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## Writing Tables and Reading Chairs:

### verbal-textual-intertextual representations of furniture in the nineteenth century

#### Introduction:

Furniture, whether useful or merely ornamental, at once reveals its own story of the degree of talent and the length of time devoted to its execution; all connected with it, to use a homely phrase, is plain and aboveboard, and the eye cannot be deceived by false appearances nor lured to admire by the display of glittering colours, as is the case in many other operative arts (*Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue* 1851: 79).

These comments from the *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Industry of All Nations 1851* are among the most famous verbal, or perhaps more properly, *textual* representations of furniture published during the nineteenth century. As this was “one of the first periods in furniture history for which there are overwhelming written sources” (Agius 1978: 19), the pioneer curators and connoisseurs who established nineteenth-century furniture as a subject worthy of serious scholarship were also able to draw upon many types of texts associated with furniture designed during this era; very often assessing their value as historical sources<sup>1</sup>. For instance, writing in 1962, Elizabeth Aslin (1923-89) categorized several different types of documentary evidence, each written or published with different intentions and aimed at different groups of readers. These included: the business records of leading manufacturers; dated designs for specially commissioned pieces of furniture; the Patent Office Register of Designs (f. 1839); pattern books; trade catalogues; catalogues published for international exhibitions; and, “the wealth of text and illustrations in periodicals” which she described as “the most useful information and [...] certainly the most prolific” (Aslin 1962: 23). Ten years later, Jeremy Cooper also discussed the Victorian textual sources that furniture collectors and historians might draw upon, aiming to indicate “the nature of the information traceable in the many publications” and to provide “an account of the various stylistic changes evident in furniture design” (Cooper 1972: 115). While Aslin listed eight types of documentary evidence, Cooper organized his “bibliography” into five main groups; these also included “Pattern Books and Guides”, “Trade Catalogues” and, “Journals

and Periodicals”. In addition, focusing on printed materials rather than unpublished archival sources, Cooper listed “Books on Taste and Style” and “Critical and Factual Works on the Contemporary Arts” and pointed out that the texts in these two groups sometimes overlapped. Cooper also noted that Clive Wainwright (1942-99) at the Victoria and Albert Museum was then “engaged in compiling a general bibliographic survey of the period” (Cooper 1972: 120); a survey that later formed the basis of the *Pictorial Dictionary of British Nineteenth Century Furniture Design* (1977). Published by the Antique Collectors’ Club as a “Research Project” with an introduction by Edward Joy (1909-81), whose study of *English Furniture 1800-1851* was issued in the same year, the aim of the *Pictorial Dictionary* was “to show the complete range of Victorian furniture in illustrations drawn from contemporary sources” (Joy in *Pictorial Dictionary* 1977: ix). Accordingly, the emphasis was placed upon presenting *visual* information rather than offering any analyses of the *texts* from which the images were reproduced: the illustrations were organized typologically and chronologically to show stylistic changes and innovations in furniture designs throughout the nineteenth century. Although focused on visual evidence, the *Pictorial Dictionary*, also included a biographical section on “The Designers and Design Books” and a list of “Contemporary Sources”, namely Pattern Books, Trade Manuals and Catalogues, which ranged from Sheraton’s “Appendix” to *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer’s Drawing Book* (1802) to Morris & Co.’s *Catalogue of Furniture* (1900). This list, which has provided subsequent generations of scholars and collectors with a useful starting point for further research, also demonstrated an important change in in the purpose of textual representations of furniture published during the nineteenth century; from texts that discussed the *production* of furniture to those more concerned with its *distribution* and *consumption* – from Pattern Book to Catalogue. This is a shift mirrored by recent developments in the work of furniture historians, which has moved beyond the simple identification and discussion of designers, makers, materials and popular styles to much closer examinations of the methods and systems of distribution and forms of consumption; here often focusing on the nineteenth-century construct of “home”. Many studies have relied upon analyses of different types of verbal-textual representations of furniture published in the nineteenth century. This wealth of textual representations of furniture, didactic, descriptive and/or disparaging, provides the critical reader with invaluable research material. Explained in pattern books, praised in

exhibitions catalogues, or critiqued in the trade journal, very often the same item of furniture can be considered from multiple synchronic viewpoints; while a diachronic analysis of its appearance in subsequent texts can chart the decline, fall and revival of its appreciation and of nineteenth century furniture more generally. Perhaps an example would be helpful; let's return to the Great Exhibition.

### **The Tale of Pugin's "Bookcase"**

Described in the second volume of the *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851*, "Furniture" was exhibited in Section III, Class 26 along with "Upholstery, Paper Hangings, Decorative Ceilings, Papier Mâché and Japanned Goods", where the appearance of the entire Class bespoke "a high degree of national prosperity" (*Official Catalogue* 1851: 729).

The exhibits included a wide range of furniture types produced in a multitude of popular styles by 528 exhibitors<sup>2</sup> as well as the more unusual patented inventions and extraordinary virtuoso objects, often made on a gigantic scale or covered with elaborate decoration, created to attract maximum attention at the Crystal Palace [Figure 1]. Indeed, the *Official Catalogue* noted that "many of the decorative objects appear better to become the apartments of a palace than those of persons from the ordinary walks of life" and deemed "the amount of ingenuity, of contrivance and arrangement" which had been "expended upon furniture ... scarcely conceivable" (1851: 729). Objects such as the painted and gilded mahogany and limewood table made by George Morant & Son [Figure 2] with its naturalistic stork supports of cast plaster and metal, gilded leather bulrushes, flowers and lily leaves and a circular plate glass top painted in imitation of Florentine mosaic appeared in the *Official Catalogue* (plate 34), *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures* (plate 17) and in the *Art-Journal Illustrated Catalogue*, where it was praised as one of three "elegant objects" exhibited by Morant (1851: 34). Yet, much of the furniture designed and described in the mid-Victorian period quickly came to represent "a depressing picture of the progress of taste in furniture" (Jervis 1968: 13). Well before the end of Queen Victoria's reign, the decorative arts of the period, including its furniture, had become "an aesthetic no-

go area whose vast multiplicity of surviving artefacts were either beneath contempt or merely objects of derision” (Wainwright 1986:9). Morant’s Stork Table, which had been “widely criticised for the over naturalistic character of the base” (V&A Museum: W.34:1, 2-1980) was silently put into storage. Even items of furniture approved of by the designers and theorists associated with the British “Design Reform” movement, who, with government support sought to establish official Schools of Design *and* to improve the taste of the consuming public, would suffer serious neglect and an uncertain future. Perhaps the best known, and most fitting example for a chapter on verbal-textual-intertextual representations of furniture in the nineteenth century, is the tale of Pugin’s “bookcase”, a cabinet designed in the Gothic Revival style by AWN Pugin (1812-52) and manufactured by Crace of London [Figure 3].

Exhibited among other items of furniture in the Medieval Court, “one of the most striking portions of the Exhibition”, which Pugin had himself designed and superintended, the “cabinet bookcase, in carved oak, with ornamental brass work” (*Official Catalogue* 1851: 761) was described by the *Art Journal* as “one of the most important pieces in the Medieval Court” (1851: 317). Despite anti-Catholic grumblings in the popular press (Teukolsky 2009: 88-91) and Ralph Wornum’s assessment of the Medieval Court as “simply the copy of an old idea; old things in an old taste” (Wornum 1851: V\*\*\*), the cabinet was the first piece of British furniture acquired for the new Museum of Ornamental Art based at Marlborough House (VAM: 25:1 to 3-1852). Costing £154 (an RPI equivalent of £15,090 in 2015), it was praised for the quality of its construction and carved details (Department of Practical Art 1852: 48). By the 1930s, however, when “official appreciation of the Gothic Revival was at its lowest” (this despite the publication of Kenneth Clark’s *Gothic Revival* in 1928), the “disposal” of the cabinet was being considered<sup>3</sup>. Saved for use as an office bookcase at the Bethnal Green Museum, its importance went unrecognized for another twenty years, until it was included in an exhibition of *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts*.

Held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1952 to “commemorate the centenary of the Museum of Ornamental Art” (Ashton in *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* 1952: 2), this exhibition marked an important turning point in the appreciation of nineteenth-century furniture as part of a

wider “Victorian Revival”<sup>4</sup>. Even so, the exhibits were chosen “in accordance with Pevsnerian orthodoxy in which special emphasis was placed on what was regarded as sincerity and originality” (Watkin 1980: 174). Indeed, Peter Floud (1911-60), Keeper of the Circulating Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which had organized the exhibition, noted in his introduction to the Catalogue:

We have deliberately eliminated what was merely freakish or grotesque. At the same time we have purposely left out a whole host of Victorian designers whose work was unashamedly based on the copying of earlier styles (Floud in *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* 1952: 5).

Unsurprisingly, there was no sign of Morant’s stork table!

Fortunately, in a post-modern age such fascinating objects are of much more interest and prompt many more questions. Times and tastes have changed and since the serious revival of interest in Victorian culture in the mid-twentieth century, historians and collectors have been steadily re-evaluating and re-discovering the furniture designed, manufactured, distributed, acquired and used during the nineteenth century.

While both Pugin’s “bookcase” and Morant’s table survived to be displayed in the British Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, other items were not so fortunate<sup>5</sup>. At best “disregarded as merely old-stuff with only second-hand value” (Agius 1978: 19); at worst, like Jennens and Bettridge *papier-mâché* “Day-Dreamer Chair”, they have disappeared [Figure 4]. But all is not entirely lost; many examples of nineteenth-century furniture have survived, if only on paper, as textual representations. For instance, the entry for the “Day-Dreamer Chair” in the *Official Catalogue*, which included a full-page illustration, also offered a detailed explanation of its symbolic decoration:

The “day dreamer”, — an easy chair, designed by H. Fitz Cook, and manufactured in papier mâché, by the exhibitors. The chair is decorated at the top with two winged thoughts — the

one with bird-like pinions, and crowned with roses, representing happy and joyous dreams; the other with leathern bat-like wings — unpleasant and troublesome ones. Behind is displayed Hope, under the figure of the rising sun. The twisted supports of the back are ornamented with the poppy, heartsease, convolvulus and snow-drop, all emblematic of the subject. In front of the seat is a shell, containing the head of a cherub, and on either side of it, pleasant and troubled dreams are represented by figures. At the side is seen a figure of Puck, lying asleep in a labyrinth of foliage, and holding a branch of poppies in his hand (*Official Catalogue* 1851: 748).

This additional textual representation enables the reader (both past and present) to decode the complexities of its design and to marvel at the technical ability of its manufacturers, who have given form to fantasy if not function.

In *Eminent Victorians* (1918), Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) famously warned future generations about the impossibility of writing the history of the Victorian Age. Blaming the “vast quantity of information” that had been poured forth and accumulated about the period, he offered a solution to this embarrassment of textual riches:

It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous narration that the explorer of the past can hope to depict that singular epoch. If he is wise, he will adopt a subtler strategy ... He will row out over that great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths, to be examined with a careful curiosity. (Strachey 2009 [1918]: 5)

Almost a hundred years later, and mindful of the overwhelming amount of textual sources available, which in an age of digital humanities seems to have expanded exponentially, I have confined the contents of my “little bucket” to printed materials. Sadly, this excludes the unpublished archives of leading furniture manufacturers, for example, the famous *Estimate Sketch Books* (1784-1905), “the most frequently consulted series records” of Gillows. Held at Westminster City Archives these are a “factual record of the furniture produced by the firm and provide valuable information about furniture

designs, the cost of materials, workmanship, sometimes the craftsmen responsible and the client for whom the piece was made” (CWA: 344). Fortunately, Susan E. Stuart’s magnum opus *Gillows of Lancaster and London, 1730-1840* (2008), draws extensively upon the estimate sketchbooks, thus making “available vast swathes of previously unpublished material from what is unquestionably the most important surviving archive of any English cabinet-maker” (Levy 2009-10: 212).

