Selfhood and 'Nostalgia:' Sensory and Material Memories of the Childhood Home in late Georgian Britain

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Keywords:

Memories, Material-Culture, Emotions, Senses, Family, Childhood, Nostalgia

Abstract

Focusing on autobiographies written from the 1790s to the 1820s, this article demonstrates that material, emotional, and sensorial memories of the childhood house and its location were integral to constructions of self. Firstly, it traces the interplay between prevailing cultural forms, family memory, and identity, and proposes that these changed over time, shaped by cultural, social and economic factors. Secondly, in analysing these personal memories, it contributes to the debates around the meanings of the 'emotional disposition' of nostalgia, arguing that it was central to the formation of both national culture and individual selfhood.

Introduction:

Memoirists writing in the later Georgian period recalled childhoods materially, emotionally, and sensorily through the sights, sounds, and smells of natal dwellings, gardens, landscapes, and even parents. An excellent example is found in Dorothea Herbert's (1767-1829) *Retrospections*, written in the early years of the nineteenth century and based on her contemporary diaries.[1] She came from an upper-class Anglo-Irish family, the daughter of an Anglican clergyman whose parishes were in Carrick-on-Suir, Tipperary, Ireland. Her description of being sent away from home for 'finishing' at her Aunt's house in Dublin, throbs with sensorial feeling about the parental, home, and its surroundings:

> But – Still I sigh'd for dear Home! ...The first Bunch of flowers I got threw me into strong Hysterick of grief and Joy – The Well known smell of the Sweet Briar and the

[1] Barbara Hughes, *Between Literature and History: The Diaries and Memoirs of Mary Leadbeater and Dorothea Herbert* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

> Hyacinths sweet Perfume brought our Gravel Walk and my Mothers little Garden so fully to my recollection that I wept and sobbd over them – An Acute Sensibility was ever my foible, my Bane, and my Solace.[2]

Feeling too much was the predicament of the age of sensibility, and writers frequently retrospectively assessed its emotional and sensorial aspects.[3]

This article uses three case-studies of autobiographies that were written from the 1790s to 1820s to explore the ways in which material, emotional, and sensorial memories of the childhood house and its location were integral to constructions of self in the past.[4] This 'self,' 'characterized by psychological depth, or interiority' was, as Dror Wahrman explains, coming into being in the period in which these memoirists were writing. He argues that the end of the eighteenth century saw a transformation from an *ancien regime* of identity, outwardly turned, and somewhat protean, to a modern identity-as-self, inwardly turned, innate and fixed from childhood.[5] It thereby argues that such memories contributed to this process of change. As such, it further contends that life writers presented a historicized self, influenced by the changing nature and meanings of homes, their contents, and locations, shaped by social class, cultural trends, and changing habits of consumption and ownership of goods. By analysing these personal, familial memories, it also contributes to the debates around the meanings of the 'emotional disposition' of nostalgia, arguing that it was central to the formation of both national culture and individual selfhood.[6]

Although memories of family and childhood were driving forces in these phenomena, they have only recently been more thoroughly investigated, despite extensive work on collective memory and memorialisation in response to national traumas. Astri Erll, for example, builds on Maurice Halbwachs' work, to argue that family memory acts as an intermediary between

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2 Dorothea Herbert, *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert* (2 vols., London, 1929-30), vol. 1, 54-5. For the sensory nature of eighteenth-century pleasure gardens and their relationship with gender identity and public space, see William Tullett, 'The Macaroni's Ambrosial Essences: Perfume, Identity and Public Space in Eighteenth-Century England,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 No. 2, (2015): 163-180.

3 Anne Vila, 'Introduction: Powers, Pleasures, and Perils of the Senses in the Enlightenment Era' in idem (ed), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) p. 10.

4 For an American example: Susan Stabile, *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America* (Icatha & London: Cornell University Press, 2004). People still create themselves through houses: Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, 'Houses: Accommodating Theory,' (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

5 Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Childhood* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. xi, and chapter 7.

