads or balls of hair" is reminiscent of our object's hair ellipsoids and the

objects at the V&A and the MET. While the black enamel on the bands may signal mourning,

this description of hair jewelry in the 1858 issue appears under the sub-heading "Jewelry" within

a section titled "Fashions," which details the newest fashions in a variety of areas, including

some under the sub-heading "Second-Mourning Styles," where a second/half mourning *parure*

should have been listed but was not. This is in contrast to the hair bracelets that are positioned

exclusively as second/half mourning items in the 1849 and 1850 *Godey's* issues. This could

suggest quick behavioural changes: by 1858, a hair *parure* may not be worn as second/half

morning and, by this time, our ALCTC bracelet may have been part of a set that could include

earrings akin to those from the Met (Figure 14) as well as a necklace similar to the ones at the

V&A, as a *parure* may also include those.

As established through the *Godey's* primary research, the term "hair work" could be very

broad and include the pastime or the objects produced, like hair jewelry or its sub-category—hair

bracelets—that may or may not be used for mourning. While a search for the term "mourning

jewelry" was conducted, it only produced three descriptions of the desirable material for

mourning jewelry being jet or tortoiseshell due to their durability between 1875 and 1880, with

no contextual mention of hair as a desirable or fashionable material. While the previous evidence

presented from *Godey's* does support that hair jewelry (and specifically hair bracelets) were

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[270] *Godey's Lady's Book And Magazine 1881-03: Vol 102 Iss 609* (Open Court Publishing Co, 1881), 250, http://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1881-03_102_609.
[271] *Godey's Lady's Book 1858-08: Vol 57 Iss 2* (Open Court Publishing Co, 1858), 192, http://archive.org/details/sim_godeys-magazine_1858-08_57_2.

worn for mourning, this publication did not use the term "mourning jewelry" but rather demarcated whether the hair object was used for mourning in different ways. For this reason, the search term "mourning jewelry" was not lucrative.

Lastly the issue of gendered use is not one that can be answered via *Godey's Lady's Book.* It was my initial assumption that the bracelet was made for a woman, but, at 19 cm in total length, the bracelet could fit a man's wrist as well. Unfortunately, I found no reference in *Godey's Lady's Book* that such objects were made for men, only that men could also make hairwork.[272] This does not mean it cannot be the case, but the evidence points to women being overwhelmingly targeted as wearers.

In summary, from the 1830 to 1890 search in *Godey's Lady's Book* and the Campbell and Speight evidence collected in the Interpretation phase, it can be advanced that hairwork was popular with and advertised to women. Furthermore, by 1849 and 1850 hair bracelets were part of second/half mourning attire described in *Godey's*. By 1858, this publication mentions that hair bracelets may be part of sets (*parures*) that may no longer be worn as second/half mourning attire. This may be explained by the popularity of hair bracelets in the United States between 1849 and 1863 and how, in 1850, hairwork was already presented in *Godey's* as an enjoyable pastime. More research would need to be conducted in a variety of periodicals in the USA and the UK to substantiate the evidence found in the *Godey's Lady's Book* search. If our ALCTC bracelet has higher probability of dating from 1849 to 1863, three mentions of hair bracelets are nonetheless found from 1871 to 1879. Based on the evidence found in *Godey's*, Campbell's 1867 book and Speight's 1871 book are latecomers but, in the case of the latter, could suggest the beginning of a trend towards fashionable hairwork objects. While it is not possible to say

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[272] *Godey's Lady's Book 1850-12*, 378.

whether our ALCTC bracelet was made as second/half mourning or as an object devoid of sentimental meaning produced as a pastime, it can be established that hair bracelets were most popular as hairwork fashions in the United States between 1849 and 1863 and could be part of a *parure* as such sets encompassed similar hair jewelry, including earrings and necklaces.