Westminster City Archives also hold other frequently consulted collections that relate to furniture manufacturers and retailers, including the archive of Liberty of London, while, the archives of the Crace Family (1692-1992); Holland & Son (1821-1968); Heal & Son Holdings plc (1810-2009) and, EW Godwin are part of the Victoria and Albert Museum Collections held at the Archive of Art and Design<sup>6</sup>. These unpublished sources are, of course, significant textual representations of furniture that have been the subject of detailed investigations<sup>7</sup>. Many studies have drawn upon other unpublished texts kept within these archives such as diaries and letters written by furniture designers, makers, sellers and customers, which are also invaluable forms of textual representation that provide evidence of the relationships between producers, distributors and consumers and which offer descriptions of furniture. Again, however, for practical reasons, this type of unpublished hand-written material has also been deliberately denied a place in my bucket.

Pragmatism aside, the historical and cultural context of the nineteenth century provides further justification for this possibly contentious decision. As Richard Altick’s pioneering book, *The Common Reader* (1957; 1998) has demonstrated, the nineteenth century witnessed a massive expansion of print culture. Driven by technological developments in both print and paper production, improvements in systems of distribution (from the railways to the circulating libraries) were able to feed a rapidly growing mass-market of literate consumers who were hungry for print in all its forms. Indeed, due to important social changes including Foster’s Education Act (1870), census data show that while the population rose from 7.8 million in 1801 to 30 million by 1901, so too did male and female literacy rates, which reached 97.2 percent and 96.8 percent respectively by 1900 (Altick 1998: 171). Inevitably, a growing population stimulated the demand for housing. Again, census figures show that in 1831 there were over 2.5 million houses in England and Wales increasing to over 6.25



million by 1901; houses that of course needed furniture. As Henry Mayhew (1812-87) noted in the third volume of *London Labour and the London Poor*:

Since 1839 there have been 200 miles of new streets formed in London, no less than 6,405 new dwellings have been erected annually since that time; and it is but fair to assume that the majority of these new homes must have required new furniture (Mayhew 1861: 223).

Strachey's choice of biographical subjects was ostensibly determined "by simple motives of convenience and of art" (Strachey 2009 [1918]: 5), however, in considering the "new furniture" referred to by Mayhew, the second part of this chapter has been organized using a model of Production-Distribution-Consumption developed by John A. Walker in *Design History and the History of Design* (1989). Presented diagrammatically, Walker divided the processes of design into four sections each representing a different phase: the production of designs; the manufacture of designed goods – in this case furniture; the distribution of those goods through marketing and retailing activities; and, finally, the consumption and use of the goods including their customization, re-sale, collection, re-cycling and/or destruction [Figure 5]. I have applied this same principle to my classification of the primary publications discussed throughout the chapter which in turn relate to the *production* (both design and manufacture), the *distribution* and the *consumption* of actual furniture during the nineteenth century. This allows for a consideration of textual representations in terms of authorship *and* readership; here asking who wrote these texts, why they were written and published, and how they might have been understood by their intended readers.

The first part examines publications that relate to the design and manufacture of nineteenth-century furniture written *by* cabinet-makers and upholsterers, architect-designers and design-educators *for* those working in the trade. These texts include cabinet-makers' price books, drawing books, instruction manuals and treatises written by professional designers. The next section considers the range of publications issued as a means of marketing and distribution, including trade and exhibition catalogues written by, or about manufacturers, and aimed at potential consumers. This section will also examine examples of domestic design advice literature; a valuable source in the history of

furniture, which “is situated firmly within the category of mediation, operating as it does between the realms of production and consumption” (Lees-Maffei 2003: 3). Finally, the chapter will consider textual representations that relate to the consumption of furniture including published accounts of the collections amassed by patrons of designers, manufacturers and furnishers, and descriptions of furniture within homes, both rich and poor, that were published in nineteenth century books, reports and magazine articles. Here I shall also consider descriptions of furniture found in the nineteenth-century novel, which, although fictional rather than factual examples, are nonetheless, textual *representations* of furniture.

So now, with my life-jacket fastened and my little bucket ready to be lowered, I shall “row out over that great ocean of material” and, while afloat, I shall endeavor to bring up to the light of day some characteristic [textual] specimens about the design, manufacture, distribution and consumption of furniture that were published in the nineteenth century.

### **Nineteenth-century Texts: the Production of Furniture**

A wide range of publications that relate to the production of furniture were issued in the nineteenth century demonstrating the shift from the *verbal* to the *textual* representation of furniture. Indeed, as Sheraton noted in his *Drawing Book*, “a master cannot possibly convey to the workman so just an idea of a piece of furniture by a verbal description as may be done by a good sketch” (Sheraton 1802: 178). From furniture pattern books to the periodicals which eventually replaced them (Long 2002:116), this tsunami of texts is just as Strachey warned. For instance, the number of English-language journals which contained discussion and descriptions of furniture originally published for the professional artist-designer, decorator, furniture maker, architect and builder during the course of the nineteenth century is staggering. These include, chronologically: *The Art Union* (1838-49), *The Art Journal* (1839-1911), *The Builder* (f. 1843), *The Journal of Design and Manufacturing* (1849-52), *The Cabinet Maker’s Assistant* (f. 1853), *The Building News* (1855-1926), *The Cabinet Maker’s Monthly Journal of Design* (f. 1856), *The Decorator* (1864), *The Architect* (f.1869), *The Workshop* (1869-72),

*The House Furnisher and Decorator* (1872-3), *The Furniture Gazette* (1872-93), *The Art Workman* (1873-83), *The British Architect and Northern Engineer* (f. 1874), *The Magazine of Art* (1878-1904), *The Artist* (1880-92), *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture* (1880-94), *The Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher* (1880-1902), *Decoration in Painting, Architecture, Furniture etc.* (1880-93), *The Journal of Decorative Art* (1881-1937), *The Art Designer* (f. 1884), *The Hobby Horse* (1884-8), *Art and Decoration* (1885-6), *Furniture and Decoration* (1890-98), *The Studio* (f. 1893), the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (f.1893), *The Architectural Review* (f. 1896), *The House* (1897-1902), and *The Furnisher* (1899-1901). This long list, for which I apologize, is intended to highlight the breadth and depth of this great textual ocean and the potential for over-filling my little bucket with professional and trade magazines alone.

Since the 1950s, furniture historians have drawn upon a wide range of nineteenth-century texts that focus upon the production of furniture, or more properly the *design* of furniture. There are many significant monographs and articles which have effectively recovered the biographies and oeuvre of many British architect-designers, often with a focus on the works of the “Progressive”; notably; AWN Pugin (1812-52); William Burges (1827-81); Christopher Dresser (1834-1904); Bruce Talbert (1838-81); CFA Voysey (1857-1941); CR Ashbee (1863-1942); and, Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928)<sup>8</sup>. Besides the studies of leading nineteenth-century furniture manufacturing and furnishing companies including Gillows (f. 1730); Crace (f. 1768); Holland & Son (f. 1803) and Heal’s (f. 1810), several scholars have used company archives to investigate the other London-based firms including the cabinet-maker George Bullock (fl. 1777-1818); Collinson & Lock (f. 1782); Charles Hindley & Sons (fl. 1817-92) Jackson & Graham (f. 1836); Maples (f. 1870); and William Watt & Company (f.1874)<sup>9</sup>. The over-abundance of texts about Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., would probably fill an entire chapter, but there are several studies that focus upon specific pieces of furniture including the famous Sussex chair range or the “Morris Adjustable-Back Armchair”<sup>10</sup> designed and made by the well-known original members of “the Firm”, Ford Madox Brown (1821-93), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) and by Philip Webb (1831-1915), as well as the later designs by George Jack (1855-1931)<sup>11</sup>. Where records have survived, the work of smaller provincial firms of cabinet-makers

has also been examined in articles published in the *Journal of the Regional Furniture Society*<sup>12</sup>. The work of “Ruskinian” Guilds<sup>13</sup> and the Cotswold-based craftsmen associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement have also received a great deal of attention<sup>14</sup>. Finally, driven by an interest in social and labor history since the late-1960s, the organization of the furniture “industry” has also been examined including the emergence of trades unionism; the division of labor within the “comprehensive manufacturing firms”; the “dishonourable” trade in London’s East End; and, the chair-making capital at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire<sup>15</sup>. These studies have all been based upon a careful examination of nineteenth-century texts. So, what should I bring up to the light of day to examine with “careful curiosity”? Walker’s diagram offers a solution, suggesting texts written *for* the labor force involved in the production processes – design and manufacture – *by* practitioners, educators and professional organizations.

While the illustrated pattern books, discussed elsewhere in this volume, were published by individual cabinet-makers and upholsterers to disseminate fashionable designs for a wide range of furniture types, the Society (later Union) of London Cabinet Makers issued their own books of *Prices and Designs of Cabinet Work*, which “collectively form a factual compendium of incomparable richness for everyone seriously interested in furniture history” (Gilbert 1982: 15). First published in 1788, Price Books were prepared by a Committee of Masters and Journeymen, but unlike the “lavish pattern book intended to enhance the prestige and advertise the business of an individual firm”, this type of publication was instead “a practical handbook for regulating and calculating the labour charges or piecework rates when making specific cabinet wares in common production” (Gilbert 1982:11). Price Books reveal a great deal about the economics of the furniture trade; as Martin Weil has commented their “very existence suggests the need to establish stable and uniform prices which in turn suggests that the trade was disturbed by competitive pricing practices” (1979: 175). However, aimed at working cabinet-makers and intended for daily use in the workshop, they also contained long and detailed specifications for all types of furniture. The following description from the 1811 edition of the *London Cabinet-Makers’ Union Book of Prices* gives the dimensions for, and cost of making “A Cylinder-Fall Writing Table”:

All solid.—Three feet long, one foot nine inches wide, the upper framing ten and a half inches deep, the lower framing six and a half inches ditto, one drawer in front, cock beaded, &c.: four inches deep) outside, the inside fast; three small drawers and six letter-holes in ditto; the edge of the top and the sweep part of ends square; on plain Marlbro legs; the standing-board solid and made fast, and a front edge of inch stuff under ditto, to receive a mortice lock; the bottom rail of inch and quarter stuff; without any mouldings; the cylinder to run on four iron pins, or with wood tongues; the upper back of mahogany, screw'd in; partition edges faced with mahogany (1811:99).

Published without an accompanying plate, the language of the text indicated the technical knowledge required by the cabinet-maker; as Weil has also noted, Price Books are “especially useful for the insights they provide into the terminology used by the craftsman himself as opposed to the terminology invented in subsequent years by collectors and dealers” (Weil 1979:175). The London Price Books were revised until 1866, with supplements issued for “work not included in the union book” and for specific items such as “improved extensible dining tables”<sup>16</sup>. Versions were also published beyond the metropolis in towns and cities across England and north of the border in Scotland: they were also compiled in America thus offering information about regional and national variations in popular designs<sup>17</sup>.

The Price Books, written for the skilled master, journeyman and apprentice, focused upon the costs and specifications associated with the production of furniture; however, other texts published in the nineteenth century offered additional instruction for the cabinet-maker or upholsterer in a range of technical skills, particularly drawing. Akiko Shimbo has noted that many authors “stated that apprenticeship did not provide enough training” and that “there was demand among craftspeople for more advanced, sophisticated and practical knowledge of ornamental and perspective drawing” (2015: 50). Several early pattern books, for example, George Smith’s *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer’s Guide, Drawing Book and Repository* (1826) included instructions on perspective and ornamental drawing and geometry “sufficient to make any one a draftsman in his own person” (Smith 1826: vi); detailed drawing exercises were also included in several furniture pattern books. In the “Preface” to

the 1835 edition of *The Rudiments of Drawing Cabinet and Upholstery Furniture* (first published in 1822), Richard Brown drew attention to the short comings of his better-known predecessors and justified the need for his own publication:

The writers on the subject of cabinet furniture have been comparatively few; and the books hitherto published containing merely designs for furniture, and not rudiments, gave rise to the present work. It is true that Chippendale and Sheraton have given rules for drawing; but the ideas of their trivial compositions being taken from the models of the French school of about the middle of the last century, now obsolete, has entirely discouraged cabinet-makers from investigating the principles employed in their delineations (Brown 1835: iv).