6 Thomas Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

individual memory and larger frames of collective remembrance and national identity.[7] Ashley Barnwell uses Australian family historians' forgetting and remembering of convict ancestors to demonstrate how generations shape family narratives in response to changing social and political climates and the contested nature of public history.[8] Tracing the relationship between familial and collective memory in British life-writing in the long eighteenth century is challenging, given the nature of the sources.[9] Nonetheless, there is work on the role of family memory in constructing personal identity.[10] For life-writers of different social ranks, remembering was both a tool and an art. They remembered their parents and parentage to define their own social status, moral worth, and credit.[11] Typically written in old age, memories of family provided a narrative framework for individuals to chart the development of self over a life-course. They also selected which family members they wished to remember, usually driven by prevailing notions of rank and gender value.[12] Organised and, with hindsight, rationalised, such memories offered individuals a degree of control over a life lived, as well as providing consolation in the process, since acts of remembrance revivified parents often long dead.[13]

These memories were shaped by cultural tropes.[14] As Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone observe, though we may well experience memory 'as private and internal, [it] draws on countless scraps and bits of knowledge and information from the surrounding

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7 Astri Erll, 'Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies,' *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42, no. 3 (2011): 303-18. Also see, Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews,' *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 65-70; Paul Thompson, 'Family myth, models and denials in the shaping of individual life paths,' in *Between generations: Family models, myths and memories*, eds. Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (New Brunswick, Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 13-38

8 Ashley Barnwell, 'Convict shame to convict chic: intergenerational memory and family histories,' *Memory Studies* (2017): 2.

9 A literary example is Sharon Setzer, 'The Gothic Structure of Mary Robinson's Memoirs,' in ed. Eugene Stelzig *Romantic Autobiography in England* (London: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 31-48. For memories and autobiography see David Amigoni, ed., *Life writing and Victorian Culture* (Aldershot, Hants: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006).

10 Sandra Holton, 'Family memory, religion and radicalism: the Priestman, Bright and Clark kinship circle of women friends and Quaker history,'' *Quaker Studies* 9 no. 1 (2005): 56-75.

11 Joanne Bailey, 'The "Afterlife" of Parenting: Memory, Parentage, and Personal Identity in Britain c. 1760-1830', *Journal of Family History* 35, no. 3 (2010): 249.

12 Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England 1760-1830: Emotions, Identities, and Generations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2012), 129-132.

13 Ibid., 264 and *passim*.

14 For an overview of the ways in which family and individual memory is shaped by cultural media see Erll, 'Locating Family,' 313-15; Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure,' 68-9.

culture'.[15] They were also captured and conveyed materially.[16] Visual forms of reproduction facilitate memories of family members and enable the construction of family identities. In the long eighteenth century, elite families used portraits not only to memorialise individuals at key points in the dynastic or familial life-cycle, but to construct favoured family values and to prioritise particular dynastic lines.[17] In the age of mechanical reproduction from the 1840s, photographs became central to memory practices for a broader range of social classes and levels of wealth, enabling the formation of family identities through selection, destruction, and rearrangement.[18]

'Things' in Bill Brown's sense of subject-object relations were thus repositories of family memories, assigned with specific meanings and transferred as carriers of the family narrative across the generations.[19] Examples include the watches that fathers passed on to sons, and the dolls houses that women inherited and bequeathed to female relatives.[20] Jewellery and worked hair were vehicles for people to remember and grieve loved ones and memorial stones and sculpture were not merely repositories of memories of deceased family members, they enabled people to try and shape the ways in which they would be recollected by future generations.[21] Material culture thus enhanced the mutable nature of family identity; different family members could construct the family that they preferred from selected artefacts.[22] In all

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15 Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002) 165; Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Contested Pasts: the Politics of Memory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.

16 For work on the way families preserve their histories through material culture see, Liz Gloyn, Vicky Crewe, Laura King, and Anna Woodham, 'The Ties That Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the "Things" Families Keep,' *Journal of Family History* 43, no. 2, (2018): 157 – 176.

17 Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 153–4, 163–5 and chapter 5; Margaretta Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 117, 120–32.

18 For modern practices: Şahika.Erkonan, 'Photography and the construction of family and memory,' in L. Kramp, N. Carpentier, A. Hepp, R. Kilborn, R. Kunelius, H. Nieminen, T. Olsson, P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, I. Tomanić Trivundža, and S. Tosoni eds. *Politics, Civil Society and Participation: Media and Communications in a Transforming Environment* (Bremen: edition lumière, 2016) 257-272.

19 Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry* 28, no 1 (2001), 4. For its value for family memory, see Anna Green and Kayleigh Luscombe, 'Family Memory, 'Things' and Counterfactual Thinking,' *Memory Studies* (2017): 2-3.