Discussion

The research set out to answer the question: "What can an object analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece, tell us about Victorian mourning practices?" In the process of the object analysis and further research into primary and secondary sources, the answer turns out to be quite a bit. Using Mida and Kim's object analysis methodology allowed me to discover the "narrative embedded" in our object, the hair bracelet.[273] As we know one of the necklaces from the V&A was made sometime during the 1850s and Campbell's book was published in 1867, thus providing a nearly twenty-year window where this technique could have been used for hairwork. The culmination of the object analysis, both Speight's and Campbell's books, and the objects from the V&A and MET, allow me to conclude that hairwork and hair jewelry were popular and present in Victorian culture between 1849 and 1871, and that there was a demand for guidance on how to create hairwork pieces in the home from 1867 to 1871, implying an established popularity prior to their publication.

The *Godey's* research produced findings that hair jewelry was worn as second/half mourning pieces from 1849 to 1858 and was being advertised to women from 1850 to 1883. From these findings, I can hypothesize that hair bracelets evolved from second/half-mourning

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[273] Mida and Kim, *The Dress Detective*, 27.

accessories to objects devoid of mourning intent over the span of their peak popularity from 1849 to 1863. It was likely that, with the rise of hairwork as a pastime documented by 1850, by the time of Speight's publication in 1871 and after twenty years of presence in Victorian culture, such objects were ubiquitous.

Yan, Jalland, and Gitter[274] provide the broad 1850s to 1880s as the peak period of popularity for "the common use of hair as a material remembrance of love, friendship, or familial affection, as a memento of the deceased, or as a decorative item worn for personal adornment."[275] These sources amalgamate the different types of hair objects and assign them a broad thirty year period of popularity but, as the research has revealed, there is subtlety in the evolution of hairwork.

To focus solely on hair jewelry for a moment, from its first appearance in *Godey's* in 1850 it was positioned as a leisurely pastime to create mementos of beloved friends and family, in line with the beginning of the accepted peak popularity of all hairwork.[276] Sometime in the 1850s, the V&A cross necklace was made for the explicit purpose of mourning. By 1858, hair bracelets specifically were categorized as fashionable in *Godey's*, as opposed to objects of mourning, suggesting a shift in the use of hair jewelry. In 1861, Prince Albert dies, and Queen Victoria begins her period of mourning that will last until her death. Yan attributes "mourning jewelry [becoming] highly fashionable" to Queen Victoria's materializing of mourning.[277] Campbell's 1867 book emphasises hair jewelry as a favourable pastime to create a sentimental object and as a rapidly growing industry. Yet, when Speight's 1871 guidebook is published, they

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[274] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 300; Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124; Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942.
[275] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124.
[276] *Godey's Lady's Book 1850-12*, 377.
[277] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 126.

advise readers to make design choices not associated with mourning when making their jewelry. This evidence suggests hair jewelry could be classified as a fashion object as early as 1858 (three years before Prince Albert's death) and by 1871 it may have been considered out of fashion to wear or make hair jewelry ostensibly for mourning.

I hypothesise, from the evidence presented, that the growth observed in the popularity of hairwork after the death of Prince Albert may in fact be the beginning of the rise of hair jewelry as fashion objects, specifically, accompanied by the concurrent decline of hair jewelry as mourning objects. While more extensive research is needed on this subject, this evidence suggests there were multiple micro fashion cycles occurring in the thirty-year period from 1850 to 1880, in lieu of the broader macro trend of hair objects. The rapid change of hair jewelry from exclusively a Victorian material culture of death to a stylish accessory supports Speight in his statement that "fashion, however, is at all times irresistible."[278]

However, there are limitations to my hypotheses, in addition to the limitations of any object analysis research that were addressed in the methodology section. The evidence gathered is prescriptive: if two guidebook authors and issues of *Godey's* magazine present hairwork objects to readers, we do not know the extent to which practices were adopted, but we know that some were, as hair jewelry pieces survived. How frequently such objects were used, and exactly where, when, and who made them and for what reason is often unknown. It should be noted that Campbell's book and *Godey's Lady's Book* were both published in the United States of America, while Speight's book was published in the United Kingdom and that the use and popularity of hairwork and jewelry likely differed geographically, despite most fashions originating in Europe. Furthermore, there are many other prominent ladies' magazines and journals that provided

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[278] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 72.

similar information to *Godey's,* but the exploration of these magazines was limited by the nature of this research.

