

Objects, Memory and Narrative: Threads to Construct and Reify

Identity

by

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## ABSTRACT

As a writer and a journalist, I have always been interested in narrative. When I moved to the small town of Wickenburg, Arizona in 2003, and began to get acquainted, a friend said to me, "The only way you leave Wickenburg is in a box." The town of Wickenburg places much importance on its history, a focus that led me to explore its related literature of the U.S. West, moving from there to think about evocative objects, collections, and to Material Culture Theory.

This thesis considers three objects as springboards for exploring identity, sense of place, memory, and the narrative threads that bring these together. Two of these objects are specific to local history. The first is one of the leather badges worn by the women of Las Damas, a Wickenburg horse riding association. The second is a bronze sculpture, "Fatal Dismount," created by local rancher Mary Cooper Hamill, in which the artist depicts a moment, highly significant to her family, that also speaks to and from local history. The third object is a gold bead heirloom necklace that was handed down to me, the fifth-generation recipient. I conclude with a discussion of how evocative objects, handed down across generations, shape two memoirs by Isabel Allende, *Paula*, and *My Invented Country*. In the case of each object, the study of material culture provides a framework for understanding how women have created spaces for themselves, both now and in the past by interacting with objects, articulating identities, making meaning and re-creating history through memories and storytelling.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER	
1 MAKING MEANING: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Las Damas.....	3
Mary Cooper Hamill .....	9
A Gold Bead Necklace .....	10
2 SENSE OF PLACE: 'OUT WICKENBURG WAY' .....	26
More Changes for Wickenburg .....	36
3 ISABEL ALLENDE: NARRATIVE THREADS .....	40
Remembering and Identity.....	42
Paredes: Place and Memory .....	49
"Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past" .....	51
4 CONCLUSION: LIVING MEMORY .....	56
WORKS CITED .....	61

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Las Damas Badge .....	5
2.	"Fatal Dismount" .....	11
3.	A Gold Bead Necklace .....	1

## CHAPTER 1

### MAKING MEANING: INTRODUCTION

Material Culture is concerned with the interrelations of memory, material objects and the past. In Women & Things 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies, Beth Fowkes Tobin and Maureen Daly Goggin argue women make meaning, create and perform identity through their “gendered material practices” that disseminate and preserve knowledge, which is “important in writing women’s history” (Tobin and Goggin 2, 3). The relationship between women and things is more than just commemoration, they argue: within gendered material culture, identity performing practices are necessary to understanding and recording historical data in what is called “embodied knowledge” (Tobin and Goggin 4).

Embodied knowledge speaks to the idea that women’s material practices such as collecting, memorializing, writing, sculpting, and interacting with objects are more than just “situated” (Tobin and Goggin 4) or local knowledge. Tobin and Goggin argue for reaching into the realm of that knowledge that “destabilize(s) the dominant validation of disembodied, abstract thinking” (Tobin and Goggin 4). Tobin and Goggin further assert that local knowledge, while often ephemeral, is key to historically more elevated ideas of what constitutes knowledge. Tobin’s and Goggin’s profuse and varied compilation of essays, stories and histories speak to historicism, and material culture in relating objects to place and identity formation.

The women portrayed in their collection, may, at the time they were interacting with specific objects, have thought they were preserving history, and they were. In addition, those women were also reinterpreting and rearranging the past in a dialogue of making meaning. In the course of arguing that women are important to history despite their historical marginalization, their contributions emerge as important to the history of knowledge, as evidenced by their material practices with objects, and documented by Tobin and Goggin, and in this thesis. In this way, Tobin and Goggin led me to understand how a close look at women's material practices gives an opportunity to rescue that knowledge from the angel of history, and turn our faces to the past while at the same time being "irresistibly propelled into the future" (Benjamin 258).

Research into the role of objects in material culture has asserted that the study of material culture is less about the "thingness" of an object than about the interactions or relationship between an individual, societies, and cultures. I will, however, indulge in focusing initially on the thingness of objects. Further, I assert that an object does have a certain amount of agency. To illustrate and develop this point, I consider three specific objects that function similarly to the objects in Tobin and Goggin, plus objects described in the memoirs of Isabel Allende, as jumping off points for a dialogue about the agency of objects. In considering the meaning-making properties of gendered objects, I present objects as commemorative vehicles that can battle

the displacement of time, and as narrative threads which create identity within a larger context of memory and remembering as acts of agency manifest in identity formation. I echo Tobin and Goggin when I say that women's material practices write women's history, and thus write the history of individuals, communities, nations, and the world.

### Las Damas

The observation that "gender and material culture processes" are "negotiated, contested, and interactive" is particularly true for showing women's relationship to groups (Tobin and Goggin 11). The first object I will examine is one of the leather badges that are worn by the members of a women's group, called Las Damas (LD), based in Wickenburg, Arizona. In this group, which was founded by 25 women who took their first monthly ride in 1949, there are currently about 130 members. Each year, many months in advance of an annual five-day horseback ride, a member of the group stokes up her fireplace, gets out the branding iron and stamps the badge with an image of a bow-legged cowgirl waving her hand. Every member and guest wears such a badge, whether on their monthly rides or on the five-day ride; the badge identifies each member as belonging to this group. I have been a member of this association since 2005, and have obtained permission from Gerry Ballinger, Las Damas member and resident of Congress, Arizona, to photograph and use an image of her badge. In addition, however, the opinions, statements and ideas presented in



this thesis are solely my own and do not represent the views or opinions of Las Damas or any of its members.

The badge is a good place to start, as a simple thing that speaks volumes about the “negotiated, contested, and interactive” (Tobin and Goggin 11) performance of identity. Gerry Ballinger’s badge, which is full of pins and jewels, represents the forty-two years during which she has participated in the five-day ride. Each pin affixed to the leather badge represents a service that the member has performed within the context of the association, which has a board of directors and numerous yearly committees dedicated to organizing the rides and activities, all while trying to keep everyone happy and make sure they have a good time. That there is a lot of work to do to keep the association running can be seen by this badge (Figure 1). To perform so many services over many, many years requires dedication and caring from long-standing members and many others, too many to list here.



Las Damas Badge. This badge belongs to Gerry Ballinger, a member of Las Damas who has participated in 42 annual rides. The badge identifies her as belonging to Las Damas and displays the recognition she has been given.

While the badge pins represent service on committees, I think it also represents, as Katherine Rieder describes in her essay "Gifting and Fetishization: The Portrait Miniature of Sally Foster Otis as a Maker of Female Memory," a reciprocal and cyclical exchange related to gender and time, which symbolizes "remembrance, fidelity, loyalty" (Rieder 253). Although Rieder's description of the exchange of a portrait miniature works somewhat differently from what I am describing, as I believe that it is applicable to the gift-giving practice to which I was introduced in Las Damas. Not everyone does this: the entire membership is broken down into smaller groups, each of which has its own camp names; the group I was part of has exchanged gifts at every annual five-day ride.

Drawing on the work of Marcel Mauss, Rieder states that in the context of gifting--, the necklace given to Otis by her husband, and the miniature, commissioned by Otis and given to her husband -- "were in reality ... given and reciprocated obligatorily" (Rieder 251). The Otises exchanged gifts with each other. Las Damas does the same by giving a gift to show appreciation for the service that the member provides to the club. Rieder's emphasis on the cyclical giving of the miniature and necklace refers to the inheritance of the objects; in Las Damas, giving occurs within the cyclical activity of the association, reflecting the need for participation by members, for which they are rewarded with gifts. After participating in five annual rides, the individual is given a "lady pin" to affix to her badge. The pin is the distinctive shape of what

might be called a Las Damas logo, the bowlegged cowgirl raising her hand in a wave. After ten years, one starts to receive jewels to be placed on the lady pin. As years pass, marking certain milestones of time, more jewels are given: sapphires, and then a diamond will mark 25 years and so on.

Quoting Marx and Freud, Rieder points to the history of the gift and the fetish. She emphasizes how the Freudian view “centered on personal interaction” (Rieder 252) and that the object, or fetish, which creates a bond between the giver and the receiver prevents “the fragmentation of the relationship” (Rieder 253) over time, cementing the connection and also negating the absence of the other. The LD badge and its attached “gifts” perform this same function, representing a negation of absence, and recognizing the displacement of time; the long-ago years are gone and new times are here and things are not the same for many of the LD members, yet they persevere in their traditions. In this way, the LD badge represents a discursive meaning-making practice by means of which the founding members have inserted themselves into the history and location of Wickenburg, and the west.