20 Bailey, *Parenting,* 179; Joanne Begiato, 'Moving Objects: Emotional Transformation, Tangibility, and Time-Travel,' in Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles, eds., *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions Through History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 239-40; Green and Luscombe, 'Family Memory', 5.

21 Bailey, '"Afterlife" of Parenting,' 250; Matthew Craske, *The Silent Rhetoric of the Body: A History of Monumental Sculpture and Commemorative Art in England, 1720-1770* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2008), chap. 10-13. For examples of memorialisation through material culture, see Stabile, *Memory's Daughters,* chapter 4, and Laura King's ongoing research project, 'Living with Dying: Everyday Cultures of Dying within Family Life in Britain, 1900-50s.'
https://livingwithdying.leeds.ac.uk/category/research/

22 Erkonan, 'Photography', 263; Green and Luscombe, 'Family Memory', 1-14.

these instances. objects were agents conveying familial and moral values and identities, as well as, we shall see, a sense of self.[23]

This article extends the materiality of memories to encompass buildings and spaces as well as objects, since in the long eighteenth century memories of childhood homes centred on the dwelling and its immediate natural and built environment, as well as the objects it might contain.[24] Susan Stabile's study of eighteenth-century Philadelphian women shows that they recalled family homes through their environs and places, as well as rooms.[25] Lindsey Freeman, Benjamin Nienass, and Rachel Daniell's term 'mnemonic assemblages' is especially helpful here. They argue that 'humans, objects, and memories are bound up with each other in their material presences, creating assemblages made of persons, things, and traces of the past'.[26] For the life-writers discussed, the 'mnemonic assemblages' of their natal homes and surroundings, and their associations with their parents, were used to construct a sense of self.

The emotional and sensorial components of memories of childhood are also essential to consider.[27] What makes moments memorable, as cognitive psychologists tell us, is their association with heightened emotions.[28] Such emotions were themselves materialised. As Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles observe, 'objects may be both expressions and sources of emotion in people, as well as mediums for the communication of emotional states'.[29] The senses are also bound up with emotions and things in memory. Neuropsychiatric work on nostalgia, for example, proposes that it relates to idealised emotional states, typically located in the past, which 'become displaced onto inanimate objects, sounds, smells and tastes that were experienced concurrently with the emotions'.[30] In

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23 Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley *(eds) Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Berg: Oxford 1999).

24 For the importance of space and place see John Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997), Part VI: Province and Nation.

25 Stabile, *Memory's Daughters,* 1-8.

26 Lindsey Freeman, Benjamin Nienass, and Rachel Daniell, 'Memory, Materiality, Sensuality,' *Memory Studies* 9, no. 1 (2016): 5.

27 An early example is Jason Tebbe, **'**Landscapes Of Remembrance: Home And Memory In The Nineteenth-Century Bürgertum,' *Journal of Family History* 33, no. 2 (April 2008): 195-215. For the important place of the senses in the period see Vila, 'Introduction', 7, 9, 11, 13.

28 S. Christianson and M. Safer, 'Emotional events and emotions in autobiographical memories.' in D. Rubin, *Remembering our past: studies in autobiographical memory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1996), 219.

29 Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles, 'A Feeling for Things, Past and Present' in *idem* eds, *Feeling Things*, 11.

30 Alan R. Hirsch, 'Nostalgia: a Neuropsychiatric Understanding,' in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* 19, eds. John F. Sherry, Jr. and Brian Sternthal, (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1992) 390-395.

his survey of historical perspective on smell, Jonathan Reinarz observes that writers have long associated memories and emotions with odours, especially when recollecting childhood.[31] This article therefore offers what Mark Smith calls a 'sense-specific' analysis of memoirists' deployment of childhood memory and identity.[32]

The mnemonic assemblage outlined here as a framework for identity was historically specific to the generation examined. Firstly, because homes and their meanings change over time and according to place and class. In the decades when these memoirists were children, homes had fewer decorative objects and sparser possessions.[33] As such, considerable attention was also paid to their proximate gardens, buildings, and views.[34] Secondly, ideas about the construction of self were shifting. The concept of childhood as a developmental phase in the construction of the adult psyche was emerging, with memories of childhood forming the basis of empirical psychology and adults' route to knowing themselves.[35] Thirdly, notions of temporality were in flux. Timothy Campbell shows how the establishment in the eighteenth century of rapid fashion cycles reshaped perceptions of time and saw the rise of a historical self-consciousness which enabled 'ordinary Britons for the first time … to recognize and to care about the precise ways in which their culture had changed over time.'[36] In the post-revolutionary period, as Peter Fritzsche argues, people came to apprehend time 'as non-repeatable' and 'irretrievable'.[37]