Writing in 1847, Henry Whitaker also drew attention to the importance of drawing skills for designers in his snappily-titled *The Practical Cabinet-Maker, Upholsterer and Decorator's Treasury of Designs in the Grecian, Italian, Renaissance, Louis-Quatorze, Gothic, Tudor, and Elizabethan Styles, including designs executed for the Royal Palaces and for some of the principal mansions of the nobility and gentry, and club houses*:

With the pains that are now taken by the Government Schools of Design, to imbue all classes with a knowledge of drawing, ... we hope yet to see the day when England will stand as pre-eminent for excellence of design, as it does for the execution of every article that employs the hand of man, and contributes to health, comfort, or refinement (Whitaker 1847: 5).

The Government Schools of Design, funded by the Board of Trade, had been established ten years earlier after the Parliamentary Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures (1835-6) reported on the poor standard of British-manufactured goods and their story has been discussed elsewhere<sup>18</sup>. The aim was to improve the standard of design education in Britain, and although Pugin famously dismissed the first School of Design at Somerset House as a “mere drawing school” (*The Builder* 1845:367), several architect-designers and artists (the so-called “Design Reformers”) associated with what became known as the “South Kensington System” produced a wide range of texts on furniture design during this period. These design-focused texts, which included treatises, instruction manuals, essays,

published lectures, and, articles in the professional and trade journals, indicated the growing the division of labour in the production of furniture between what John Moyr Smith (1839-1912) described as “the department of design and ... that of practical workmanship” (1887: iv).

Some of these publications were written for an intended readership of designers and craftsmen directly involved in the production processes; for instance, William Bell Scott’s *The Ornamentist or Artisan’s Manual of the Various Branches of Ornamental Art* (1845). Other works, such as Christopher Dresser’s *Studies in Design* (1876), were aimed at a wider possible audience, being:

intended to help the decorator and to enable those who live in decorated houses to judge, to an extent, of the merit of the ornament around them. It will also, it is hoped, aid the designer and the manufacturer of decorated objects, by suggesting to them useful ideas (Dresser 1876: Preface).

Christopher Dresser studied at the Government School of Design where he was influenced by the men leading the design reform movement: Richard Redgrave (1804-88), Henry Cole (1808-82), Owen Jones (1809-74), and Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820-77). Appointed Professor of Artistic Botany at the Department of Science and Art, South Kensington in 1855, Dresser contributed designs from “Leaves and Flowers from Nature” to Owen Jones’ *Grammar of Ornament* (1856)<sup>19</sup>. He also wrote several books on design, including *The Art of Decorative Design* (1862), *Principles of Design* (1873), *Studies in Design* (1875), *Japan: its Architecture, Art and Art-Manufactures* (1882) and *Modern Ornamentation* (1886) and he was the editor of the *Furniture Gazette* (1880-1). Dresser was among several authors who combined the roles of critic and practitioner in this period. Writing about EW Godwin (1833-86), who was “lead writer, editorial consultant and occasional graphic designer for the *British Architect and Northern Engineer* (1878-85)”, Juliet Kinchin has commented that his “direct contemporaries such as Bruce Talbert, John Moyr Smith, Christopher Dresser and William Morris all heightened their visibility through committing themselves to print” (Kinchin 2005: 22).

Dresser’s *Principles of Design* (1873), a text addressed to “working men”, included a chapter on “Furniture”, which was based upon three articles on “Art Furniture” first published in *The Technical*

*Educator* (1870)<sup>20</sup>. A close-reading of this work suggests that it is also an excellent example of *intertextuality*, which refers to many other contemporary texts. In fact, this single chapter incorporates textual representations of furniture including exhibition reports, trade catalogues, pattern books, professional journals, museum guide books and advice manuals.

The construction of furniture was the key theme of Dresser's chapter: "for unless such works are properly constructed they cannot possibly be useful, and if not useful they would fail to answer the end for which they were contrived" (50). His opening remarks included a well-known quote from Richard Redgrave's *Supplementary Report*<sup>21</sup> on "the general state of design as applied to the fabric and manufactures in the Great Exhibition" (1851: 708):

"Design", says Redgrave, "has reference to the construction of any work both for use and beauty, and therefore includes its ornamentation also. Ornament is merely the decoration of a thing constructed" (Dresser 1873: 50).

Next, Dresser considered "the structure of works of furniture" and focused upon wood "the material from which we form our furniture" (51). Here, having commented upon the grain and strength of different types of wood, he referred his readers to the *Catalogue of the Collection illustrating Construction and Building Material* in the South Kensington Museum, and the manual of *Technical Drawing for Cabinetmakers*, by EA Davidson (51). Moving on to discuss the design and construction of chairs, Dresser complained that he saw "but few chairs in the market which are well constructed" (52). To illustrate this point he referred to, and "borrowed" images from the popular domestic advice manual *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) by Charles Locke Eastlake (1836-1906). Dresser commented in a footnote:

\*It is well worth reading, as much may be learned from it. I think Mr. Eastlake right in many views, yet wrong in others, but I cannot help regarding him somewhat as an apostle of ugliness, as he appears to me to despise finish and refinement (52).



Consequently, he re-used an image of a chair recommended by Eastlake as an example of “good taste in furniture” to illustrate what Dresser considered “essentially bad and wrong” [Figure 6]. He continued:

Were I sitting in such a chair, I should be afraid to lean to the right or the left, for fear of the chair giving way. Give me a Yorkshire rocking-chair, in preference to one of these ... (53).

Instead he offered his own illustrations of chairs in a range of styles as examples that “show how I think chairs should be constructed”:

Fig. 30 is an arm-chair in the Greek style, which I have designed. Fig. 31 is a lady's chair in the Gothic style; Fig. 32, a lady's chair in early Greek. These I have prepared to show different modes of structure (55).

Dresser also discussed and illustrated a Greek-style “chair shown by Messrs. Gillow and Co., of Oxford Street, in the last Paris International Exhibition” (56), an event that he had reported on in *The Development of Ornamental Art in the International Exhibition* (1862). Alongside the “admirably constructed” Gillows chair Dresser placed an illustration “from Mr. Talbert’s very excellent work on ‘Gothic Furniture’” (56). Other designs for a settee and a sideboard from Talbert’s pattern book *Gothic Forms Applied to Furniture, Metal Work and Decoration for Domestic Purposes* (1862) were also included and approved:

Although Mr. Talbert is not always right, yet his book is well worthy of the most careful consideration and study; and this I can truly say, that it compares favourably with all other works on furniture with which I am acquainted (58).

Having advocated “simplicity of structure and truthfulness of construction” (58), Dresser next considered “the enrichment of parts”; here he recommended that any carving “should be sparingly used” (61). This part of the chapter referred to and illustrated “Mr. Grace's sideboard, by Pugin” (61) and “a painted cabinet by Mr. Burgess [sic] (Fig. 42), the well-known Gothic architect, whose architecture must be admired. Both of these works are worthy of study of a very careful kind” (64).

Dresser's study of these two pieces found fault in the excessive carving on Pugin's sideboard, while the "much more serious objections" identified and enumerated regarding Burges' painted cabinet<sup>22</sup> related to its roof: "It is very absurd ... to treat the roof of a cabinet, which is to stand in a room, as if it were an entire house, or an object which were to stand in a garden" (65). Interestingly, William Burges had also written on "Furniture" in his published Cantor Lectures *Art Applied to Industry* (1865). Here, Burges defended notable pieces of painted furniture exhibited at the International Exhibition of 1862:

The works of Marshall, Morris, and Co., in the late Exhibition, were excellent examples of this way of treatment, but then the Firm are all artists, so that we have a right to expect better things than we generally find ... I hope to see a very great deal of this furniture executed, for it speaks and gives us ideas—but then some people dislike nothing so much as ideas, and, upon the whole, would rather not think at all (Burges 1865: 76-7).

But, back to Dresser.

Condemning examples of "the false in furniture" discovered while examining French wardrobes and cabinets at the International Exhibition of 1862 ("Horrible! horrible!" was all I could exclaim"), Dresser also exposed "the series of frauds and shams" he had detected in falsely constructed Gothic furniture designed and manufactured by a large Yorkshire firm of cabinet-makers. Here he equated bad design with bad morals: "How any person could possibly produce such furniture, be he ever so degraded, I cannot think" (66). The chapter continued with comments upon "upholstery as applied to works of furniture, the materials employed as coverings for seats, and the nature of picture-frames and curtain-poles"; he also found space to "notice general errors in furniture, strictly so called" (65).

Much of this discussion referred once more to Eastlake's earlier book. Here, Dresser again copied an illustration, but this time also quoted at length from the text of *Hints*, reproducing two pages of Eastlake's objections to the telescopic dining table "generally made of planks of polished oak or mahogany laid upon an insecure framework of the same material, and supported by four gouty legs, ornamented by the turner with mouldings which look like inverted cups and saucers piled upon an

attic baluster” (Eastlake quoted in Dresser 1873: 66). Dresser was in accord; “especially in his remark that, owing to the very nature of its construction, a modern dining-table must be an inartistic object” (67). The chapter continued with four illustrations of mirrors, which Dresser included as “examples of utterly bad furniture” before he turned to the subject of veneering. Unsurprisingly, given his strictures on falsity in furniture, this was condemned as “a practice which should be wholly abandoned” (68). Following this were the promised recommendations for drapery and upholstery which criticized the “gouty forms” of sofas “now made as though they were feather beds ... so soft that you sink into them, and become uncomfortably warm by merely resting upon them” (70) before he concluded rather abruptly with an illustration of a picture frame taken from the *Building News* of September 7th, 1866, which he described as “fanciful but good” (72).

Dresser’s *Principles*, the earlier drawing books of Smith, Brown and Whitaker, and the Price Books issued by the Society of London Cabinet-Makers are texts that relate to the production of furniture: all were aimed explicitly at a readership of “working men”. Yet Dresser’s work also incorporated publications usually associated with the distribution and consumption of furniture including exhibition reports, trade catalogues, museum guide books and advice manuals; texts to which I shall now turn “my careful curiosity”.

### **Nineteenth-century Texts: the Distribution of Furniture**

Walker’s diagram suggests several different types of text that relate to the distribution of furniture; the third of the processes of design that moves manufactured goods from producers to consumers. These include publications that were issued for marketing purposes such as advertisements and catalogues, both those produced by the furniture trade for their customers and those produced on a larger scale for exhibitions.

The nineteenth century was famously an “Age of Exhibitions”; the second half of the period witnessed Great Exhibitions, *Expositions Universelles*, and world’s fairs in London (1851, 1862 and 1871); Paris (1855, 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900); Vienna (1873); Philadelphia (1876); Melbourne (1880-1); Barcelona (1888); Chicago (1893) and Brussels (1897). These exhibitions, which are

discussed elsewhere in this volume, have formed the subject of many studies that have explored themes of imperialism, internationalism versus nationalism, trade, manufacturing and technological developments in this period<sup>23</sup>. British furniture – the product of all these influences – was exhibited at many international events where it was compared with the furniture manufactured by other nations; especially that exhibited by the French. Indeed, of the five prestigious “Council Medals” awarded at the Great Exhibition in Class 26 none were given to British firms: four went to French manufacturers and one to an Austrian exhibitor.

As was demonstrated at the outset of this chapter, illustrated descriptions can be found in the Catalogues and Guide Books; but detailed information can also be found in the Jurors’ and Artisans’ Reports and the countless journal and newspaper articles which reviewed the exhibitions. Sometimes these offer very different opinions about the same object. For instance, the virtuoso cabinet made by French firm Fourdinois, which was exhibited at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1867, was depicted and described in the *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Universal Exhibition* [Figure 7]:

It is impossible, either by pen or pencil, to do justice to the Cabinet of M. Fourdinois, the *chef-d’oeuvre* of the Exhibition, and certainly the best work of its class that has been produced, in modern times, by any manufacturer. But it is not a production of manufacture, not even of Art-manufacture; it is a collection of sculptured works, brought together and made to constitute parts of a cabinet— these “parts” all exquisitely sculptured; “carving” is not a word sufficient to express their delicacy and beauty. We engrave it; yet no engraving, however large, could convey an idea of the perfection of this perfect work (1867: 141).