Further, the existence of Las Damas attests to the gendered material practices in which the founding members of the group, as well as the present-day members have engaged. These practices at once influence and reflect the group’s status as members and participants in the social and cultural identity within the larger community, in a series

of actions that solidify and perform their own personal and cultural identities.

Within the context of Tobin's assertion that "material culture is important in the writing of women's history," Las Damas is an example of a "feminist women's history" (Tobin 3) whose formation and continued existence are reflected in material practices that are "productive of gendered ... social identities" (Tobin and Goggin 7). The badge is much like the handkerchief that Maureen Daly Goggin discusses in her study of textiles, and specifically Janie Terrero's English Suffrage Handkerchief as an object that "offers a snapshot, frozen in time, of ... identity performance at a specific time and place," operating not only in a "discursive space but in a material place and time" and "is situated in a social web that connects us, and other knowing observers" (Goggin 34). Within the wider context of theoretical Cultural Studies, the Las Damas badge is first, a detailed documentary, and second, descriptive of specific meanings and values represented in particular behaviors (Castle 73).

Inherent to a discussion of Las Damas is its relation both to Wickenburg, Arizona, and to the presence of another local group, consisting entirely of men, called the Desert Caballeros (DC). Las Damas emerged as a response to exclusion, for the DC group was formed as a men's only association in 1948, following various economic and social factors in the town of Wickenburg. When Las Damas was formed in the following year, the women's association

copied almost all of the elements of DC, yet there are differences between the two groups corresponding to their status within the community. One of those differences involves the prominent place in the community's representation of DC in the print media. Each year the local community newspaper, *The Wickenburg Sun*, produces a special supplemental tabloid section that features the DC. By way of considering the badge and related aspects of material culture and memory, this thesis addresses details about both groups' impact, not only on the community in general, but specifically on the identity of the women of Las Damas.

As Las Damas is inextricably tied to Wickenburg, and DC, this thesis presents more information about the history of Wickenburg, its residents, its "Hispanic" pioneers, and other "gendered" Arizona personalities who have played a major role in the identity of Arizona and the West. I particularly emphasize those women who have strived to preserve the history, and still today are engaged in performing and embodying their sense of place in their actions, their commemorating activities, and their collecting.

#### Mary Cooper Hamill

The next object I will examine is a bronze sculpture entitled "Fatal Dismount" (Article 2). The artist, Mary Cooper Hamill, is a fifth-generation rancher who lives on the Cooper Ranch, located north of Wickenburg, in the Weaver Mountains, near Wagoner, Arizona. When Hamill's grandmother, Nel Sweeten Cooper (1898-1990), filed for her

homestead rights in 1923, she selected the ranch's site, near Spring Creek.

A discussion of women's artwork and where it is situated goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I would like to focus on the relation between the object itself and the place, Wickenburg, broadly associated with that object, before going on to consider the artist's relation to the object in a praxis of meaning-making for herself and others.

"Fatal Dismount" is a sculpture (18 x 13 x 10 inches) that represents a praxis of identity formation. The sculpture depicts the moment when Hamill's grandfather, Roy Francis Cooper, Sr. was about to be dragged to death by his horse. Through a series of circumstances, which Hamill details in her brief account of the incident, as Cooper dismounted the horse, a rope that was tied to the saddle horn became wrapped around his arm, and the frightened horse ran. One of Cooper's sons tried everything he could to stop the horse, but was unable to save his father.

Roy Francis Cooper was married to Nel Sweeten Cooper, that is, the grandmother of the artist. After his death, Nel ran the ranch without Roy, but had her sons, including the artist's father, to help her.

Inherent in "Fatal Dismount" and the artist's creative process is Hamill's attempt to stop the displacement of time by preserving part of her history and to memorialize an aspect of her family history. In so

doing, the artist performs her own identity and creates a narrative thread that solidifies a link between her and her grandmother, whose history goes even further back.



"Fatal Dismount" Bronze sculpture by Mary Cooper Hamill. 18 x 13 x 10 inches. On display at Batterman's Auctions and Art Gallery in Prescott, Arizona. Photo printed by permission of Mary Cooper Hamill.



Often identity might be thought of as something personal, something we of course project, but in reality, identity is a performance. Through Hamill's manipulation of the material world she has given herself an opportunity to perform her identity by means of creating the sculpture. Hamill performs and shares her own identity by creating the object. By placing her sculptures on display at the Gold Nugget Art Gallery in Wickenburg, in the Desert Caballeros Western Museum in Wickenburg, and currently, at Batterman's Auction and Art Gallery in Prescott, Arizona, Hamill brings "Fatal Dismount" out of the sphere of personal history and into the public community realm.

To further solidify the narrative thread that she has created in the sculpture, Hamill has developed brief stories to accompany each of her bronzes. Each of these stories gives the historical background which inspired the piece. All of these stories involve her family and their experiences on the Cooper ranch. Through such efforts, Hamill has taken her personal story and brought it into the present day, which relates to what Tobin points out regarding ritual, place making and self-expression: "material culture is still often all that remains of their lives" (Tobin and Goggin 3).

Hamill's creativity engages in a praxis of making meaning. Her use of narrative in combination with the object's representational qualities and her choice of venues in which to display "Fatal Dismount" create a narrative thread so that this object, unlike other material objects, does not require us to interpret what meaning is there. She

has brought her own history out of the gendered realm and inserted it into the “world beyond the traditionally prescribed (and circumscribed) boundaries occupied by women” (Tobin and Goggin 2). In addition to this praxis of creating a narrative thread to history, Hamill is also engaged in commemorating her history, rhetorically, in ways resembling what Goggin accomplishes in her essay, “Fabricating Identity: Janie Terrero’s 1912 Embroidered English Suffrage Signature Handkerchief.”

There is a close connection between Hamill’s sculptures, ranch, and Las Damas, as I learned over the years of being acquainted with Mary Cooper Hamill. Because Wickenburg is a small town, and I worked as the editor of the local newspaper, I have had the opportunity to meet many people. In the course of that work I learned about how the Cooper Ranch was and still is a key part of the tradition that surrounds Wickenburg, and how that tradition relates to Las Damas as well as to the Desert Caballeros riders. While both of the riding clubs stay on local ranches for their annual rides, the Cooper Ranch is the main camp spot for DC. As had been the case many times in the past, in 2009 Las Damas made their base camp at the Cooper Ranch. This is just one illustration of the deep ties between the ranch and the community. Many of the memories, and the commemoration of particularly DC are tied to the ranch. This relationship has been documented in the DC ride book, the LD ride book, and in booklets

that Hamill's grandmother, Nel Sweeten Cooper, produced over the years in order to document the history of the area.

Currently, the Cooper ranch is being run by Mary Cooper Hamill, her brother John William Cooper, and Tom Hamill. Mary's parents still live on the ranch, and her father is 83-years-old. Hamill began sculpting in 1990; she told me, when I interviewed her in March of 2011, that it took her "about a year" to complete "Fatal Dismount." She did not work on it full time, but worked on it when she could in between doing her ranch work. She created the sculpture using the "Lost Wax" method; she took it to the foundry in Prescott as part of the completion of the process. Of the nine bronzes that she has completed, all pertain to the history of the ranch, and to Hamill. In addition to "Fatal Dismount," which depicts the artist's grandfather, the artist's other subjects are her grandmother, Nel Sweeten Cooper, "Mary's Boots and Hat," her uncle Roy F. Cooper, as well as her most recent piece, a bust of her father, John W. Cooper.

When I asked Hamill about her motivations for sculpting and the meanings she ascribed to her work, she told me that she identified herself, now, "as an artist in addition to a rancher" (Interview with Mary Hamill, March 2011). And she added that it was "also all about her being an artist." My focus was on memory and identity, whereas Hamill takes it even further. Not only does she engage in commemoration which reifies her family history and perform her identity as a rancher, but she also performs and recognizes her

identity as an artist. This speaks directly to Tobin and Goggin's discussion of the relationship between women and things and "the ways in which women engaged in meaning making, identity formation, and commemoration through their production and manipulation of material artifacts" (Tobin and Goggin 1).