Relatedly, understandings of space and belonging changed too. John Brewer shows how the generations born at mid-century shaped a national culture from their aestheticized attachment to the local.[38] Yet at the same time, as Susan Matt argues, enlightenment philosophy began to pathologize attachment to the local, identifying leaving home behind as the route to success

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31 Jonathan Reinarz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 6-7. For an overview of historians' investigations of smell, see Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories,' *American Historical Review* 116, No. 2 (Apr 2011): 335-351.

32 Mark Smith, 'Preface: Styling Sensory History,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35 No. 4, (2012): 469-472.

33 For changing patterns of ownership see Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988).

34 For gardens as landscapes of memory, see Stabile, *Memory's Daughters,* 230-2.

35 A. Krupp, 'Observing children in an early journal of psychology: Karl Philipp Moritz's Know Thyself,' in Anje Muller, *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century. Age and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 34, 40, 42; J. Schlumbohm, 'Constructing individuality: Childhood memories in late eighteenth-century ''empirical psychology'' and autobiography,' *German History* 16 (1998): 31.

36 Timothy Campbell, *Historical Style: Fashion and the New Mode of History, 1740-1830* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) pp. 1-3, 12.

37 Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 3.

38 Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination*, p. 493, 618-660.

and autonomy. In a world of accelerating migration and mobility, connection to home was characterised as a weakness.[39] Perhaps James Vernon's thesis resolves this apparent tension. He argues that the growth of a 'society of strangers' generated more abstract systems of government to manage new, increasingly impersonal, conditions. Simultaneously, there was a reinvention of the local; a dialectical process rather than survival of the traditional in the face of modernity. Vernon's thesis positions this dialectic process as fully developing in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it is discernible in the century's early years.[40] The life-writers analysed were thus articulating national and personal identities in the face of modernity's profound temporal disruption and spatial dislocation. Yet, as Fritzsche suggests, these broader historical forces were not simply disruptive, they also offered 'imaginative possibilities for building subjecthood.'[41] This article, therefore, argues that material, sensory, and emotional memories of childhood familial homes were a key part of this process, which in turn helps illuminate that slippery and complex phenomenon we call nostalgia.[42]

Material, emotional, and sensory memories of childhood homes and their surroundings

Though the life-writers discussed here had different social and regional backgrounds, they had several similarities. Each writer's self-examination occurred later in life, near death, and their reflections on the childhood home were scattered throughout their memoir.[43] All envisioned home less as a physical building and more as a nexus of dwelling, garden and the immediate landscape, vista, or adjacent buildings, which stirred strong associations with parents and a range of emotions and sensory perceptions. All memoirists narrated their memories in the vocabularies of the cultural movements with which they were familiar in adulthood; planted in the pastoral, sensitive to sensibility, or revelling in the romantic.[44] Collectively, their narratives also demonstrate that objects and the senses were not 'inanimate,' nor were the emotions projected upon them idealised or purely consolatory. The places and spaces they remembered possessed agency, in that they could create a sense of belonging and self. Moreover, although the nexus often stimulated emotional wellbeing,

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[39] Susan Matt, *Homesickness: An American History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28.
[40] James Vernon, *Distant Strangers: How Britain Became Modern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) 14-15, 128-9.
[41] Fritzsche, *Stranded*, 7.
[42] For an overview of approaches to nostalgia see Patrick Hutton, 'Reconsiderations of the Idea of Nostalgia in Contemporary Historical Writing,' *Historical Reflections* 39, no. 3 (2013): 1-9.
[43] For this kind of examination over a life-course and an introduction to this literature see Amy Culley, 'Women's Life-Writing in the Long 18th Century: A Critical Survey,' *Literature Compass* 12, no. 1 (2015), 7.
[44] For the hybridity of life-writing and the permeable borders between life 7-8.writing and other genres see, Culley, 'Women's Life-Writing, 7-8.

security, or happiness, negative emotions such as regret, guilt, or grief also became bound up with these natal homes, which in turn transformed feeling for place and forged a new or altered sense of self.[45] Indeed all tended to experience more negative emotions about their childhood home as time passed, offering insights into the effect of the passage of time on autobiographical writing.