The cabinet was also described in Alfred Cooper’s report on “Cabinet Making” published in the *Reports of Artisans selected by a committee appointed by the Society of Arts to visit the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867* as:

... decidedly a perfect gem. The ground is dark wood, and the carving light, but there is this peculiarity in the work, the carving is not planted on, but inlaid, the wood being quite cut

through, and, when all glued together, forms one solid mass. This piece of work I consider to be the perfection of cabinet work (Cooper 1867: 6).

*And* in James Mackie's report on "Woodcarving":

The ebony cabinet, with carved and many-tinted pear-tree inlay, in the same style of art, is certainly a masterpiece. ... its details are so perfect, that, were it divided into a thousand pieces, each would be a model and a treasure. ... It must be pronounced a work of wonderful beauty (Mackie 1867: 85).

And *again* in R. Baker's slightly less enthusiastic *Report* on the same trade:

... it is rather over-done in the minuteness and delicacy of detail; the inlaid wood restricts the carver, and the colouring somewhat destroys the effect of the carving (Baker 1867: 103).

Awarded the Grand Prix at the *Exposition*, Fourdinois' ebony cabinet was acquired by the newly founded South Kensington Museum for £2,750 (an RPI equivalent of £219,600 in 2015), but was later described in disparaging terms by Christopher Dresser:

The South Kensington Museum purchased in the last Paris International Exhibition, at great cost, a cabinet from Fourdonois [sic]; but it is a very unsatisfactory specimen, as it is too delicate, too tender, and too fine for a work of utility—it is an example of what should be avoided rather than of what should be followed (1873: 63).

Exhibitions generated many fascinating textual representations of furniture, even though "exhibition furniture" like Fourdinois' ebony cabinet, Morant's Stork Table and Jennens and Bettridge's "Day-Dreamer Chair" give "a completely misleading picture of furniture in common use" (Aslin 1962: 36). Perhaps their extraordinary nature explains why these pieces have so often been examined. However, not all furniture on view and described in the catalogues was "exhibition furniture"; many objects displayed were subsequently successful and widely produced. Famously, Michael Thonet's Vienna bentwood chairs (c.1850) were awarded a bronze medal at the Great Exhibition and, following improvements in manufacturing techniques, a silver medal four years later at the Paris Exposition.

Depicted in the *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the International Exhibition* of 1862 [Figure 8], they were praised for:

combining a remarkable degree of lightness with strength and being produced at a singularly small cost. By a peculiar process in manufacture, the wood can be bent to any shape. The designs are generally graceful and good, the great purpose of “use” being always kept in view (1862: 291).

Examples of innovative furniture were also shown at events such as the themed exhibitions held annually in London including the *International Health Exhibition* (1884) and the *International Inventions Exhibition* (1885). The catalogues published for these events provide interesting descriptions and commentary, even though furniture was not the primary object of interest; indeed, items could only be exhibited if they fulfilled specific requirements:

[...] only such exhibits as have a distinct bearing upon health can be admitted. Specimens, therefore, illustrating building construction generally, the decoration of houses, or their furniture, cannot be admitted unless they are shown to have actual reference to the health of the inmates of the houses (*International Health Exhibition* 1884: xxxv-xxxvi).

Furniture took center-stage, however, at the exhibitions of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (ACES) at the New Gallery (1888-90) and in the catalogues published for each event. As well as descriptions of the exhibits, the *Catalogue of the Third Exhibition* (1890) included a series of “Introductory Notes”, which were later republished in *Arts and Crafts Essays* (1893), which all largely echoed the often-quoted polemic of William Morris, who had earlier argued for:

good citizen’s furniture, solid and well made in workmanship, and in design should have nothing about it that is not easily defensible, no monstrosities or extravagances, not even of beauty, lest we weary of it (Morris 1998 [1882]:261).

As well as exhibition catalogues written *about* manufacturers, trade catalogue written and published *by* furniture manufacturers and retailers *for* their potential customers are also suggested by Walker’s

diagram as textual representation associated with the distribution of furniture. Historians of nineteenth-century interior design, decoration and furniture have relied also heavily on this type of publications which communicate designs between producers, retailers and consumers<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, scholars working within the growing field of research into the history of furniture retailing and consumption during the nineteenth century<sup>25</sup> have also relied upon trade catalogues and other printed texts including trade cards<sup>26</sup> and newspaper advertisements<sup>27</sup>; analyzing the role played by these types of printed ephemera in selling furniture.

Representing a commercial development from the furniture pattern book, trade catalogues indicate the divisions of labor within furniture production and distribution, and also show differences in intended readership; advertising actual furniture for potential consumers. William Smee & Sons' *Designs of Furniture* "A Stock of which is Always Kept Ready for Sale at Their Cabinet and Upholstery Manufactory and Warerooms, No. 6, Finsbury Pavement, London" (c. 1850), is often cited as one of the earliest examples of furniture catalogue: it comprised 375 pages of numbered illustrations with a brief description for each item. A small 16-page trade catalogue was issued by Jennens and Bettridge, "specially appointed Papier Mache Manufacturers to their Majesties George IV., William IV., Queen Victoria, and H.R.H. the Prince Albert", immediately after their success at the Great Exhibition, where they received one of the 70 "Prize Medals" awarded for "excellence in production or workmanship" in Class 26. This catalogue provided information about the history and production of *papier-mâché* objects and the innovations patented by Jennens and Bettridge. It also gave a list of prices and featured illustrated descriptions of their *papier-mâché* products including the "Day-Dreamer Chair", which had been "Exhibited at the Crystal Palace". Heal's also began issuing their *Illustrated Catalogue of Bedsteads and Priced Bedding* in this decade, however, the majority of the surviving British furniture trade catalogues in the National Art Library in London date from the 1870s onwards<sup>28</sup>. Published in the era of "Art Furniture", these include catalogues issued by Collinson & Lock's *Sketches of Artistic Furniture* (1871) which featured designs by the architect-designer Thomas Collcutt (1840-1924); James Shoolbred & Company's *Practical Methods of House Furnishing*

(1874); and, William Watt's *Art Furniture from designs by E.W. Godwin and others: with hints and suggestions on domestic furniture and decoration* (1877) [Figure 9].

Often these catalogues contain remarkably little text, concentrating instead on the all-important illustrations provided by professional designers; several catalogues advertise a direct relationship between designers and manufacturers. Pat Kirkham noted that by the 1860s "designers were regularly employed by West End firms" (1988: 96) while by the 1870s "the professional designer was not only accepted but considered a necessary figure by the leading firms" (105). As well as Collcutt and Godwin, there are other well-known relationships: designs by Bruce Talbert, who had published his second book, *Examples of Ancient and Modern Furniture, Metal Work, Tapestries, Decoration etc.* in 1876, were manufactured by Holland & Son, Gillows, Cox & Son, Jackson & Graham, Mash Jones & Cribb, and the Coalbrookdale Iron Company; while Talbert's pupil HW Batley (1846-1932), who also published *A Series of Designs for Domestic Furniture* (1883), is known to have designed for Gillows, James Shoolbred & Company, Collison & Lock, and, Smee & Sons<sup>29</sup>.

Other examples of trade catalogue are fortunately more verbose. In particular, Oetzmann and Co.'s lengthy *Hints on House Furnishing and Decoration* (c. 1871) was full of useful advice, and which in a later version (c. 1896) "combined journalism with salesmanship" when it re-printed some illustrated articles first published in *The Lady* that advised a young married couple on furnishing their new home (Edwards 2005: 138). The titles of these trade catalogues, with their *Hints* and *Suggestions*, certainly refer to the genre of domestic advice literature, which became particularly popular from the 1860s following the publication of that quintessential advice manual, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861). Interestingly, several authors of advice literature recommended particular manufacturers and retailers whose trade advertisements were often inserted at the back of the volumes. Robert Edis's published Cantor Lectures on *Decoration and Furniture of Townhouses* (1881), which included "Lecture III: Furniture" recommended specific pieces by several well-known manufacturers:



I was indebted to Messrs. Jackson and Graham and Messrs. Gillow for the loan of some exceedingly good examples of modern, so-called Chippendale, Adams and Sheraton work, which form the subjects of some of my illustrations (Edis 1881: 103).

Similarly, in *Ornamental Interiors: Ancient and Modern* (1887), John Moyr Smith acknowledged his indebtedness “to several publishers, art manufacturers, and importers of artistic objects, whose names are attached to their respective contributions” (Moyr Smith 1887: iii).

Many studies that have examined Victorian domestic ideology and the gendered construction of “the home” have drawn upon domestic advice books and magazines aimed primarily at female readers<sup>30</sup>. Nineteenth-century women’s magazines such as *The Queen* (f. 1861); *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Journal* (1852-79); *Myra’s Journal* (1875-1912); *Woman* (1890-1912); and *Sylvia’s Home Journal* (1878-91) often contained information about the domestic interior and descriptions of its furniture. For example, in an article titled “Influence of Aesthetics on English Society” published in *Sylvia’s Home Journal*, the author commented with some irony:

The aesthetic maxim that all our surroundings are an expression of ourselves, that our furniture betrays us to our friends, is startling enough to good folk who have lived their lives innocently among their chairs and tables without attributing to them any uncanny powers of proclaiming abroad the secrets of their hearts (AC 1879: 420).

Moreover, many articles first published in journals were often later collected and re-issued as separate volumes of domestic advice. Elsewhere I have discussed the complicated inter-textual relationships between some of the volumes in Macmillan’s “Art at Home Series” (1876-83) and Clarence M. Cook’s *House Beautiful* (1877), which was based upon his original series of articles “Beds, Tables, Stools and Candlesticks” for *Scribner’s Monthly*. My research also demonstrates the problematic nature of visual and textual representations of furniture within this sort of text; notably in Mrs Orrin Smith’s *The Drawing Room* (1878). Commissioned to write new text for British readers around the original images taken from Cook’s American articles, Mrs Orrin Smith resolved any difficulties by simply re-organizing, re-naming, and inventing new descriptions for the plates. For example, an

illustration that appeared in *The House Beautiful* as “A French Settee” reappeared in *The Drawing Room* as “A ‘Sheraton’ Sofa”, while Cook’s description of an “Italian Fire-screen” became “lovely pieces of Japanese embroidery... worked in glowing silks, representing peacocks’ feathers” (Orrinsmith 1878: 78) [Figure 10]. It is arguable whether this says more about the knowledge of the author, the quality of the image or the fluidity of its meaning<sup>31</sup>. Nonetheless, this example shows the pitfalls of treating advice literature as straightforward textual (and visual) evidence about how homes were furnished in the nineteenth century.

Recent debates have further problematized the use of advice books as factual documentary sources. Occupying a position somewhere “between fact and fiction”, (Lees-Maffei 2003:1), domestic design advice is a complex source, one often more concerned with the formation of class and gender ideologies than furniture and interior decoration. Indeed, “these non-literary materials did not simply reflect a ‘real’ historical subject, but helped to produce it through their discursive practices” (Langland 1995: 24). Few scholars, however, have made clear the distinction between advice and evidence or between prescription and practice. Some have commented on this difficulty and others, while acknowledging this dilemma, have nonetheless emphasized the popularity of the genre, suggesting that “it is hard to over-estimate the role of the household book in promoting the ideal pattern of middle-class life” (Attar 1987: 13). A special issue of *The Journal of Design History* (2003) edited by Grace Lees-Maffei, examined domestic design advice and considered the role this type of literature played in the formation of the domestic interior. My own contribution to this special issue offered a comparative analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garretts’ *Suggestions for House Decoration* (1876) and Eastlake’s *Hints*. Arguing that domestic advice manuals are not conventional historical evidence, I suggested that they should be understood both as texts that engage with contemporary notions of design and taste, *and* as a genre of Victorian literature; an argument which returns us rather neatly to textual representations of furniture in the nineteenth century.

It is tempting to re-examine Charles Eastlake's *Hints*, which was hugely influential both in Great Britain and in America, where it inspired the production of a style of furniture. Eastlake was most indignant and in the Preface to the fourth edition of *Hints* made his feelings on the matter plain:

I find that American tradesmen continually advertising what they are pleased to call "Eastlake" furniture with the production of which I have nothing whatsoever to do and for the taste of which I should be very sorry to be considered responsible (1878 edition: viii).