Hamill's comments concisely echoed Tobin and Goggin when she stated that "If I did some other kind of subject (besides her family and ranch history,) it wouldn't identify with me." This relates to what Goggin sums up her study of Janie Terrero's handkerchief, when she asserts that "Terrero, in the act of embroidering her handkerchief, fabricated her identity" (Goggin 33). Referencing anthropologist Webb Keane, Goggin stresses the unpredictable and "unexpected responses" that material objects invited (Goggin 33). Hamill's observations further suggest the agency that objects can provoke: "There was something extra special about making 'Fatal Dismount;' it was very healing for my father," and she explained that after she had created the sculpture, her father was inspired to share even more stories about his own life.

In addition, she said that when she sculpted a bust of her father, "he was very proud of it and it seemed to give him an identity." She explained this to mean that she believed her father felt that all of the colorful things he did in his life would not be forgotten. Just as her grandfather will be remembered because of "Fatal Dismount," so did her father feel he, too, would be remembered. "For some reason we

all want to make a mark," she said. In addition she pointed out that her sculptures are engaged in "telling a history about who my family was and still is. It's about teaching, and it can keep the past memories alive and keep that energy alive."

Hamill, as an artist, is quite clear that she is not only engaging in commemoration. She is also quite cognizant that, in addition, she is engaged in her own agency of creating her identity as an ongoing performance which becomes a narrative thread to her past.

#### A Gold Bead Necklace

Of the many of the essays in Tobin's and Goggin's collection that coalesce around identity, some especially focus on memorializing, which speaks to the historical importance of women's material practices. In that context I include in my collection of objects an heirloom gold bead necklace, of which I am the fifth-generation owner. The necklace, which consists of a number of gold beads, measures 13 inches from end to end. Drawing the two ends together is a gold clasp engraved with the name "Eyle Wimer," as the necklace originally belonged to my great-great-grandmother, Sarah Eyle Wimer (Doenges was her married name). Born November 14, 1866 in Springfield, Illinois, Sarah Eyle died January 16, 1961 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois.

I include a brief "cultural biography" of the necklace, as developing, preserving, and studying such narratives is important to understanding the meaning of objects. The necklace's original owner,

Sarah Eyle Weimer, received the necklace as a gift, or so the story has been told. My mother shared with me what few details she knew about the history of the necklace. Her comments were interesting, if not extremely informative, in that they brought to mind the nature of memory, and particularly the idea of "memoire volontaire" as opposed to "involuntaire." This distinction, which is important to the writer Isabel Allende, as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, admits that not all memories are based on fact and indeed, some are made up. I would not say that my mother made anything up, but only propose that memory is tricky, and that one remembers what they remember, and that is what we are left with as the story unfolds.

My mother stated that the necklace was made for Wimer for her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. "At least that's what I remember being told," she said. Whether it was made by an artisan or purchased from a jewelry store is unknown. What matters is that the necklace was handed down from Wimer to her only daughter Grace Doenges Secker (1895, Springfield, Illinois- 1962, Las Vegas, Nevada).



Colorized, framed photograph of Grace Secker Doenges, great-grandmother of the author of this thesis, wearing the gold bead heirloom necklace. Photo of framed picture by Lora Neu.

Grace Secker had one daughter, Mary Elizabeth Doenges Rogers, my grandmother. Rogers was adopted and raised by Wimer. Rogers was born in 1911 in Springfield, Illinois, and died March 27, 1975 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Rogers, unlike her mother and grandmother who each had one daughter, had five daughters. At this point the direct inheritance of the necklace from mother to daughter experienced a gap. My grandmother decided that instead of choosing one of her daughters to inherit the necklace that she deeply treasured, that she would give it to her first granddaughter, yet to be born. I ended up being that granddaughter and the recipient of the heirloom.

I did not receive it, however, until about 2009, when I asked my mother, who had it for "safekeeping" if she would give it to me. In preparing to write this thesis I tried to get more information from my mother about the necklace. She stated that she believed (again, the best she can "remember being told," and from her own recollections) that the necklace was intended to be handed down upon the death of the owner. Thus, when Wimer died, the necklace went to Secker, and when Secker died, the necklace went to Rogers. As I was 15 years old when my grandmother died, my grandfather gave it to my mother to keep for me. She kept it for nearly four decades! She would never claim ownership of it verbally; she always denied that it was hers. But she admitted: "I had a hard time giving it up. I wanted to have possession of it." She also explained that she felt the necklace was a direct connection to her great-grandmother, Sarah Eyle Wimer, whom



she "idolized." In addition, remember that Secker gave up her child to be raised by Wimer, so the children of Rogers looked to Wimer as "grandmother" rather than Secker who eschewed being called grandma. I felt all of these connections in association with the necklace between me and my grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Rogers. There is very little else available to me at this time about the cultural biography of the necklace. There is a brief mention of it in my great-great-grandmother's newspaper wedding announcement, as it was worn by someone in the bridal party. Years ago, a cousin of my grandmother asked my mother if she knew about the whereabouts of the necklace and was "thrilled" to confirm that it was still in the family. This relative, who was one of the granddaughters of Wimer, grew up hearing her stories and was moved to compile a booklet of all the stories that Wimer had told her grandchildren and great-grandchildren about her life and her days on the frontier. There also exist photographs of Wimer, Secker, Rogers and myself wearing the necklace.

With regard to what Rieder calls "Gifting and Fetishization," it was arresting for me to see the photograph of the "Sally Foster Otis Miniature and Cornelian Necklace" (Rieder 248). The photograph shows a portrait miniature in which Otis is wearing a beaded necklace: I was struck by the similarity to my necklace, which, though I have no miniature, is accompanied by a photograph depicting one of the owners wearing the necklace. Within Rieder's "cultural biography"

(Rieder 249) of the necklace, she delves into the theories of anthropologist Marcel Mauss and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Their theories clarify how the miniature “and the necklace it portrayed became central to an interlocking network of gifting and fetishization that enabled the Otis family to deny absence and prevent familial fragmentation ...” (Rieder 249). So similar are my necklace and photographs to those which Rieder features that I was drawn all the more to her theories of commemoration, obligation, and the cyclical nature of objects. Like Rieder’s stress on how objects helped families to “deny absence and prevent familial fragmentation” (Rieder 249), there is, as Mary Cooper Hamill explained, and as my mother explained, a sense in which objects preserve the memory of the past.

Further, following Mauss, Rieder asserts that gifts “although allegedly given voluntarily, were ‘in reality ... given and reciprocated obligatorily’” (Rieder 251). This likewise appears in the meanings that my mother attributed to the necklace, as she asserted that while she wanted to keep the necklace, when she did give it to me she was glad to be released from the burden. “It relieved me of all my responsibility,” she said. “That it not get lost and that it would stay in the family.” In addition, she pointed out that she remembers that her own mother felt the burden of the responsibility. And from my own memories, and as my mother repeated to me again what I had heard all my life: My grandmother had eleven children, and there were

many times when money was tight and “she could have sold it, but she never would. She valued and treasured it always,” Mom repeated.

I would take my relationship to the necklace a step further by articulating what my mother may have felt in a more personal way, but perhaps did not put into so many words: that the obligation is not only to hold on to the object, but to “cement the bond between portrayed and possessor, and (prevent) the fragmentation of the relationship that a prolonged absence from one another might cause” (Rieder 253). This speaks directly to the relationship between my mother and Wimer, and my relationship with my own grandmother, Rogers.

Rieder moves, appropriately, even further through time, up to the present, in her discussion of subsequent owners of the objects and “the Perpetuation of Memory” (Rieder 254). Battling the displacement of time is a motivating factor in preservation of the past and perpetuating the memories of families. Rieder details how the miniature and the necklace were handed down, and the bonds that were created from generation to generation. In addition to the gendered objects that the women of the family receive, in contrast to the traditional way in which more public-sphere property such as homes, land and other large objects are left to men, women receive more portable objects, appropriate to those who, by virtue of their gender, are most likely to experience a severance of family ties. By virtue of a woman’s gendered role, they are fated to marry, and when

they do, unlike men, they will take a new name and join a new family. The tradition of bestowing family names on children is one way of fighting this displacement (as Rieder points out). "The most vivid symbol of a woman's loss of connection to her family at the time of her marriage and beyond was the loss of her maiden name," (258) Rieder explains. While there are instances in my own family line, going back to the 1700s of repetitions of names handed down, I will not go into that, but will only mention that my interest in genealogy, if at all, is strictly the line of women, which historically, can be difficult to do, specifically because (as Rieder points out), women's names change when they marry. One piece of evidence for this attempt to preserve the family connection that I will submit to add to Rieder's own is that I named my own daughter after both my great-great-grandmother and my grandmother; my daughter's name is Eyle Elizabeth.