In answer to the research question, an object-analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece can tell us that what was seen as a second/half mourning Victorian custom in the USA in 1849 to 1850 merged into fashionable attire by 1858. This shift in mourning practices was likely complete by 1871 when Speight published their book. Hairwork may have lost its specifically deathly connotation when the practice became more popular as a pastime and, in so doing, entered the fashionable arena in a different way

CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION

This thesis endeavoured to answer the research question: "What can an object analysis of a nineteenth-century mourning hair jewelry piece tell us about Victorian mourning practices?" To further examine this specific mourning practice in the United Kingdom and the United States between 1830 and 1890, an object analysis of a hair bracelet located in the ALCTC was conducted. The literature review provided background knowledge on mourning jewelry and relevant themes in Victorian culture and contributed to the interpretation of findings in the Reflection and Interpretation phases. Mida and Kim's object analysis methodology was chosen to help answer the research question and the history of material culture and object analysis was given a brief overview. The object chosen was carefully observed to understand its complex plaited structure and potential uses. Drawing from other hairwork artifacts and primary sources, I was able to contextualize and interpret the object and explore two deductions: the date of the bracelet and when its use may have shifted from a mourning to a fashion object. The combination of the literature review and methodology allowed for a deeper exploration of the deductions made in the previous chapter.

The literature review explored themes related to mourning jewelry and the influence it had on cultural and social practices in the Victorian Era. Organized by theme, the review first established that although mourning dress played a significant role in shaping the public image of the bereaved widow, due in part to Queen Victoria's popularization of mourning customs after the death of her husband, Prince Albert, mourning jewelry existed in a transitional area between public and private grieving. Even with the deep personal connection imbued in hair as a material,

mourning jewelry gained popularity as a fashion trend as addressed by Yan and Gitter.[279] The materiality of hair as a medium, removed from the body, was explored from a material culture perspective, with scholars Lutz and Holm establishing hair as an authenticator of identity[280] and medium of memory[281] in Victorian culture. Due in part to the sentimental attachment to a specific person's hair, mourning jewelry emerged as both a means of public mourning and as a way to preserve a private bond through locks of hair. Scholars Gitter and Markiewicz further documented how hair was used as a signifier of identity in Victorian culture and literature; establishing hair as an embodiment of a person and thus why Victorians were preserving and cherishing locks of hair from deceased loved ones. Victorian guidebooks were explored next to understand the way hairwork was marketed to middle class women and to exemplify the way mourning jewelry was commodified as a fashionable object.

An overview of mourning practices in the Victorian Era established mourning jewelry as a prominent part of the mourning process and demonstrated the extent to which mourning customs were engrained in Victorian culture. Mourning customs were also gendered, and, as mourning shifted to an association with the sentimental, the gendering of objects that related to mourning changed. The iconography of mourning became rooted in the feminine, and the creating and wearing of jewelry allowed women to express their grief through an outward display of fashion, domestic skills, and social status. While the socioeconomic status of women impacted how they were able to mourn and abide by mourning customs, hairwork and mourning jewelry would have been accessible to most social classes, thus allowing it to grow in popularity as both a memento of a loved one and as a fashion object. While the decline in popularity of

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[279] Yan, "The Art of Working in Hair," 124. Gitter, "The Power of Women's Hair," 942.

[280] Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us," 136.

[281] Holm, "Sentimental Cuts," 140.

mourning jewelry has not been attributed to one specific event, the culmination of progress in germ theory and decline in death rates as well as the accessibility of photography likely contributed to mourning jewelry falling out of fashion beginning in the early 1880s.