However, Mr Eastlake has received quite enough attention already, so instead I shall find another characteristic specimen from this genre to put into my little bucket.

Occasionally classified as a furniture pattern book, the *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture*, written by John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843), was first published in 1833 and re-issued in eleven editions until 1867. Hugely influential in Great Britain, it was also popular in America and Australia; Loudon commented that the main aim of his book was "to improve the dwellings of the great mass of society, in the temperate regions of both hemispheres" (Loudon 1833: 1). Dealing as it does "with all, literally all, thinkable aspects of the house" (Muthesius 2009: 41), Loudon's *Encyclopedia* has been used by several historians as a source of information about the nineteenth-century home<sup>32</sup>. Figure 11 illustrates a page from the *Encyclopedia* which offered advice on suitable furnishings for a cottage. It showed:

a kind of bench with solid back and arms, for a cottage kitchen, commonly called a settle, and frequently to be met with in public houses. The back forms an excellent screen or protection from the current of air which is continually passing from the door to the chimney. ... Placed in the open floor, where it would seldom require to be moved, there might even be book shelves fixed to this back, and a flap might be hung to it, with a jib bracket, to serve as a reading or writing table, or for other purposes (Loudon 1833: 317).

Providing designs and advice for “Furniture for Cottage Dwellings” as well as Villas and Country Houses, Loudon’s text offered a broader perspective than other similar sources. As the *Pictorial Dictionary* explained:

its title indicates, the *Encyclopedia*, with over 1,100 pages and 2,000 engravings is a mine of information on the homes and furnishings of all classes, in contrast to earlier pattern and similar books which had the upper and middle classes mainly in mind. ... It differs from most previous books of the kind in devoting attention to cheap, utilitarian furniture. Nothing else in print of the time gives us such a detailed account of the early Victorian household (1977: xxi).

This assertion is arguable; the *Encyclopedia* is advice *not* evidence. Its detailed descriptions represent textual ideals rather than factual realities. It does, however, devote a great many of its pages to *ideal* furniture which could be compared with contemporary sources about the consumption of *actual* furniture; and, as my little bucket is almost full, it is towards these texts that I shall now row.

### **Nineteenth-century Texts: the Consumption of Furniture**

If advice is not evidence, then examining the consumption of furniture in the nineteenth century starts to become extremely problematic. How are we to know which items of furniture people actually bought from the wide ranges advertised by retailers in their catalogues, and, once acquired, how were these pieces used, customized and eventually disposed of during the nineteenth century?

One solution has, of course, been to examine the texts written *by* consumers themselves. For instance, Amanda Girling Budd (2004) combined invoices, account books and designs from the estimate sketchbooks in the Gillows Archive with diary entries and letters from their clients, the Clarkes of Summerhill in Lancashire. Similarly, Trevor Keeble (2007) made extensive use of the diaries written by the sisters, Emily (1819-1901) and Ellen Hall (1822-1902); while Jane Hamlett (2010) consulted diaries, letters, notebooks, inventories, wills and informal bequests, and even lists of wedding presents. These studies draw upon private unpublished sources held in local record offices, but there are several examples of nineteenth-century diaries and collections of correspondence which have been published posthumously and used as historical evidence<sup>33</sup>. These include the diaries of Mary Ann

(Marion) Sambourne (1851-1914), wife of illustrator and *Punch* cartoonist Linley Sambourne (1844-1910), whose house at 18 Stafford Terrace survives as a rare example of an Aesthetic interior<sup>34</sup>.

Another approach is to use surviving images and descriptions of real interiors. Peter Thornton's *Authentic Décor: the Domestic Interior, 1620-1920* (1984) is a visual survey that incorporates illustrations of domestic interiors including paintings of interiors and photographic collections. Along similar lines, Charlotte Gere's *Nineteenth Century Decoration: the Art of the Interior* (1989) is a collection of exclusively nineteenth-century imagery. Unlike Frances Borzello's study *At Home: the Domestic Interior in Art* (2006), neither Thornton nor Gere offered interpretations of the interiors depicted; instead the images (which include some taken from advice manuals) are used as straightforward historical evidence. Indeed, Thornton stated that "these illustrations show rooms as they actually were" (1984: 8). This is, of course, debatable; nonetheless, both studies remain invaluable secondary sources. Many of the images discussed by Thornton and Gere depict the interiors and furnishings of Victorian country houses. There are several studies on this popular Anglo-centric theme which have been published by architectural and social historians, particularly since the exhibition, *The Destruction of the English Country House 1875-1975* held at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1974<sup>35</sup>. This "epoch-making" exhibition aroused "public anger at such wanton destruction" and, significantly, also "focussed attention upon the history and the surviving documentation of both destroyed and surviving houses" (1989:2). The examples of "surviving documentation" included a wide range of textual representations of furniture and interior schemes including unpublished archival sources: inventories; records of sales; insurance policies; diaries; private correspondence; and, architectural drawings from the RIBA Archive. Contemporary publications have also been examined including auction catalogues; memoirs and biographies; early-nineteenth-century antiquarian studies; topological surveys; articles in architectural journals notably *The Builder*, *Building News* and *The British Architect*, as well as periodicals such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1922) and *Country Life* (f. 1897). This interest in the Victorian country house – even when it ventures below stairs – illustrates the partial nature of nineteenth-century furniture histories, which of necessity, tend to focus upon "opulent" interiors and objects commissioned or collected by

the upper classes<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, another of the categories of text relating to the consumption of furniture suggested by Walker's diagram is that associated with "museums and private collection". These include the texts written *by* private collectors about their collections such as inventories, catalogues and guide books and similar publications issued during the nineteenth century by national and regional collections, such as the South Kensington Museum, which represent public consumption.

One of the most significant early nineteenth-century guide-books was Thomas Hope's (1807) *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* [Figure 12]; a publication usually credited with the introduction of the phrase "interior decoration" into the English language. Thomas Hope (1769-1831) was a designer and collector, whose book described and illustrated his home at Duchess Street and defined Regency Style:

PLATE XI. No. 1 and 2. Front and end of a large library or writing table, flanked with paper presses, or escrutoirs. The tops that terminate these presses present the shape of ancient Greek house roofs. Their extremities or pediments contain the heads of the patron and patroness of science, of Apollo and of Minerva (Hope 1807: 28).

Hope has been the subject of extensive research and exhibitions<sup>37</sup> as have other notable collectors. For instance, in *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 170-1850* (1989), Clive Wainwright examined the development of the modern antiques trade in Britain and offered case studies of significant collections of furnishings amassed in the homes of five well-known collectors<sup>38</sup>. Other textual representations of real furniture can be found in the contemporary magazine features that describe visits to the homes of the rich and famous. An excellent example is Mrs Eliza Mary Haweis' book *Beautiful Houses* (1882); which like Charles Eastlake's *Hints* was first published in *The Queen* (1880-81). Providing descriptions of "certain well-known artistic houses", Mrs Haweis described the furniture and interiors found in the homes of artists and architects including Frederick Leighton, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, JJ Stevenson, Alfred Morrison and the late-William Burges; a theme almost as popular as the Victorian country house. Other similar texts include Moncure Conway's *Travels in South Kensington* (1882) and John Moyr Smith's *Ornamental Interiors* (1887) in

which he thanked “the various architects, decorative artists, firms of art decorators, and makers of artistic furniture, who by their courtesy have enabled him to inspect and describe many specimens of artistic work not usually made free to the public” (Moyr Smith 1887: iii-iv).

Some design historians have turned their attention to the furniture found in the provincial and colonial homes of the “middling sort”, using family papers, account books, sales catalogues, wills, probate inventories and house contents lists as textual sources<sup>39</sup>. Further down the social ladder however, it becomes much harder to establish what type of furniture was found in the homes of the poor.

Snippets of factual evidence about the production, retail and ownership of working-class furniture can be found in important publications that considered the plight of the poor. For instance, Henry Mayhew’s articles for the *Morning Chronicle* offer information about the furniture trade while *London Labour and the London Poor* includes a chapter on “Garret-Masters” (1861: 221-31) as does Charles Booth’s *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889). Both texts describe the living conditions of the poor in London. Similarly, Adolphe Smith and John Thomson’s photographic articles recording *Street Life in London* (1876-7) included “Old Furniture” **[Figure 13]** which depicted a second-hand furniture dealer at the corner of Church Lane, Holborn:

whose business was a cross between that of a shop and a street stall. The dealer was never satisfied unless the weather allowed him to disgorge nearly the whole of his stock into the middle of the street, a method which alone secured the approval and custom of his neighbours (Smith and Thomson 1877: 128).

These texts and official Reports, such as the *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes* (1885), contain references to the furniture owned by the Victorian working classes, which have provided some evidence for historians:

It could scarcely be called furniture; there was a bed and a big box by the side of the bed, upon which one would lie at night, possibly. The covering of the bed was of a very poor description (*Royal Commission* 1885: 258).

There have been interesting studies about the formation of working-class domestic spaces both rural and urban<sup>40</sup>, but as the authors of *Victorian Interior Style* (1995) have noted, in the nineteenth century:

Few writers wrote for working-class readers or bothered to describe working-class homes.

Few artists or photographers chose to record them. Surviving interiors, even individual items of furniture are rare; in poorer homes most things were used until they were worn out

(Banham et al 1995:10).

Descriptions of the homes and furniture owned by all classes of society do, however, appear in the novel, one of the most significant forms of text published in the nineteenth century. Philippa Tristram has commented that “Because the novel is invincibly domestic, it can tell us much about the space we live in; equally, designs for houses and their furnishings can reveal hidden aspects of the novelist’s art” (1989: 2). Nineteenth-century fiction is examined in great detail in Tristram’s *Living Space in Fact and Fiction* (1989) and in Charlotte Grant’s article for *Home Cultures* (2005) and chapter for *Imagined Interiors* (2006) in which she argued “that the novel, as it developed between 1720 and 1920, is a key form of representing and imagining the domestic interior” (Grant 2006: 134).

To offer an analysis of the metaphorical meanings of fictional furniture in the nineteenth-century British novel is well beyond the scope of this chapter, but there are several important examples that deserve to be mentioned. Again the problem is the wealth of materials from which to select a “characteristic specimen”. Should I examine the furniture in Fanny Price’s little east room at *Mansfield Park* (1814), which, significantly, includes a writing desk or the eponymous Emma’s rather grander “large modern circular table” that had recently replaced a small-sized Pembroke at Hartfield (Austen 2008 [1815]: 325)? Perhaps Mrs Barton’s Pembroke table (Gaskell 2008 [1848]:15) or Mrs Jamieson’s “white and gold” chairs at *Cranford* (Gaskell 1998 [1851]: 75) should be considered. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Bronte described a whole bedroom suite in the famously womb-like red-room that offers a wealth of fictional furniture suitable for Freudian and Feminist analyses:

A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre; the two large windows, with their blinds always



drawn down, were half shrouded in festoons and falls of similar drapery; the carpet was red; the table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth; the walls were a soft fawn colour with a blush of pink in it; the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of darkly polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane. Scarcely less prominent was an ample cushioned easy-chair near the head of the bed, also white, with a footstool before it; and looking, as I thought, like a pale throne (Bronte 2006 [1847]: 8-9).

The novels of Dickens, “a key figure in the nineteenth century’s construction of an idealized image of home” are of course filled with furniture and symbolic interiors (Grant 2006: 149-50). A signifier of new money and no taste, the absence of patination on Mr and Mrs Veneering’s “bran’ new” dining table is discussed elsewhere in this volume, but the furniture in Miss Havisham’s dressing room described in *Great Expectations* (1865) is just as well-known; as is the description of furniture owned by “Our Next Door Neighbour” in *Sketches by Boz* (1839):

The paper was new, and the paint was new, and the furniture was new; and all three, paper, paint, and furniture, bespoke the limited means of the tenant. There was a little red and black carpet in the drawing-room, with a border of flooring all the way round; a few stained chairs and a pembroke table. A pink shell was displayed on each of the little sideboards, which, with the addition of a tea-tray and caddy, a few more shells on the mantelpiece, and three peacock’s feathers tastefully arranged above them, completed the decorative furniture of the apartment (Dickens 1995 [1839]: 61).