Making the civilised pedagogue: Catherine Cappe (1744-1821)

Catherine Cappe was a Unitarian, educationalist, philanthropist, and writer. She wrote her autobiography between 1812 and 1818 and it was published in 1822 by her step-daughter.[46] Cappe began it with memories of her parents and the place where she was born and spent her early years: Long Preston, in the Craven District of North Yorkshire. The daughter of the clergyman Jeremiah Harrison, she described with affection the vicarage at Long Preston, its situation, its form, its garden, and its view of Pendle-hill ten miles away, which she described as one of the highest mountains in the neighbourhood.[47] Her father and this home were entwined in her mind. For example, by emphasising its remoteness and barrenness, she was able to present her father as fashioning, indeed civilising it. Catherine states that when her father arrived there, in 1729, its native inhabitants were as uncivilized as their 'mountains' were rude and uncultivated. The country was divided between small freeholders or leaseholders and the combination of un-enclosed land and intermingled property, she observed, led to litigation and discord; the inhabitants' pride was such that it was difficult to arbitrate between them. 'This herculean labour, however, my father courageously attempted,' she declared, describing him organising the open fields into more coherent blocks, and taking on the office of justice of the peace for the area.[48]

Her perception of the local landscape was in effect mediated through her father's activities. The landscape would, she says, have been beautiful except that it was almost entirely destitute of wood until her father planted trees, which, 'became the general rendezvous of little groups of singing birds, who rewarded him for their accommodation by their enlivening music'.[49] The other thing to note here is her attention to the sounds of nature; her father brought the sound of singing birds to the area. Moreover, she recalled: 'I well remember, that

[45] For the concept of 'composure' in its sense of life-writing to produce calm and control, see Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure,' 69. Green and Luscombe found that objects represented difficulties in a family's past as well as feelings of wellbeing, 'Family Memory,' 3, 6-1.
[46] *Memoirs of the life of the late Mrs Catharine Cappe. Written by herself* (London, 1822).
[47] *Ibid*, 5.
[48] *Ibid*, 6-7.
[49] *Ibid*, 8.

one of my earliest pleasures was to listen to the sound of the bells hung round the neck' of the pack horses 'as they passed stately along the shady lane by my father's garden; all of them seeming to enjoy, equally with myself, this simple music.'[50] Here her memories of her father were located in place, sounds, and happiness.

Her love of her natal home and its location is emphasised by her description of her distress at leaving it, at four years old, in the summer of 1748, when her father became vicar of Catterick. As a contrast with this loved natal home, she described the tottering walls, weeds and decay of the house that they moved to in the centre of Catterick.[51] Cappe's recollections of her home and its environs were a deeply nostalgic sensorium:

> Often did I lament, without exactly knowing why, the charming fields of Long Preston, into which the vicarage garden opened; where I had been accustomed to gather in little baskets, the daisies and cowslips; had thoughtlessly pursued the painted butterfly, or heard at a distance the plaintive note of the cuckoo! Even the croaking of the bittern in a neighbouring pool, was listened to with pleasure; and at this distant day, I cannot hear mentioned the names of various objects in its vicinity, of this river or that mountain, which then first struck the ear, or regaled the eye with wonder and delight, although the distinct idea of them, if it ever were obtained, has long since vanished away, without experiencing an indescribable feeling of tender regret.[52]

These memories were powerful because they were meshed with sights, sounds, and strong feelings. Not only was the early move from Long Preston an emotional rupture in family life, her father eventually died there. The family retained links with Long Preston after they moved to Catterick, since Jeremiah Harrison visited the property he retained there.[53] He returned finally in the spring of 1763 when he was ill. After once more advising the parishioners in his capacity as a magistrate, he died in July and was buried in the village church.[54]

Cappe inherited property in Craven and managed it throughout her life, periodically visiting the village.[55] She still referred to 'my native village' when describing a visit to Long Preston

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[50] *Ibid*, 6.
[51] *Ibid*, 15.
[52] *Ibid*, 15-16.
[53] *Ibid*, 21.
[54] *Ibid*, 73-6.
[55] *Ibid*, 79.