Rieder asserts that the perpetual cycle of giving objects, as well as the naming, "push(es) the family's legacy into the future while simultaneously referring to its past" (Rieder 259). She also mentions that speculation about timing of gift-giving and other aspects "had little impact on their eventual and inevitable meaning" (259). "The necklace ... fiercely fought this fragmentation by binding the women to their original families" (Rieder 259).

My study of Tobin's and Goggin's book and the other research and interviews I have done seems to confirm that struggling against the displacement of time is a losing battle. There remains, however,

something of the past that can perhaps be captured. As Mary Hamill Cooper pointed out, one can attempt to keep past memories alive, and she used a fascinating word in conjunction with that thought, and that is "energy." She said "...and keep that energy alive."

One of the most evocative and haunting premises that Rieder puts forth is something that I myself can experience, which speaks to the identity-forming property of objects. Rieder speaks about the materiality of the objects as agents in stopping the fracture of the family. The connection created by the gift allows one to "now possess a part of the spirit of the other," (Rieder 259) creating a relationship of recognition and projection between the viewer and the other, in a gaze that links the descendent and the past, and solidifies the relationship in "projections of self" (259) that are directly related to the materiality of the object and its physicality, enabling the projection of identity to occur across time. Taking the metaphor to its "ultimate conclusion" Rieder says specifically in regard to both the necklace and the miniature together, much like my necklace and portrait of my great-grandmother:

If a female descendant wore Sally's necklace, her body slipped into her place as it was portrayed in the miniature. The descendant's sense of self, in this instance enacted through wearing rather than holding and gazing, would become connected to Sally through a bodily duplication of the image the miniature contained. Should the descendant wearing the

necklace simultaneously contemplate the miniature, the interaction between the female viewer and Sally became even more powerful. The female descendant wearing the necklace and gazing at the miniature became Sally's double, creating the ultimate instance of self-recognition as the miniature became a mirror rather than an image in which the self and the other oscillated. The female descendant wearing the necklace became Sally and Sally became the female descendant wearing the necklace—the two selves became one" (Rieder 260).

Rieder's statements offer great evidence of the agency of objects, attesting to how they can reify identity as well as serve as agents of collective memory. In the case of the Otis family miniature and necklace, preserving the family history eventually became too much of a burden. Too much time passed. The family gave the objects to Historic New England at some point in the 1960s. Upon giving the objects to Historic New England, "they released this cyclical burden" (Rieder 261). She explains that the Museum eventually restored the Otis home, which had been built in 1795, so that "the restored home (and all of the objects within it) denies that Harry (Otis) and Sally have ever left. Disavowing their absence, it waits patiently for their return" (Rieder 261).

## CHAPTER 2

### SENSE OF PLACE: 'OUT WICKENBURG WAY'

Yet another narrative thread relating to these concentric, overlapping stories arises from a set of documents, describing the larger context of the efforts to preserve Wickenburg's history and connection to the past. What is it about a place that makes people identify so strongly with it that they never want to leave?

"Once you live in Wickenburg, you'll never leave unless it's in a box." Such were the words of a new friend, someone I just met when I moved to Wickenburg in 2005. At the time, I was sure those words would never apply to me, as I did not intend to make the town my permanent home.

Wickenburg, Arizona, about 60 miles northwest of Phoenix, is a town of rich history, friendly citizens, small town values, and clean air. The town is now a mecca for retirees and the Chamber of Commerce Web site boasts that "Arizona's Wild West Lives in Wickenburg." Bob Boze Bell, Arizona character, artist, historian, and Executive Editor of *True West* magazine, has included Wickenburg in his list of the "Top Ten True Western Towns." This listing covers towns across the country, and is "given to towns that have made an important contribution to preserving their pasts" (*True West*).

Wickenburg indeed is engaged in preserving its history as well as preserving the Western character of the town. The Desert Caballeros Western Museum has gone a long way to preserving local

history. Local lore abounds in this town that was settled near the greatest gold mine ever found in Arizona, the Vulture Mine, discovered in 1863 by Henry Wickenburg, the namesake of the town. It has been claimed that the famous mine yielded more than \$30 million in gold during its years of operation, but according to experts the yield was probably “between \$4 million and \$6 million” (Pry 64.)

The town grew up on the Hassayampa River, about 10 miles from the Vulture Mine. Wickenburg today has all the friendly characteristics of a small town, and in addition, one can take a walking tour around Wickenburg for clues to its past.

One locale to see is the Jail Tree, located on Wickenburg Way, where outlaws were chained up because the town had no jail. Yes, they just chained them to the tree. As part of the Town’s revitalization and historic preservation project, they have added various sculptures or statues at historically significant locations around town, including at the Jail Tree where a bemused character sits under the shade. He looks a little down and out and worse for wear, exactly as such a person might have looked in the long-ago past.

Across the street is the Desert Caballeros Western Museum, which, in addition to housing western art, also has a collection of handy tools to have in the Old West—the six-shooter and the rifle. Many locations around the Wickenburg area were sites of deadly conflict and murder.



Wickenburg history is well documented, but if you take a visit to the Wishing Well, you'll learn the legend of the Hassayampa. When gold was discovered at the Vulture Mine, there were so many stories of finding giant nuggets that it was said if you drank from the Hassayampa, you'd never tell the truth again. Many of the historical deaths and battles in the area are still shrouded in mystery, and the truth will never be known.

Nature abounds in the Wickenburg area, but historically speaking, man's experience with nature in this vicinity came down to one thing, and that one thing was gold. In his book, Catch the Stage to Phoenix, Leland J. Hanchett Jr. describes conditions in the Wickenburg area beginning in the late 1800's, and the following information summarizes the history that he documents in his book. The mining boom in central Arizona began in 1863 when Abraham Peeples and Pauline Weaver explored the Weaver Mountains north of Wickenburg. Nuggets were found on the tops of hills, and when those were used up, Placer mining was used. With this method, gold was mined in streambeds and alluvial deposits, using sluices to extract the coveted ore.

At this time, stage travel became more common, and the route between Prescott and Phoenix wound its way through Wickenburg. In addition to providing a route between Prescott and Phoenix (and Tucson as well), a western route connected central Arizona to California where supplies were shipped from the Colorado River. These

routes were notoriously dangerous and travelers were liable to be attacked by Apaches, or set upon by stagecoach robbers and killed for their possessions or for the freight, which often contained gold bullion or cash.

One particularly dangerous area on the long 200-mile stretch between Prescott and Phoenix was near Kirkland Junction north of Wickenburg. Many unsolved murders occurred at the mining town of Stanton, which was found along this route. The most notorious and mysterious place was Negro Wells. The legend began with the death of Negro Joe and his partners. The men were trying to sink a well at the still unknown location of the site that is still known as Negro Wells. It was thought that either they were fighting amongst themselves, or they fell into the well they were digging when the earth collapsed on them. After that, several individuals and an entire family were murdered at the site. Today, the location is supposed to be a spot identified by a depression in the ground, along the old stage road near Trilby Wash (Hanchett 111-121).

These travelers were not the only ones beset. Henry Wickenburg himself was shot in the head during a dispute with another Wickenburg resident. He recovered from the wound. Wickenburg's fortune, however, did not include the millions of dollars that was taken out of his discovered Vulture Mine. He struggled throughout his ownership of the mine. In 1905, Wickenburg committed suicide by shooting himself

with a pistol. As my friend said, once you come to Wickenburg, you don't leave unless you're in a box (Hanchett 111-121).

Another mystery involving the stagecoach lines is the Wickenburg Massacre, which took place on Nov. 5, 1871, about eight miles outside of Wickenburg. Stagecoach routes followed the river bottoms, as it was easier to negotiate than the rocky terrain surrounding the dry riverbeds. It was in such a place that seven passengers were allegedly accosted by thirty Apaches. Two eyewitnesses survived the attack, along with one man who disembarked at the stage before the attack, and walked back to Wickenburg because he had forgotten something important (Hanchett 111-121).