I confess that my personal favorites involve the misadventures of Mr Pooter’s attempts at home improvements recorded faithfully in *The Diary of A Nobody* (1889). Having bought a pot of Pinkford’s enamel paint, he determined to try it:

Went upstairs to the servant’s bedroom and painted her washstand, towel-horse, and chest of drawers. To my mind it was an extraordinary improvement, but as an example of the

ignorance of the lower classes in matters of taste, our servant, Sarah, on seeing them, evinced no sign of pleasure, but merely said “She thought they looked very well as they was before” (Grossmith 1995 [1892]: 42).

While descriptions such as these are of course significant textual representations of furniture that tell us a great deal about the characters depicted, the novel remains an incredibly problematic source for the historian; if indeed it is a source at all. Remember, “Dear Reader”, that fictional furniture is not factual evidence.

### **Conclusion:**

Rowing back with my little bucket now full, I too have attempted “to present some Victorian visions to the [post]modern eye” (Strachey 2009 [1918]: 5). The verbal-textual-intertextual representations of nineteenth-century furniture that have been examined with “careful curiosity” in this chapter have been selected to demonstrate the wealth of primary textual materials available for further research. Ranging from price books to advice manuals to novels, and, organized using Walker’s model of “Production-Distribution-Consumption”, it has also aimed to indicate the wide range of secondary studies of nineteenth-century furniture *and* the different historical disciplines from which they have emanated: furniture history, labour histories, the history of interior design and decoration, architectural history, socio-economic history, feminist and gender studies, the histories of retail and consumption and literary history. This is a far cry from the middle of the twentieth century, when Peter Floud drew attention to “the complete absence of any secondary sources” then available for research (Floud in *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* 1952: 6). Having navigated this “great ocean of material”, my selection has focused upon published British sources, but these characteristic specimens have, I hope, succeeded in shooting “a sudden revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hitherto undivined” (Strachey 2009 [1918]: 5).

### Endnotes

**1** Key early studies include: Nikolaus Pevsner. 1951. *High Victorian Design: A Study of the Exhibits of 1851*. London: Architectural Press; Nikolaus Pevsner. 1952. “Art Furniture of the Eighteen Seventies”. *Architectural Review*, 111(661): 43-50; Clifford Musgrave. 1961. *Regency*

*Furniture 1800-30*. London: Faber & Faber; Elizabeth Aslin. 1962. *Nineteenth Century English Furniture*. London: Faber and Faber; Margaret Jourdain and Ralph Fastnedge. 1965. *Regency Furniture*. London: Country Life; RW Symonds and BB Whineray. 1965. *Victorian Furniture*. London: Country Life; and, Simon Jervis. 1968. *Victorian Furniture*. London: Wardlock.

2 Edward Joy has noted that this official total is slightly misleading as “Several numbers are missing and exhibitors are known to have entered twice” (Joy 1977: 307 n1).

3 Victoria and Albert Museum Collections. VAM: 25:1 to 3-1852 Available online: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8162/armoire-pugin-augustus-welby/>

4 For the story of the revival of interest in Victorian architecture, design and the decorative arts see: Jules Lubbock. 1978. “Victorian Revival”. *Architectural Review*, 163: 161-7; David Watkin. 1980. *The Rise of Architectural History*. London: Architectural Press; Clive Wainwright. 1986. “Tell me what you like and I’ll tell you what you are”. In *Truth, Beauty and Design: Victorian, Edwardian and Later Decorative Art*, London: Adrian J. Tilbrook and Fischer Fine Art Limited: 7-14; and Anthony Burton. 2004. “The Revival of Interest in Victorian Decorative Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum”. In *The Victorians since 1901: Histories, Representations and Revisions* edited by Miles Taylor and Michael Wolff. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 121-37.

5 The table by George J. Morant & Sons exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851 is very similar to the one displayed in the British Galleries of the Victoria & Albert Museum, which was purchased by the museum from Lady Ashton (Madge Garland, former fashion editor of British *Vogue* and first Professor of Fashion at the Royal College of Art). Her husband Sir Leigh Ashton was director of the Victoria & Albert Museum from 1945 until 1955. Victoria and Albert Museum Collections. Table. Michelangelo Barberi and George Morant & Son. V&A Museum: W.34:1, 2-1980. Available online: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8202/table-barberi-michelangelo-chevalier/>

6 The Archive of Art and Design hold the following collections: Crace Family (1692-1992) (ARC1089); Holland & Son (1821-1968) (ARC51241); Heal & Son Holdings plc (1810-2009) (ARC51256) and EW Godwin (ARC51012). Besides the London-based archives, others such as The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera at the Winterthur Library: <http://winterthur.org/library> which includes the papers of such American firms as Herter Brothers in New York, provide a wealth of unpublished textual representations of furniture for this period.

7 On the Craces see Megan Aldrich (ed.) 1990. *The Craces: Royal Decorators 1768-1899*. London: John Murray. The studies of Liberty’s include Alison Adburgham. 1975. *Liberty’s: A Biography of a Shop*. London: Allen & Unwin; Stephen Calloway, (ed.) 1992. *The House of Liberty: Masters of Style and Decoration*. London: Thames and Hudson; Sonia Ashmore. 2008. “Liberty and Lifestyle: Shopping for Art and Luxury in Nineteenth Century London” In *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* edited by David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby. Farnham: Ashgate, 73-90; and, Daryl Bennett. 2012. *Liberty’s Furniture 1875-1915: The Birth of Modern Interior Design*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club. On Gillows see Nicholas Goodison and John Hardy, 1970. “Gillows at Tatton Park”. *Furniture History*, 6: 1-39; Susan E. Stuart 1996. “Three Generations of Gothic Chairs by Gillows”. *Furniture History* 32: 33-45; a special edition of *Regional Furniture* (Volume XII 1998); Amanda Girling-Budd. 2004. “Comfort and Gentility: Furnishings by Gillows, Lancaster 1840-55”. In *Interior Design and Identity* edited by in Susie McKellar and Penny Sparke. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 27-47; Laura Mircoulis 2005. “Gillow and Company’s Furniture for a Liverpool Maecenas: John Grant Morris of Allerton Priory”. *Furniture History*, 41: 189-216; and Stuart, Susan E. 2008. *Gillows of Lancaster and London 1730-1840: Cabinet-Makers and International Merchants. A Furniture and Business History*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club. On Holland & Son see Simon Jervis. 1970. “Holland and Sons and the furnishing of the Athenaeum”. *Furniture History*, 6: 43-61; Girling-Budd 2004; and Christina M. Anderson. 2005. “W. Bryson and the Firm of Holland and Sons”. *Furniture History* 41: 217-30 and Christina M. Anderson. 2012 “Further Evidence of the Comprehensive Nature of the Firm of Holland and Son”. *Furniture History* 48: . On Heal’s see Susanna Goodden 1984. *A History of Heals*. London: Lund Humphries and Oliver Heal 2014. *Sir Ambrose Heal and the Heal Cabinet Factory 1897 – 1939*. London: Oblong Creative. For EW Godwin see Elizabeth Aslin. 1986. *E.W. Godwin: Furniture and Interior Decoration*. London: John Murray; Juliet Kinchin. 2005. “Designer as Critic: E. W. Godwin and the Aesthetic Home”, *Journal of Design History*, 18(1): 21-34; and Susan

Weber Soros. 1999. *The Secular Furniture of E.W. Godwin*. New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press.

**8** “Progressive” is certainly a term that features in texts produced in the mid-1970s including Edward Joy’s introduction to the *Pictorial Dictionary of British Nineteenth Century Furniture* [1977. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club and its companion volume, Pauline Agius. 1978. *British Furniture 1880-1915*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club. For the architect-designers respectively see Clive Wainwright. 1976. “AWN Pugin’s Early Furniture”. *Connoisseur*, CXCI, 767: 3-11 and 1994. “Furniture” in *Pugin: A Gothic Passion* edited by Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright. London: V&A Publications: 127-42; Alexandra Wedgwood. 1990. “JG Crace and Awn Pugin” in *The Craces: Royal Decorators 1768-1899*, edited by Megan Aldrich. London: John Murray: 137-45; J. Mordaunt Crook. 1981. *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Widar Halén. 1990. *Christopher Dresser*. London: Phaidon Christies; Stuart Durant. 1993. *Christopher Dresser*. London: John Wiley; Michael Whiteway. 2004. *Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser’s Design Revolution*. London: V&A Publications; Harry Lyons. 2004. *Christopher Dresser*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club; Sally MacDonald. 1987. “Gothic Forms Applied to Furniture: The Early Work of Bruce James Talbert”. *Furniture History*, 23: 39–66; Simon Jervis. 1989. “Charles, Bevan and Talbert” in *The Decorative Arts of the Victorian Period* edited by Susan M. Wright. London: The Society of Antiquaries: 15-29; Stuart Durant. 1992. *CFA Voysey*. London: John Wiley; Wendy Hitchmough. 1997. *CFA Voysey*. London: Phaidon; Anne O’Donnell. 2011. *C.F.A. Voysey: Architect Designer Individualist*. Warwick: Pomegranate Europe; Alan Crawford. 1985. *CR Ashbee: Architect, Designer, Romantic Socialist*. New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press; Roger Billcliffe. 1979. *Mackintosh Furniture*. Moffat, Dumfries & Galloway: Cameron & Hollis; Alan Crawford. 1995. *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*. London: Thames & Hudson; McKean, John and Colin Baxter. 2012. *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Architect, Artist, Icon*. Broxburn: Lomond Books.

**9** Virginia Glenn. 1979. “George Bullock, Richard Bridgens and James Watt’s Regency Furnishing Schemes”. *Furniture History*. 15: 54-67; Clive Wainwright. 1988. *George Bullock: Cabinet-Maker*. London: John Murray.; Hugh Barty-King. 1992. *Maples Fine Furnishers: A Household Name for 150 Years*. London: Quiller; Michael Hall. 1996. “‘Furniture of Artistic Character’: Watts and Company as House Furnishers, 1874-1907”. *Furniture History*, 32: 179-204; Clive D. Edwards 1998. “The Firm of Jackson and Graham”. *Furniture History*, 34: 238-65; Laura Mircoulis. 1998. “Charles Hindley & Sons, London House Furnishers of the Nineteenth Century: A Paradigm of the Middle-Range Market”. *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*. 5 (2): 69-96; Laura Mircoulis. 2001. “The Furniture Drawings of Charles Hindley & Sons, 134 Oxford Street, London”. *Furniture History* 37: 67-90; Clive D. Edwards. 2012a. “‘Art Furniture in the Old English Style’: The Firm of Collinson and Lock, London, 1870-1900”. *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*. 19(2): 255-81.

**10** See the example in the V&A Collection: VAM: CIRC.250&A/1to B/1-1961. Available online: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9236/morris-adjustable-back-chair-bird-adjustable-back-chair-webb-philip/>

**11** Pat Kirkham. 1982, “William Morris’s Early Furniture”, *Journal of William Morris Studies*, 4(3):25-28; Annette Carruthers. 1989. “‘Like Incubi and Succubi’: A Table by Webb or Morris”, *Craft History* 2: 55-61; Giles Ellwood. 1996. “Three Tables by Philip Webb”. *Furniture History* 32: 127-40; and, Frances Collard. 1996. “Furniture” in *William Morris* edited by Linda Parry. London: Philip Wilson/V&A Publications: 155-79.

**12** Lindsay Boynton. 1967. “High Victorian Furniture: The Example of Marsh and Jones of Leeds”. *Furniture History* 3: 54-91; Luke Millar. 1996. *The Notebook of John Davies, Cabinet Maker, Carmarthen, 1844-55*. *Regional Furniture*; Jones, Robin. 1997. “Arthur Foley: A Nineteenth-Century Furniture Manufacturer in Salisbury”. *Regional Furniture*; and Banham, Julie. 2001. “Johnson & Appleyards Ltd of Sheffield: A Victorian Family Business”, *Regional Furniture*.