To answer my research question, I selected a material culture framework and chose Mida and Kim's object analysis as my methodology. In order to select an appropriate methodology, I briefly addressed the history of material culture and scholars like Prown, Woodward, and Steele who greatly shaped the field. Both Prown and Woodward define material culture as the study of the belief and values of a particular time and culture through objects,[282] and emphasize the importance being able to read an object as it can reveal information otherwise missed. Steele applied Prown's object analysis method to fashion studies and analysis of dress artifacts and underscored the importance of comparison of objects in an effective object analysis.[283] Mida and Kim's object-based research methodology was selected for its detailed checklists, applicability, and focus of dress artifacts. Following Mida and Kim's three phase structure, I first conducted an object analysis of a hairwork bracelet located in the ALCTC and came to the following conclusions.

From the first phase of the object analysis of the bracelet, Observation, four deductions were made:

1. the object is akin to a tube made of hair that is plaited, contracted on a base string to form ellipsoids that are anchored to a base string with plain metal tubes, and fastened with a system of engraved gold-coloured oval beads;

2. it was intended to be worn as a bracelet;

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[282] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 1.
[283] Steele, "A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 330.

3. based on the ellipsoids and beads' inconsistent size and the cut marks on the beads, it is probable the object was hand-made; and

4. the resilient structure of the plaited textile lends itself to regular use.

The second phase, Reflection, provided more insights into the deductions from the Observation phase, and produced three more findings:

1. the bracelet has the ability to function as both a fashion object and/or token of a loved one;

2. patterns similar to those on the beads were fashionable mid-century;

3. the survey of other prominent museum collections confirmed that our object is uncommon, but not rare; and

4. the techniques likely used to make the bracelet and the style itself were popular by 1850.

From the deductions produced in the Observation and Reflection phases, two areas of questioning were chosen to further analyze in the third phase, Interpretation: the object date and its used as a fashionable item. To extrapolate a potential date for our bracelet, primary source research was conducted on necklaces from the V&A made in the 1850s and late nineteenth century, and earrings from the MET dated 1850 to 1860 were analyzed, along with Speight's and Campbell's guidebooks. This vein of research produced four findings:

1. an initial assessment of the object date from 1850s to 1880s based on other artifacts in museums;

2. Campbell's 1867 book and Speight's 1871 book demonstrate that there is a demand for guides on how to make hairwork;

3. the choice of mount was important and could delineate between mourning and fashion jewelry; and

4. Speight's 1871 book suggests that making hairwork exclusively for mourning practices or jewelry was waning in popularity;

From there, the question of the use of the object remained. Issues of *Godey's Lady's Book* provided answers to the use of hairwork and specifically hair bracelets and/or second/half mourning bracelets for the period from 1830 to 1890. This research produced five findings:

1. most mentions of hair bracelets occurred from 1849 to 1863 and subsequently dwindled;

2. hairwork was advertised as a pleasurable pastime and the magazine provided instructions on how to make hairwork at home;

3. hair bracelets were worn as second and/or half mourning jewelry in 1849 and 1850;

4. hair jewelry is advertised as a fashion piece in 1858; and

5. women were overwhelmingly targeted as wearers of hair jewelry.

These findings support what was explored in the literature review, that hairwork and mourning jewelry were popular and fashionable pieces in the mid-nineteenth century. From the object analysis of the bracelet, visual analysis of the three hairwork artifacts from the V&A and the MET, and research into *Godey's* as well as Speight's and Campbell's books, it is probable that this bracelet was made and designed to be worn from 1849 to 1863 as either a mourning item or a fashion accessory. Regardless of its intended use, the hair bracelet is made of hair either donated or taken from a human being and turned into this piece of jewelry, which can be a piece of material remembrance, forever imbued with the identity of the hair donor and those who made and wore it.

As a final note, I have frequently been met with twenty-first century confusion on my research foray into mourning jewelry. When I explain that I am studying jewelry made from people's hair, reactions can range from disgust to intrigue and, whatever the reaction, it is always followed up with one question: "Why?" I tend not to ask what part of it they are questioning. As material culture scholars, humanity is central to everything we study, and what is more human than art made by and from us? But the question "Why?" remains. I think Speight answers this question best: "But however we may look upon it in admiration or in sorrow, we still connect hairs with heads."[284]

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[284] Speight, *The Lock of Hair*, 3.

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