The culprits were never found. Some said that Mexicans dressed as Indians were the murderers. Others blamed a gang of stage robbers. Still others thought that one of the surviving passengers, prostitute Mollie Sheppard, was involved. Unfortunately for the native population, the massacre brought the wrath of the military through the person of General Crook, who organized against the Mojave, Apache and Yavapai of the area. By 1875, the so-called "Indian problem" was solved with the surrender of the Yavapai and their relocation to a reservation (Hanchett 111-121).

A significant natural disaster occurred upstream from Wickenburg, on the Hassayampa River, at the Walnut Grove Dam. The earthen dam burst about 2 a.m. on Feb. 22, 1890, causing the largest

natural disaster in Arizona history to that point. As many as 70 were estimated to have been killed. The avalanche of water destroyed many of the farms along the Hassayampa. Many of those killed were Mexican-Americans, early pioneers of the area. Since these Mexican-American victims were refused burial alongside the Anglo victims, rancher Ygnacio Garcia donated land for a burial site. The Garcia Cemetery can be found in Wickenburg today, located on Tegner Street. Mark Pry, in his book on Wickenburg history, points out that many of the Mexican Americans did not leave town after this disaster wiped out their ranches and farms. "Leaving was an option that offered little; after all, Wickenburg was their home," (Pry 55). These early pioneers never left either.

The topography of the Hassayampa has recovered from that fateful day, and today, for the nature lover, there is the Hassayampa River Preserve, owned by the Nature Conservancy. The Hassayampa mostly flows underground, but at this riparian area, the water flows above ground and attracts hundreds of species of birds as well as a variety of wildlife. This location, once known as The Garden of Allah, was Wickenburg's first resort, leading the way for Wickenburg to become the Dude Ranch Capital of the World. But like many of the mysteries surrounding Wickenburg's history, no one really knows what happened to the previous owners, who abandoned the Garden of Allah and were never heard from again.

By prying gold from the earth, tilling the soil, and traveling across the arid desert, men try to wrest power over the earth by building dams and towns, mining for ore and searching for wealth. In these dangerous and deadly occupations, early Wickenburg residents lived, died, and made this place their home.

I don't know what the fate of this little town will be, located in a beautiful expanse of Sonoran desert, nor what the fate of the townspeople will be. But I was always intrigued when my friend said to me that you don't leave Wickenburg but in a box. It made the hair on my arms stand up. And the history of the town attests to this peculiar but often not discussed aspect of this small town. While his statement is a little eerie, it is also a testament to the deep roots that people put down in Wickenburg.

These anecdotes are just a slice of Wickenburg's varied history. The Hispanic Pioneers, as they are called, also made up a big part of the founding of Wickenburg, and played an important role. During many periods of Wickenburg history, about half of the population were Mexican-Americans. The agricultural activities of the Mexican-American community was part of the turning away from a mining to a ranching culture, as Wickenburg struggled to define itself. Prejudice was a fact of life in Wickenburg, like many other places around the country. The local newspaper, *The Miner*, however, was owned by a woman, Angela Hammer, and she published the newspaper from 1904-1913, when she finally left Wickenburg. Another businesswoman, Elizabeth Smith,

“who was one of the town’s few black residents, arrived in Wickenburg sometime around 1897” (Pry 68). Smith ran the Vernetta Hotel. According to Pry, Smith was a well-thought of resident and a town benefactor, “(A)lthough racial prejudice eventually forced her to withdraw from active involvement in community affairs” (Pry 69). To re-enact a vignette of history, a statue of a black woman now stands outside the Hassayampa Building, now restored and recorded on the National Register of Historic Places. This statue stands on the sidewalk in front of the building, just as if she were a real person and you might pass her on the street. In addition there is a brief audio history near the statue, which, at the touch of a button, you can learn that Smith arrived in Wickenburg around 1897 and stayed at the Baxter House, where she began running that hotel. We learn that when officials of the Santa Fe Railroad heard about how great her food was, they asked her to open a restaurant for them. Eventually, in 1905, the Vernetta Hotel was built by the railroad, and managed by Smith, who was renowned for her good cooking and her hospitality.

Though Wickenburg was a small town and unlikely to draw a lot of tourists, its Western atmosphere eventually became a draw for tourism. As Pry points out, many tourists visiting the west “came searching for an authentically ‘western’ experience,” which Wickenburg provided through its Dude Ranch industry, which grew out of the ranching culture of the area, beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The arid nature of the Wickenburg area brought many challenges with ranching. Without a reservoir on the Hassayampa River, Wickenburg again was facing a difficult economy. The early 1920's offered "a turning point in Wickenburg between cattle ranching and mining and dude ranching," according to Anthony "Tony" O'Brien, whose family leased their ranch to the people who would develop the Remuda Ranch, which became "Wickenburg's first full-time guest ranch" (Pry 95-96).

Pry points to an interesting development in that, due to increased urbanization, and the new industrial nature of society, "Americans began to feel estranged from their frontier past" (Pry 96-97). By visiting the dude ranch or guest ranch, tourists hoped to "experience the 'real' West" (Pry 97). This included an opportunity to wear western clothing, participate in the western lifestyle, and be in a location removed from urban development. These same qualities still mark Wickenburg as a unique western town in the present day.

Many standards for the western lifestyle touted by the dude ranches still exist today. Visitors were encouraged to wear western clothing, and purchase those items locally, bringing money into the town's businesses.

As the dude ranches were specifically designed as an economic boost to keep the town alive, horseback riding, the western atmosphere, cowboys, rodeos and pack trips became the focus of that western experience. A cowboy with his guitar singing around the

campfire, all made up the character of the town, albeit "put on" to a certain extent for the benefit of the guests. At that time, lifestyles were such that guests stayed at the ranches for up to as long as a month, and many of the guests were found by being referred by guests or other locals. In this way a "restricted clientele" was formed (Pry 102). There were many reasons for this restriction, as Pry points out: to make sure the guests were compatible with one another and to distinguish the dude ranch experience from other "sanatoria" where people would stay for health reasons. "But the restrictions also were racial and ethnic," Pry states. He further points out that "Jews were not welcome—a sentiment made explicit by the Bar FX, which in the 1930s was "maintained for the patronage of gentile guests" (Pry 102). Segregation was common in the country then, and the reference-only process of the dude ranches allowed the owners to pick and choose who would be welcome.

Challenging Wickenburg's claim as the Dude Ranch Capital of the World were post World War II changes to the economy and habits and behaviors of Americans. In an effort to retain visitors -- who were now staying for shorter periods of time rather than the month-long experiences -- local dude ranch and other ranch owners came up with a plan to replace some of the other activities such as rodeos.

The Desert Caballeros (DC) was formed and held its first ride in 1947. In this annual event, held every spring, the participants went on a multi-day trail ride into the desert mountains near Wickenburg. The



riders camped at local ranches; they hired helpers from among the local ranch hands and residents. The ride price was not cheap for the participants, but their dollars bought them that Wild West and frontier experience, as well as catered meals, and a virtual caravan of people who set up their camp for them in advance of their arrival on horseback.

Each year the group, en masse--2011 will mark their 66th year--rides through the main streets of Wickenburg as they set out on what is now a five-day journey. Like the previous guests at the dude ranches, this large band of "Caballeros" was made up of "wealthy executives and professional men" (Pry 129); however, it is worth noting that while participation is still by invitation-only, due to time and changing social climate, the group's make-up may have changed somewhat and become more diverse. Yet the group remains a men's-only group: to this day it is anathema that a woman would be anywhere near the ride or campsite.

In response to the Desert Caballeros, the local women, a year later, set up their own group, called Las Damas (LD). They, too, offer a major annual event, bringing revenue to the town. They adopted many of the same plans and routines as the DC. Both groups retained the same prerogative that the dude ranches used—membership is by referral and invitation only.

## More Changes for Wickenburg

Pry references Pete Fletcher, longtime manager of the Remuda Ranch, as having stated that "(M)any of the guest ranches went out of business or changed into the resort type." Guests were more demanding now, and they were looking for new experiences. "In part, this reflected shifts in taste; re-creations of the 'Old West' no longer had quite the appeal they once did," Pry said (130).