**13** Stuart Evans. 1997. “Century Guild Inventions: The Century Guild of Artists at the International Inventions Exhibition, London, 1885”. *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850 - the Present*. 21: 46-53 and 2008. *Century Guild of Artists*. Oxford: Oxford University.

**14** Annette Carruthers. 1978. *Ernest Gimson and the Cotswold Group of Craftsmen*. Leicester: Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Record Service; Mary Comino, [Greenstead].

1980. Gimson and the Barnsleys: Wonderful Furniture of a Commonplace Kind. London: Evans Brothers; Annette Carruthers and Mary Greenstead. 1999. *Good Citizens Furniture: The Arts and Crafts Collections at Cheltenham*. London: Lund Humphries; John Andrews. 2015 revised edition. *Arts and Crafts Furniture*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club; and Barley Roscoe. 2014 “Stoneywell and the Gimsos: Furniture and Family History”. *Furniture History*. 50:

**15** JL Oliver. 1966. *Development and Structure of the Furniture Industry*. Oxford: Pergamon Press; Joy 1977: 217-61; David Blankenhorn. 1985. “‘Our Class of Workmen’: The Cabinet-Makers Revisited”. In *Divisions of Labour: Skilled Workers and Technological Change in Nineteenth Century Britain* edited by Royden Harrison and Jonathan Zeitlin. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press; Huw Reid. 1986. *The Furniture Makers: A History of Trade Unionism in the Furniture Trade 1868-1972*. Oxford Malthouse Press; Pat Kirkham et al. 1987. *Furnishing the World: The East London Furniture Trade, 1830-1980*. London: Journeyman; Pat Kirkham. 1988. “The London Furniture Trade 1700-1870”. *Furniture History*, 24: i, iii-iv, vi-xii, 1-195 and 197-221; and JL Mayes. 1960. *The History of Chair Making in High Wycombe*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

**16** Revisions to the London Price Books were published in 1803; 1811; 1824; 1836; and 1866; Supplements were published in 1815; 1825; 1831; 1836; 1846; 1863; 1866.

**17** Christopher Gilbert. 1982. “The Cabinet-Makers Book of Prices 1793: Part II – London and Provincial Books of Prices: Comment and Bibliography”, *Furniture History*, 18: 11-21; Gerry Cotton. 1988. “‘Common’ Chairs from the Norwich Chair Makers’ price Book of 1801”. *Regional Furniture* 2: 68-92; David Jones. 1989. “Scottish Cabinet Maker’s Price Books, 1805-1825”. *Regional Furniture*. ; Martin Eli Weil,. 1979. “A Cabinetmaker's Price Book” *Winterthur Portfolio* 13: 175-92.

**18** The history of the Government Schools of Design has been recounted in Quentin Bell. 1963. *The Schools of Design*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Christopher Frayling. 1987. *The Royal College of Art, One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art and Design*. London: Hutchinson; Adrian Forty. 1986. *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980*. London: Thames and Hudson: 58-61; David Raizman. 2003. *History of Modern Design*. London: Laurence King: 57-77; Stuart MacDonald. 2004 [1970]. *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press; Mervyn Romans. 2005. *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and 2007. “An Analysis of the Political Complexion of the 1835/6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures”, *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 26(2): 215-24.

**19** Charles Newton. 2005. “Dresser and Owen Jones” *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850 - the Present*. 25: 30-41.

**20** *The Technical Educator* 1870: 311-3; 376-8; 403-6.

**21** Redgrave’s own writings and contribution to Art Education in this period, are discussed in MacDonald (2004 [1970]: 234-41), who directs his readers to *The Manual of Design* compiled from Redgrave’s various reports and addresses and published as one of the South Kensington Art Handbooks in 1876: this included a chapter “On Domestic and Other Furniture”.

**22** This piece of furniture is the Yatman Cabinet (1858) now in the V&A. Available online: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O61225/the-yatman-cabinet-cabinet-burges-william/>

**23** Paul Greenhalgh. 1988. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Jeffrey Auerbach. 1999. *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display*. New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press; Anthony David Edwards. 2008. *The Role of International Exhibitions in Britain, 1850-1910: Perceptions of Economic Decline and the Technical Education Issue*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press; and, Anna Jackson. 2008. *Expo: International Expositions 1851-2010*. London: V&A Publications.

**24** John Cornforth. 1978. *Quest for Comfort: English Interiors 1790-1848*. London: Barrie & Jenkins; Peter Thornton. 1984. *Authentic Décor: The Domestic Interior 1620-1920*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson; Charlotte Gere. 1989. *Nineteenth Century Decoration: Art of the Interior*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson; Helen Long. 2002. *Victorian Houses and their Details: the role of publications in their building and decoration*. London: Architectural Press; and Stefan Muthesius. 2009. *The Poetic Home: Designing the 19th-Century Domestic Interior*. London: Thames & Hudson.

**25** Some historians have examined these publications for information about the physical spaces of furniture retail including well-known areas of London associated with the trade; see Kirkham et al 1987; Kirkham 1988; and, Clive D. Edwards 2011. “Tottenham Court Road: the changing fortunes of London’s furniture street 1850-1950”. *The London Journal*, 36 (2): 140-60. Manufacturers’

showrooms; furniture displays in department stores; specialist furniture and furnishing shops; and shop window displays have also been studied. Several furniture historians have explored the development of the modern trade in antiques and the second-hand market, for example Stefan Muthesius. 1988. 'Why do we buy old furniture? Aspects of the authentic antique in Britain 1870–1910', *Art History*, 11(2): 231–54; Clive Wainwright. 1989. *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 1750-1850*. London: Yale University Press; Frances Collard. 1996. "Town and Emanuel". *Furniture History* 32: 81-9; James Lomax. 1997. "Buying Antiques in Early Victorian Leeds: The 1843 Exhibition", *Furniture History* 33: 275-85; Mark Westgarth. 2009. *A Biographical Dictionary of Antique and Curiosity Dealers*. Glasgow: Regional Furniture Society; Stana Nenadic. 1994. "Middle-Rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720–1840". *Past and Present*, 145 (1): 122-156; and, Clive D. Edwards and Margaret Ponsonby. 2008. "Desirable Commodity or Practical Necessity? The Sale and Consumption of Second Hand Furniture 1750-1900". In *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* edited by David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby. Aldershot: Ashgate, 117-38. In addition, the services offered by furniture manufacturers and retailers both before and after the sale such as the provision of installment credit, interior decoration and the maintenance of furniture have also been discussed. See Stefan Muthesius. 1992. "We Do Not Understand What Is Meant by a 'Company' Designing": Design versus Commerce in Late Nineteenth-Century English Furnishing". *Journal of Design History*, 5(2):113-119; Girling Budd 2004; Clive D. Edwards. 2005. *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings*. Aldershot: Ashgate; Clive D. Edwards. 2006. "Buy now - pay later. Credit: the mainstay of the retail furniture business". In *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society Since 1700* edited by John Benson and Laura Ugolini. Aldershot: Ashgate, 127-52; Clive D. Edwards. 2013. "Complete house furnishers: the retailer as interior designer in nineteenth-century London". *Journal of Interior Design*, 38 (1): 1-17; and Akiko Shimbo. 2015. *Furniture-Makers and Consumers in England, 1754-1851: Design as Interaction*. Farnham: Ashgate.

**26** There are collections of furniture-makers' trade cards at the British Museum, the Bodleian Library and Waddesdon Manor; see the articles by Katie Scott. 2004. "The Waddesdon Manor Trade Cards: More Than One History". *Journal of Design History*, 17(1): 91-104; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford. 2007. "Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France", *Cultural and Social History*, 4(2):145–70; and, Jon Stobart. 2008. "Selling (Through) Politeness", *Cultural and Social History*, 5(3):309-328.

**27** John Stabler. 1991. "British Newspaper advertisements as a source of furniture history". *Regional Furniture*, 5: 93-102; Theodore R. Crom. 1989. *Trade Catalogues 1542 to 1842*. Melrose, FA: Theodore Crom; and, Gaye Smith. 1992. *Trade Catalogues: a hundred years 1850-1949*. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University Library.

**28** John Bunston [compiler]. 1971. *English Furniture Designs 1800-1914: A Bibliography of 120 Pattern Books and Trade Catalogues in the Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: National Art Library/Victoria and Albert Museum.

**29** Susan Weber Soros. 1999. "Rediscovering H.W. Batley (1846-1932), British Aesthetic Movement Artist and Designer", *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 6 (2): 2-41.

**30** Patricia Branca. 1975. *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home*. London: Croom Helm; Jenni Calder. 1977. *The Victorian Home*. London: Batsford; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. 1987. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. London: Hutchinson; Elizabeth Langland. 1995 *Nobody's Angels: Middle-class women and domestic ideology in Victorian Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Juliet Kinchin. 1996 "The Gendered Interior: Nineteenth Century Essays on the 'Masculine' and the 'Feminine' room". In *The Gendered Object*, edited by Pat Kirkham. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Katherine Grier. 1997. *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle Class Identity, 1850-1930*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Books; Emma Ferry. 2003. "'Decorators may be compared to doctors': An Analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garrett's Suggestions for House Decoration 1876". *Journal of Design History*, 16(1): 15-33; Margaret Ponsonby. 2003. "Ideals, Reality and Meaning: Homemaking in England in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century". *Journal of Design History*, 16(3): 210-14; Judith Flanders. 2003. *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed*. London: HarperCollins; Emma Ferry. 2007. "'information for the ignorant and aid for the advancing ...'

Macmillan's Art at Home Series. 1876-83". In *Design and the Modern Magazine* edited by Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 134-155; Trevor Keeble. 2007. "Everything Whispers of Wealth and Luxury": Observation, Emulation and Display in the well-to-do Late-Victorian Home". In *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950* edited by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth. Aldershot: Ashgate, 69-86; Jane Hamlett. 2010. *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-class Families in England, 1850-1910*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; and Emma Ferry. 2014. "Any lady can do this without much trouble..." Class and Gender in The Dining Room (1878)". *Interiors: Design Architecture Culture*, 5(2): 141-159.

**31** Unfortunately, Thad Logan used this example from Mrs Orrinsmith's *The Drawing Room* to demonstrate the popularity of Japanese style screens made fashionable by the Aesthetic Movement; see Thad Logan. 2001. *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 120.

**32** Aslin 1962; Joy 1977; Philippa Tristram. 1989. *Living Space in Fact and Fiction*. London: Routledge; Davidoff and Hall 1987; Long 2002; Linda Young. 2003. *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

**33** See Rebecca Steinitz. 2011. *Time Space and Gender in the Nineteenth Century British Diary*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

**34** Preserved by their descendants, it was opened to the public in 1980 by the Victorian Society, an organisation that was founded at 18 Stafford Terrace in 1958 by the Sambourne's grand-daughter, Anne, 6th Countess of Rosse. See Shirley Nicholson. 1998. *A Victorian Household: Based on the Diaries of Marion Sambourne*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing. The Diaries are being transcribed and are available on line at

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/museums/18staffordterrace/archives/thesambournefamilydiaries-1/marionsambournediaries.aspx>

**35** Roy Strong et al. 1974. *The Destruction of the English Country House 1875-1975*. London: Thames & Hudson; Michael Wilson. 1977. *The English Country House and Its Furnishings*. London: Batsford; Mark Girouard. 1979. *The Victorian Country House*. New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press; Jill Franklin. 1981. *Gentleman's Country House and Its Plan, 1835-1914*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; and Wainwright 1989.

**36** Nicholas Cooper. 1979. *The Opulent Eye: Late Victorian and Edwardian Taste in Interior Design*. London: Architectural Press; and Wainwright 1989.

**37** David Watkin. 1968. *Thomas Hope 1769-1831 and the Neo-classical Ideal*. London: John Murray; and David Watkin. 2008. *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer*. London and New Haven CT: Yale University Press.

**38** These are Sir Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill; William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey; Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford; Charlecote Park, home to the Lucy family; and, Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick's Goodrich Court.