It seems the next phase of Wickenburg's changing face was to become a destination, not for the western experience necessarily but as a refuge for vacationers as well as "wealthy retirees" (Pry 134).

Pry asks if this was "The Demise of a 'Western' Town?" Due to the changes in the guest ranching industry, some residents feared that Wickenburg would lose its western flavor and turn from its roots:

Although it might have seemed to longtime Wickenburg residents that this shift away from their western roots was peculiar to their town, in fact similar changes were taking place all across the West. For that matter, communities in many of the country's regions—New England, the South, the Midwest—seemed gradually to be losing their distinctiveness in food, attire, manners, customs, and speech patterns. In the case of Wickenburg and other small towns in the West, this sense of eroding regional identity developed as the West was gradually drawn into the economic and social mainstream of the nation following the Second World War (Pry 136).

Pry points out that while many Americans were no longer very interested in the "Old West," a new perspective came about which he points out that Sunset magazine called "the western lifestyle" (137).

With development of a service economy, Wickenburg's historic downtown core began to lose its place as the center, while shopping centers and other businesses were being developed along the fringes of town. "Historic downtown Wickenburg is on a one-way, downhill slide into overwhelming blight," Pry quotes from a town report.

The town decided that looking back in time to the town's history could in fact lead them in to the future, so that the Wickenburg Downtown Revitalization and Historic Preservation Task Force was formed in 1982. They set about transforming and refurbishing landscaping, burying utility lines in the downtown core, and restoring the railroad depot which houses the Chamber of Commerce today. As of 1986 as many as 27 buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pry also mentions that the Arizona Nature Conservancy purchased the Frederick Brill homestead, which later was the Garden of Allah guest ranch, located in one of the few places in the Wickenburg area where the Hassayampa River flows above ground. Pry evokes the history underlying this riparian area:

Here they (residents and visitors) will glimpse remnants of the cottonwood and mesquite forests that once lined the river for

miles in either direction and provided early miners with the fuel they needed for their stamp mills, the wildlife and seasonal plants that led the Yavapai Indians to establish so many Rancherias along the river, and the flowing water that has provided drinking and irrigation water to generations of inhabitants. The Hassayampa River has changed considerably over the years—nothing will bring back the rich farming soil washed away in the Walnut Grove Dam flood—yet it still flows past Wickenburg, a living link to the town’s rich and colorful past as a farming, mining, and tourist community (Pry 141).

Pry’s referring to the Hassayampa River as a living link to the past illustrates the narrative link that this physical feature provides between the present and the past; Pry’s story is also a testament to the need to preserve that link that people feel. Such a link may not be spoken of on a day-to-day basis, yet many people familiar with Wickenburg feel this connection to the place itself, even if they can’t articulate it. That may be the reason why the DC ride, and why LD survive after so many years.

## CHAPTER 3

### ISABEL ALLENDE: NARRATIVE THREADS

Much as Wickenburg remembers and tries to bring its past alive through commemorative and preservation efforts, so does Isabel Allende hope to preserve her own past and sense of place, and engage in identity formation, as will be shown in the following chapter about Allende.

“Listen, Paula. I’m going to tell you a story ... ,” begins Isabel Allende in her memoir about her mortally-ill daughter, Paula. Allende, a prolific novelist who draws heavily on memory, admits that memories can be invented. She acknowledges that readers can rightly wonder about how truthful a memoir really is. In writing Paula as a memoir of how she experienced the life, illness, and death of her adult daughter, Allende uses narrative to help her get through the difficult experience of Paula’s coma. Using the techniques of directed narrative that Allende describes as having developed in her earlier texts--the writer evokes her daughter’s life, knowing that her daughter could die, or never awake from her coma—and writes about her own identity, and her life as a writer and a mother.

Central to Paula is Allende’s own journey of self-discovery through memoir: the writer allows us to discover and experience Paula as the writer remembers and develops her as a character, through narrative, using memory to create a recognizable identity that readers can know.

Looking closely at and relating Paula to Allende's other work, Allende's memoir and her fiction seem inseparable. By way of recollections of her past experiences and feelings, the writer at once describes the circumstances of the title character's illness, and reminisces about Paula's life. Material culture enters into the passages where Allende recalls Paula's words, clothing or other anecdotes, all of which help create an identity of Paula that we can see; she interweaves these specifics with her own memories to create a memory and identity of Paula that the reader can envision. By turning Paula into a character, the protagonist of a story that she, Paula, could eventually read or have told to her, the writer creates or recreates Paula's memories for her.

Allende's more recent memoir, My Invented Country, further shows the writer's use of narrative to define her own identity. As in *Paula*, objects have a strong role in the narrative, helping the readers to understand the writer's view of the past and how the past relates to the present. Among the objects that the writer develops to articulate the connections between the present and the past are two that especially relate to women: her grandmother's sugar bowl, mentioned in both The House of the Spirits and My Invented Country, and a plaid dress that belonged to the title character in Paula.

## Remembering and Identity

Biography, autobiography and memoir naturally rely on memory as the source of their information, if not their inspiration.

Autobiography, narrative and fiction also use memory, as well as objects and place to create a sense of identity. Americo Paredes said that "one's sense of identity is drawn from the long past..." and uses place as a representative of identity (Saldívar 9). In the process of choosing to examine the formation of identity in narrative by focusing on the use of memory, sense of place, and even objects, I have found that Allende's memoirs focus on elements of the culture as a group through individual stories, and the stories are really about individual rather than collective identity. As Allende illustrates, collective identity is also important in forming individual identity.

Allende is a storyteller, as you can see by the first line of her book Paula. She tells us that she wrote her first novel by beginning to pen a letter to her dying grandfather, and that Paula was also begun as a letter to her daughter, under unique circumstances: in the beginning of her narrative Allende explains that if her daughter recovered from her deep coma, not even the doctors knew what the outcome would be. Allende decided to write this memoir for her daughter to help preserve not only Paula's memory, but the history of Paula's heritage as well, which naturally includes Allende's memories and history.

Of her descriptions and memories of her own grandmother that she retells in the story, Allende describes the physical memories of hugs and scents, but then says that the rest is "invented." Allende closely relates her own identity to that of her grandmother, and to her daughter's identity as well. By transmitting these memories to her daughter, Allende shares her identity with Paula, whom she fears may have lost hers through the ravages of her illness and long-time coma.

As Allende admits that memories can be invented, one might ask how truthful this memoir really is, and wonder how very different it would be if Paula were writing her own autobiography. One could ask how much the memoir is fictionalized, and whether the story is really about Paula, Allende, or about their entire family. With Allende's background as a novelist, it is not surprising that her memoir employs fictionalization and imagination in recounting her own memories, which she is sharing with Paula.

Allende frequently refers to the nature of memory and admits that pieces of her past "may simply be a dream like so many that distort my reality" (136). She points out hours and moments that are etched in her memory, comparing them with years that have slipped away and been forgotten (the displacement of time). She refers to memories that never happened, (162), and in this way allows her narrative to shape itself as it develops, rather than sticking to the rigid facts.



As with all storytelling, the facts and memories can change as they are relayed to the listener. Between recollections of her past experiences and feelings, Allende refers to her daughter by telling about her illness, what other people say and do at the hospital, and feelings she is having about her daughter's illness and reminiscing about Paula's life as well. The passages where Allende recalls Paula's words, her clothing or other anecdotes all help to evoke Paula in memorable ways. As Allende interweaves these asides with her memories, she creates that some memories and an identity of Paula that the reader can envision (specificity of objects). When she places Paula in the setting of her memoir as just another character, she adds to the development of Paula's character, making her a part of the writer's past, as Allende creates Paula's memories for her, in a journey of self-discovery through memoir which allows us, the readers, to simultaneously discover the memories that the writer holds, both of herself and of Paula.

Perhaps writing the memoir of her life with her daughter, and discovering her daughter in her illness and final days, created a catharsis for Allende. As Allende points out, all the "happenings fade from memory; ... and all that remains is the journey of the soul, those rare moments of spiritual revelation" (23). By trying to capture her memories of Paula, Allende has had to reexamine her own past, in which she finds sadness, nostalgia and longing, all fitting with the story of her dying daughter.

Allende's work is notable for the importance assigned to the role of letters and to traditions that come from oral storytelling. As she explains in My Invented Country, at least two of her novels began as letters, and many of her so called memories are not events that she actually experienced herself, but are stories she was told by other people. One specific story that is very real to the writer is the story of her grandmother's sugar bowl. Her grandmother was said to be clairvoyant and was able to move the sugar bowl just with her mind. Allende knows she didn't actually see it with her own mind, but the original storyteller brings with him the experience of the memory. The storyteller's experience allows the reader to experience it as well.

Intended audience is a question one might ask of autobiographers, in relation to the idea of catharsis and self-discovery, as perhaps the authors themselves are the original, or ultimate audience in mind while writing.

Nostalgia, longing, and being an outsider are other issues that Allende frequently alludes to. Allende defines nostalgia for us: "Nostalgia is 'a bittersweet longing for things, persons, or situations of the past. The condition of being homesick:'"

... I write as a constant exercise in longing. I have been an outsider nearly all of my life ... several times I have found it necessary to pull up stakes, sever all ties, and leave everything behind ... From saying good-bye so often my roots have dried up, and I have had to grow others, which, lacking a geography

to sink into, have taken hold in my memory (My Invented Country xi).

Having once said goodbye to her country, Chile, she must now say good-bye to her daughter, and Paula will pull up her roots from the physical world. While Allende says she has a longing for her native country, Chile, in the end she embraces her home in San Francisco, and her past in Chile as all parts of her identity. But she warns us, "don't believe everything I say: I tend to exaggerate ..." (My Invented Country 197). Her disclaimer comes at the end of her memoir, but it is just her admitting the malleability of memory that lets us fall into her story, and believe that it is all true from the heart. She also says that memory cannot be trusted, that it is made up of illusions, images and uncertainty. Her admission to the fictitious nature adds to her believability.

Allende describes events in her memory that she didn't actually see or doesn't really remember; "It seems I have lived them, but when I write them down in the clear light of logic, they seem unlikely" (My Invented Country 68), and she casually shrugs this off as if it really doesn't matter whether it was her own memory, or a story she heard from someone else. Paula is similar in that the reader might assume, before starting, that the book is about Paula's memories, when in fact it is not, it cannot be because she is in a coma—Paula is not relating her own memories to the reader. It is a factual contradiction. But like her grandmother's kinetic sugar bowl, Paula's

invented memories scoot across the page, as the sugar bowl scooted across the table at her grandmother's volition. Allende explains a little bit about this character of remembering when she says of her first book, "My first memory of Chile is of a house I never knew" (My Invented Country 19). Allende says the house in her novel, The House of the Spirits, was based on the house where her mother was born. The idea evolved because her grandfather "so frequently evoked" the house "that it seems I have lived there," Allende says (My Invented Country 20).

Memory and identity have added features in that Allende has written both as an exile, in the House of the Spirits, and as an immigrant, in My Invented Country. She qualifies the differences: exile deals more in nostalgia and a longing to go back to an earlier time or place, while the immigrant looks forward to the future (174).

Writing about Allende's use of memory, history, and imagination, Karen Castellucci Cox points out that "many of her characters live, like she does, in exile or estrangement from their homelands and their families. In these cases, the ability to piece together the past from deeply cherished recollections often becomes for Allende's characters an impulse more urgent than any factual account of history" (Castellucci Cox 24-27). "The memories become as valuable an inheritance as the historical truths, regardless of their manipulation by the imagination." Prompted by her desire to preserve personal and national history, Allende says ... "I am always looking for

something, looking for my identity, trying to unveil the secrets and mysteries" (Castellucci Cox 27).

Allende says that due to moving so much (for various reasons) her "roots have dried up," and "lacking a geography to sink into, have taken hold in my memory." How much does nostalgia contribute to her "Invented Country?" Allende does seem to have a longing for her native country, and seems to carry it around with her in her mind, heart and imagination. This is why Chile figures so largely in her writing. Like the house she never knew, Allende is able to create a place for herself. Sense of place relates to identity and exiles are continually trying to work this out. Some exiles may believe they have lost at least part of their identity, while some exiles adopt their new home as Allende seems to have done. Still other exiles may well create a new identity as Allende seems to have done for Paula in the new "country" (coma) that she came to live in. There are many differences in identity exploration between exiles, emigrants, immigrants and geopolitical experiences (post-colonial).

Allende's memories may represent a partial shared cultural understanding of the Chilean people, but the class system may preclude her version of the past from representing the majority of Chileans.

## Américo Paredes: Place and Memory

Similar to how Allende uses her narrative as part of her identity formation, identity can be formed by memory and will be molded over time. The work of Américo Paredes captures his identity which is partly made up of his memories, which Ramón Saldívar attempts to record in his biography, which suggests that while the place may have changed, south Texas remains a formative part of Paredes's identity.

Saldívar evokes what he calls the "geographic specificity" of the south Texas border region and its connection to what he calls, citing Raymond Williams, individual "structures of feeling," those vitally human experiences to which official fixed forms of consciousness and knowledge do not speak at all (Saldívar 6). This quote relates to importance of place in creating a sense of identity in relation to "geographic specificity." The experience of Tejanos is different from that of exile/immigrant Isabel Allende, which differs, turn, from the experiences of Chicanos and Mexican-Americans living in other border states or regions, such as Arizona, generally, or the town of Wickenburg.

Saldívar equates Américo Paredes's work with Walter Benjamin pointing out that they both "wrestled with historical memory and the destruction of the past" (8).

"In his ethnographic and literary writings Paredes endeavored to remind us of the hold of places and times on our social selves and to liberate the forces within history that always make it something originary for the present. This held true for all of Paredes' writings, but especially for his literary creations, as works of mnemonic art" Saldívar says (8).

Paredes is cognizant of the relationship between memory and history in the "impulses of memory" that Paredes says originate from local histories, and are transformed into critical structures of feeling that link them to transnational designs. In those "half-conscious desire and yearnings" tentatively articulated as memory in the folk wisdom of a community, one may find implicitly "the matters that organize the course of history." Paredes understood that the linking of those structures of feeling to transnational designs was continually being worked out dialectically ... " As socioeconomic conditions changed a political agency itself," Paredes believed (Saldívar 14).

In essence this is saying that the real history is located in the memory and remembering of individuals and communities, and that remembering carries through as an inherent ideology of the individual or group, leading into Saldívar's sense of a "social imaginary, "a level of understanding on the symbolic level" (Saldívar 14).

The idea of the fluidity of borders is prominent in Saldívar's discussion of Paredes's work, especially in relation to the "tension between national and transnational perspectives" that he brings up in

his intro. The idea of "Greater Mexico" reflects the difference between the political borders and what the real experience of people in border cultures is and has been. And his assertion that this "transnational phenomenon ... can only be read according to a hemispheric dialectic of similarity and difference" speaks to many of the issues that have come up in Latino autobiography. Faced with the pull to choose between one's ethnic, racial and political/national heritage as opposed to assimilating into North American culture, Saldívar's explanations suggest that perhaps the "transnational imaginary" may be part of the solution to that problem of identity. Like Allende illustrates, not choosing can also be an option.

#### "Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past"

The importance of remembering to memoir in particular, relates to collective remembering as a part of creating a culture and identity. Alan Radley's "Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past," asserts that, remembering works to identify a collective past, and derives from "a framework of shared cultural understanding." Remembering sustains myths and ideology about people and cultures, and is more than an individual mental process.

In "The Objects of Memory: Collecting Eternal Sunshine," Frederika Shulman explores the agency of objects and memory. Her comments about objects can also be applied to memory. "(O)bjects have the ability to serve as living testaments to the liminal spaces of time, culture and personal and social identities" (Shulman 2). Objects



are agents of memory by virtue of the aura that clings to them.

"Artifacts can then transmit who and what we are via social and cultural myths, memories and practices" (Shulman 3). Remembering serves to help us order the past, as well as allowing us to discern a narrative thread between then and now. Memoir and remembering are tools and symbols of a collective memory, often portrayed in a rich historical context.

Isabel Allende's memoirs are a great catalyst for me because her treatment of memory is so fictionalized. Yes, she very well may falsify, fake and doctor things, but she does not communicate a false character in her writing. Allende has taken memoir and by extension, narrative, into a realm of new historicism. Allende's reinvention of her own history speaks to the condemnation of the past.