**39** Nenadic. 1994; Keeble 2007; Margaret Ponsonby. 2007. *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850*, Farnham: Ashgate; Hamlett 2010; and Lesley Hoskins. 2013. "Social, Economic, and Geographical Differences in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Homes: The Evidence from Inventories". *Regional Furniture*:

**40** Val Porter. 1992. *Life behind the Cottage Door*. Stanstead, Essex: Whittet Books; Adrian Tinniswood. 1995. *Life in the English Country Cottage*. London: Weidenfeld Nicolson Illustrated; Christiana Payne. 1998. "Rural Virtues for Urban Consumption: Cottage Scenes in early Victorian Painting", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 31: 45-68; Martin Hewitt. 1999 "District visiting and the constitution of domestic space in the mid-19th century" In *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-century Interior* edited by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 121-41 and Ruth Livesey. 2007. "Space, Class and Gender in East London, 1870-1900" In *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950* edited by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth. Aldershot: Ashgate: 87-107.

**Illustrations:**



**Figure 1:** Interior view of the Great Exhibition: 'Furniture' Plate 17 from volume II of *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851*, from the originals painted for... Prince Albert, by Messrs. Nash, Haghe, Roberts, R.A. etc., published by Dickinson Brothers, London, 1854

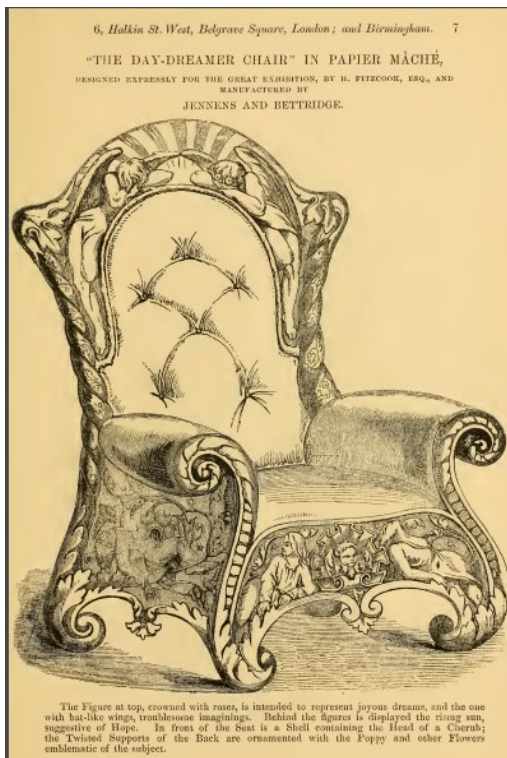


**Figure 2:** Plate 34: **Ornamental Tables** George Morant and Sons *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations Official: Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue*. 1851. Volume II. London: Spicer Brothers.

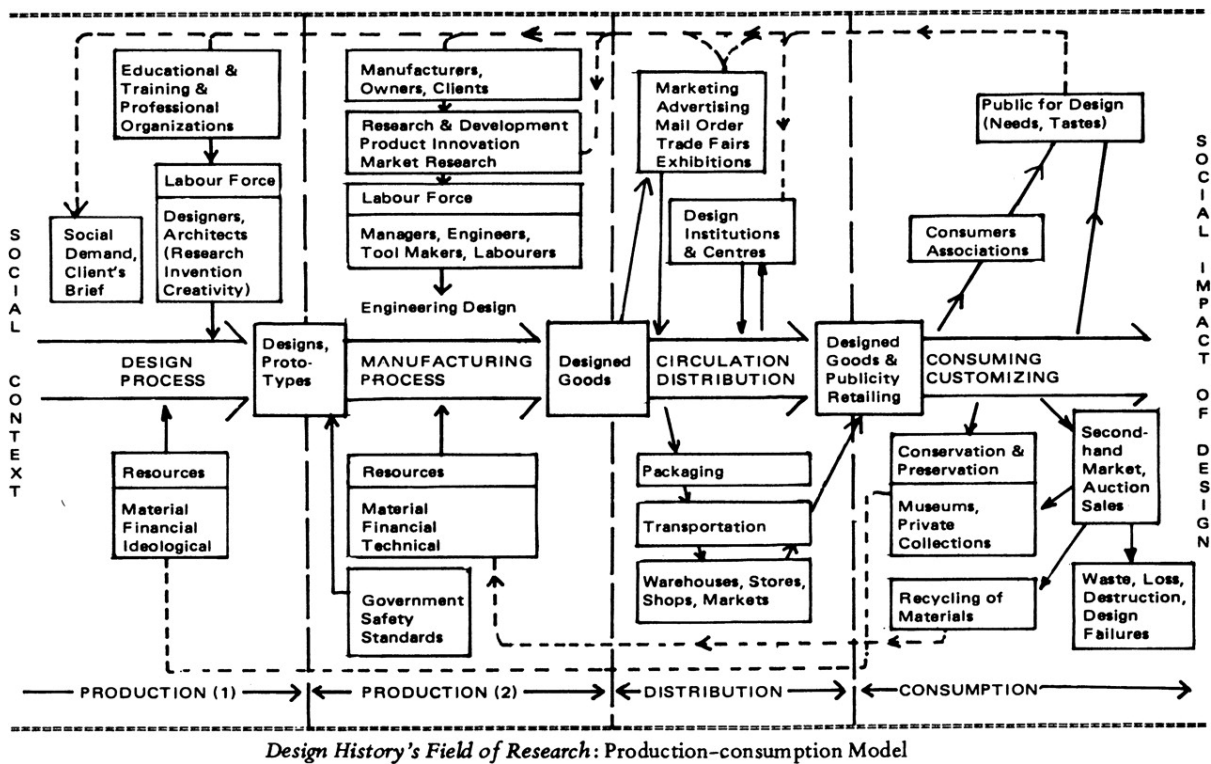




**Figure 3:** “The Cabinet here engraved is one of the most important pieces of furniture in the Medieval Court; it is executed by Mr. Crace, of London”. In *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Industry of All Nations*. 1851. London: George Virtue: 317



**Figure 4:** “The Day-Dreamer Chair” in papier-mâché from *Jennens and Bettridge’s Illustrated Catalogue of Papier-Mâché*. c. 1851: 7



**Figure 5:** John A. Walker's model of Production-Consumption from *Design History and the History of Design* (1989)



**Figure 6:** Christopher Dresser *The Principles of Design* (1873: 53)



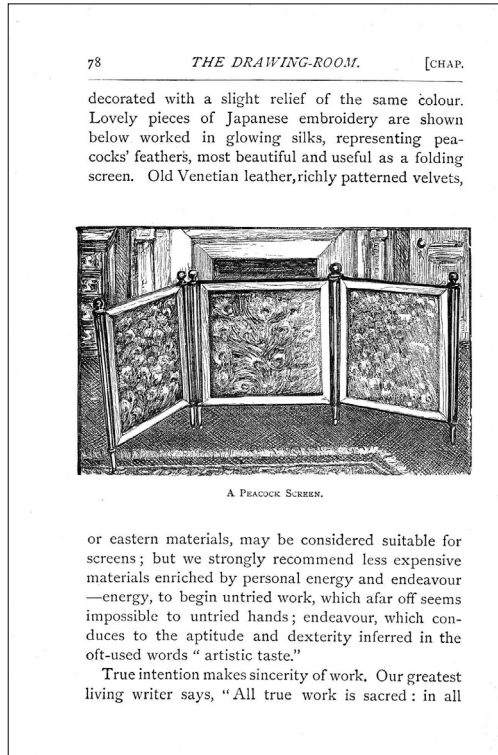
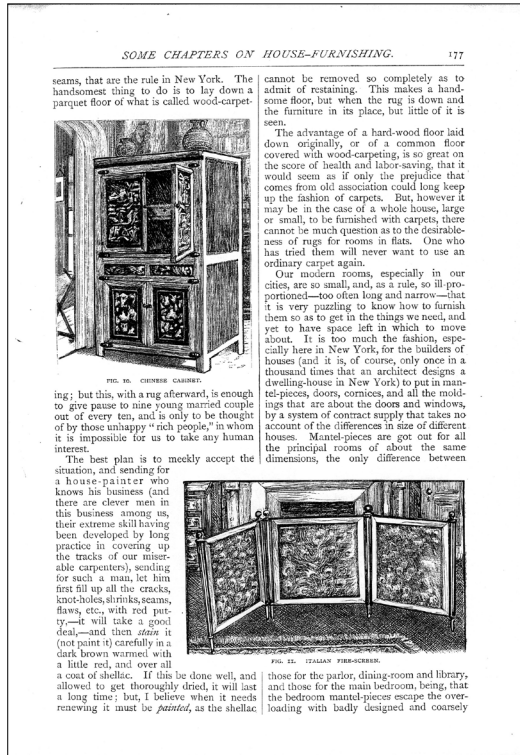
Figure 7: Fourdinois Ebony Cabinet – Universelle Exposition 1867



Figure 8: Thonet's bentwood furniture Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the International Exhibition. 1862. London: George Virtue: 291



**Figure 9:** Art Furniture from designs by E.W. Godwin FSA and manufactured by William Watt 21 Grafton Street, Gower Street London: with hints and suggestions on domestic furniture and decoration (1877)



**Figure 10 a&b:** An "Italian Screen" reproduced in Clarence Cook's first article for *Scribner's Illustrated* (1876) and later re-titled a "Peacock Screen" by Mrs Orrin Smith in *The Drawing Room* (1878)

called a settle, and frequently to be met with in public houses. The back forms an excellent screen or protection from the current of air which is continually passing from the door to the chimney. The drawers below are deep, and will be found very useful for a variety of purposes. On the back there might be a towel roller; or, in a superior kind of cottage, the back of the settle might be ornamented with prints or maps, in the manner of a screen. Placed in the open door, where it would seldom require to be moved, there might even be book shelves fixed to this back, and a flap might be hung to it, with a jib bracket, to serve as a reading or writing table, or for other purposes.

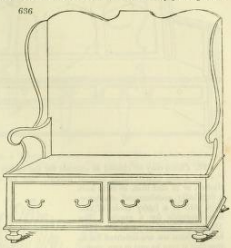
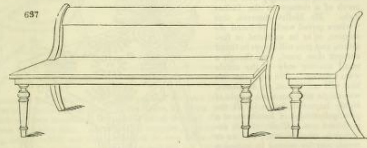
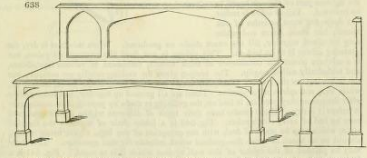


Fig. 639 is a Design for a handsomer Gothic bench

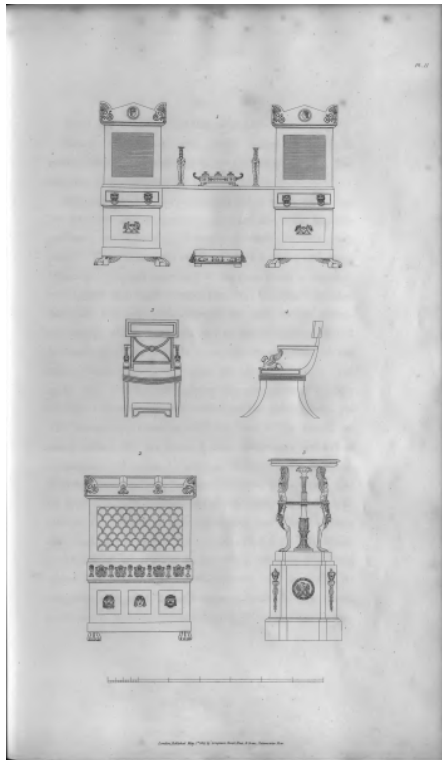


the back of which may either be paneled or open, according to the position, in the kitchen, where it is intended to stand. It has arms and two drawers, and has below the latter a broad shelf about three inches from the ground, on which shoes, &c., may



stand, or a dog may have a mat for sleeping upon. All these benches are to the same scale of half an inch to a foot.

**Figure 11:** John Claudius Loudon. 1833. *An Encyclopædia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture*. London: Longmans, Brown, Green and Longmans: 317.



**Figure 12:** Thomas Hope. 1807 *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*. Plate XI.



Figure 13: 'Old Furniture' From John Thomson and Adolphe Smith (1977) *Street Life in London*. Available at: <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:toj386div>