Nietzsche said: "If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past ... scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it; every past, however, is worthy to be condemned" (Castle 129). This conforms to what Gregory Castle regards as a definitive aspect of historicism, as "a view of history and historiography according to which social, cultural, philosophical, and religious values have meaning only when grasped as part of the historical moment in which they arise" (312). Extending Castle's view, the cultural awareness of New Historicism allows a re-reading of history, beginning with the

individual's view on history, remembering, and creating a link to a socially-shared past.

When Walter Benjamin uses the terms "memoire involuntaire" and "memoire volontaire," he distinguishes between an involuntary memory, on one hand, and the other, the voluntary memory. The latter, he writes, "is in the service of the intellect" (Benjamin 158). What we consciously try to remember evades us. When Allende details and recalls incidents in her memoir, just think how she may have struggled to remember the details. Was Paula's dress blue and green plaid, or was it really red and green checked? She may have recalled the plaid but it doesn't really tell us about Paula. Benjamin quotes Reik to explain that "The function of remembrance is the protection of impressions; memory aims at their disintegration" (Benjamin 160). Allende 's memories are a remembrance, not fact-finding mission.

"Rather, memory fragments are often most powerful and most enduring when the incident which left them behind was one that never entered consciousness. Put in Proustian terms, this means that only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience, can become a component of the 'memoire involuntaire'" (Benjamin 160-161).

When Benjamin outlines Proust's experience of the madeleine pastry, he points out that the narrator could not clearly remember the town of his childhood until he tasted the madeleine, which then "transported him back to the past, whereas before he had been limited

to the promptings of a memory which obeyed the call of attentiveness," or *memoire volontaire* (158).

The idea of "*memoire volontaire*" operates socially, linking individuals across time. Allende says that her grandmother left her few memories, but "I hoard her few remaining relics in a tin box." In the sugar bowl, one such object, the write evokes the invisible and social powers that she attributes, in memory, to her grandmother, who was said – or so we're told -- to be capable of telekinesis, of moving objects using only her mind. Allende writes about the bowl as if she has seen it, but in reality she admits, she herself never saw it move. But it is as real to her as if she experienced it herself.

Allende is tapping into those fragments of the past that aren't necessarily grounded in facts or history, but are her *memoire involuntaire*. Similarly, "structures of feeling" appear throughout Ramon Saldívar's *The Borderlands of Culture, Americo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary*, in addition to Allende's memories, which foregrounds how the remembered and reconstructed experiences of real people operate, not necessarily the way it was in history books. Allende's view may be colored, but that does not deny that her experience was part of the "structures of feeling" that make up the world of Chile. Much like Paredes in his return to the borderlands, Allende, in her writing, always returns to Chile. Her memory, her history, her identity are tied to a place. While she may embrace California as her home, she never entirely lets go of Chile, whether the

Chile of her parents, who were diplomats, of her childhood and adolescent residences and visits, of her young adulthood, or her years in exile, during the Pinochet dictatorship.

Allende's memoirs are a rich source of researching not only memory and identity, but for exploring how these two relate to forming not only an individual, but cultural identity when the exact location of a homeland shifts, depending on how people and nations, wars and politicians have drawn the borders. In recounting her experience as an exile, Allende develops a story that is similar to what various Latinos and Chicanos, especially on the U.S./Mexico border, have experienced: lives, identities, and memories that are impacted by physical and political geography, and by broader and ongoing histories of displacement.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION: LIVING MEMORY

The specific time frame stated in Women & Things 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies is part of how Beth Fowkes Tobin and Maureen Daly Goggin develop a historical perspective in their focus on material objects. As the text's essays explore the relationship between women and things, they lead to theories about how this manipulation of material objects results in "meaning making, identity formation, and commemoration" (Tobin and Goggin 1). In addition, they theorize that these practices go beyond gender and bring the results of these practices into a wider work that is concerned with the "construction, circulation, and maintenance of knowledge" (Tobin and Goggin 4).

In addition to engagement with material culture studies, Tobin and Goggin reflect the evidence of New Historicism, in which the past is described as being reinterpreted and rearranged, rather than just a linear compilation of facts—which in many cases leaves out much that is useful which may have been considered outside of the realm of classical knowledge. History, like "gender and material culture processes ... (is) negotiated, contested, interactive" (Tobin and Goggin 11).

All of the contributors to Tobin's and Goggin's collection focus on women and their engagement with material objects (or places). These essays all have something else common, and to this thesis: the concept of identity. Goggin asserts that identity has an "intimate

connection to materiality.” She discusses the performativity of identity and the difficulty of theorizing about identity and quotes Judith Butler in agreement that “Identity ... is a performance, not a static coherent state of being” (Goggin 18).

Goggin’s examination of identity reveals that it is performative, that it is not fixed and that place and other individuals are key factors, hence:

Under this theoretical perspective, then, identity is best understood as multiple, distributed, and constituted via discursive and extra-linguistic social performances that are contingent on relationships with others (people and objects) within specific contexts—contexts that are themselves not singular, stable or stagnant. (Goggin 19)

Women & Things ... speaks to the performativity of Las Damas and the Desert Caballeros in Wickenburg, two groups created within that dynamic discourse of performance and relationships. Their creation, as a response to economic changes, reinforces Goggin’s assertion that the context within which identity is created is dynamic and not stable. Similarly the town of Wickenburg’s effort to preserve its past is played out in a discourse which engages the past in a material way, such as with preserving buildings and erecting statues that represent local history. Towns like Wickenburg are special places with their own identity and meaning, especially to the people who live there, call it home, and identify themselves with the place. The living

memory performed here creates a memory site that attempts to negotiate a contested terrain in which various individuals and groups have interacted.

Mary Cooper Hamill's sculptures and her efforts to commemorate, share and teach are in line with Goggin's and Tobin's theory that women's gendered practices engage in preserving, maintaining, and distributing knowledge within gendered material practice, and in a re-creation of history. Through her art, Hamill engages the world in an attempt to preserve her history, and her family's lifestyle in a battle against the displacement of time.

Objects have a life beyond their original owner or user. Heirlooms such as the miniature painting and cornelian beaded necklace of Sally Foster Otis, as well as my own gold bead necklace also operate in a contested terrain. They are historical, make meaning, create identity, and go beyond the gendered realm of material practices. Through the efforts of generations of women (and men), like the efforts that allowed the Otis family heirlooms to find their place in a historical museum. Their efforts to preserve and commemorate lasted for generations and impacted every succeeding generation, until, for that family the life cycle of the object would no longer be their responsibility. Analyzing the meaning that my gold bead necklace has given me has allowed me the opportunity to view it from a historical perspective and to recognize more fully how the object has contributed to the formation of my own identity, as well as

every generation of women who have possessed it in the past, and consider those generations of the future to whom it will have an meaning. The gold beads are like a chain, or a narrative string, which binds each generation to the one before them, and the one after.

These many objects are concrete things that illustrate how narrative connections between the past and present express place and relationships in meaning-making practices that have been in use over time and that still occur today. The relationships between women and objects are concrete expressions of traditions handed down over time, creating and expressing relationships between multiple generations. All of the women portrayed in this thesis interacted with specific objects, preserving history, reinterpreting and rearranging the past, with a larger dialogue of making meaning.

Meaning-making and rearranging and re-creating the past are both results and purposes of Isabel Allende's memoir writing. Not only is Allende engaged in preservation of her own past, but that of the history of her memories of Chile. Her nostalgia, the longing for the past, and her re-creations of it in her novel all speak to the theories of Tobin and Goggin. She is engaged in meaning-making, sharing knowledge, and she admits that she re-creates history as well.

The work of Américo Paredes and his philosophies about sense of place, memory and history, expresses the tensions inherent in problems of identity, while Radley's focus on how artifacts relate to a collective past also speaks to Tobin's and Goggin's work.



The essays, stories, analyses and anecdotes discussed in this thesis all coalesce around the topics of narrative, identity, memory, objects, the past, sense of place, and the discursive space in which they are all enacted.

In Goggin's analysis of Janie Terrero's Suffrage Handkerchief, which was created while Terrero was imprisoned in her fight to earn the vote for women in 1912 England, Goggin sums up much of what we can believe those from the past might say to us now, if they could, which we evoke from the objects associated with them: "Terrero's handkerchief exudes an anxiety of memory; it demands, shouts even 'remember our struggles, remember our courage, and remember us'" (Goggin 35).

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