that she made when she was 66 years old.[56] While Long Preston triggered memories of her father and her love for him, stimulating her affection for the vicarage and village early in her memoir, her feelings about her brother, whom she disliked, unsettled her later memories. Unable to make a living from attempts at farming elsewhere, her brother returned in 1780 to the estate that he had inherited from his father, taking up residence at Long Preston vicarage.[57] She visited him in 1783 to sort out the tenants on her own property. Mirroring her description of Catterick she remembered the 'complete desolation' she found, and told of the broken fences, rampant weeds and incalcitrant villagers.[58] In 1812 she described Long Preston as a 'forlorn, deserted parish,' largely because it no longer had a resident clergyman like her father.[59]

Cappe's recollections of her parental home were imbued with the pastoral aesthetic of the benevolent, improving landlord and his vulgar rural workers.[60] They were also influenced by sensibility. Her account of Long Preston's 'secluded situation', for example, corresponds with the rural idyll to which idealised feeling families retreated from the world. This was not the main authorial self that she deployed, however. Her memoir was the culmination of a life-long interest in promoting and writing about female education. Her attention to the local environment of her early years was thus partly directed and informed by her persona as a pedagogue. For instance, when describing the sense of loss following her removal from her infant home she says:

> I am perfectly convinced that children are capable of being impressed in this way; and, on the contrary, of receiving great pleasure from neatness, order, and the beauties of nature, much earlier than is usually imagined, and long before the period of their being able to analyse their sensations, or to explain their causes.[61]

Moreover, Long Preston was one of the locations for her philanthropic and educational activities, since she returned there in 1786 to open a Sunday School and again in 1810 to try and set up a Female Benefit Club.[62]

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[56] *Ibid*, 211.
[57] *Ibid*, 195, 203, 209-10, 240.
[58] *Ibid*, 229-231.
[59] *Ibid*, 323.
[60] For the changing nature of representations of the rural landscape see John Barrell, *The dark side of the landscape: the rural poor in English painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)
[61] *Ibid*, 14.
[62] *Ibid*, 323.

It should be noted that Long Preston was also associated with memories of her longer-lived mother, often intimated through her mother's singing. Her mother had, she said, a 'very musical voice, [and] could pleasantly accompany my father, who played a little upon the violin, which constituted their favourite amusement in a winter's evening, when the labours of the day were over'.[63] This was no simple recollection. Cappe deployed it to position her family in the language of domesticity to display their virtue, and by extension, her own. She returned to her mother's singing when remembering her grief following her prospective suitor's sudden death in 1772. She said she gained consolation from 'two simple stanzas of the thirty-fourth psalm, in the wretched doggerel of Sternhold and Hopkins, which when very young, I had been accustomed to hear my mother sing very sweetly, as she stood by the window, in the twilight of a Sunday evening'.[64] This chain of memories did service in strengthening her self-identity as pedagogue, since she introduced the memory, she observed, 'for the purpose merely of demonstrating the great importance of early pious impressions'.[65] Disparaging the quality of music to which the psalm was set also alerted the reader to her serious piety, though ironically was probably the hook which helped fix the memory.

Parents singing had profound meaning for other autobiographers too. The Irish novelist, Sydney Morgan (1776/86[?]-1859) opened her memoir with a touching example. She noted that humming the songs her father taught her 'have cheered gloom and lightened pain,' since they 'embodied dear remembrances and sustained memory by music'.[66] No doubt she associated music with her father because he was an actor and performer. She stated that he sang at her christening, though she acknowledged that 'being but a month old I understood nothing about it; but I have so often heard of it from my father as I sat upon his knee, that my testimony, although but hearsay evidence, may be accredited'.[67] Her recollections display the 'multi-sensory' nature of memory, combining his singing voice and physical presence with her feelings of consolation, and happiness.[68] This is captured in a letter woven into her memoir that she wrote to her father, in 1796. In it she informed him that reading John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* prompted her identify her earliest

63 *Ibid*, 9.
64 *Ibid*, 142-5.
65 *Ibid*, 145. For the phenomenon of memory and sound, including song see Joy Damousi and Paula Hamilton, *A Cultural History of Sound, Memory and the Senses* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), Part III, 'Sensory Memories'.
66 *Lady Morgan's memoirs: autobiography, diaries and correspondence* (London, 1863) vol. 1, 3.
67 *Ibid*, 14
68 Charles Spence, 'Making Sense of Touch: A Multisensory Approach to the Perception of Objects,' in Elizabeth Pye, ed., *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Contexts* (Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press, 2007), 45-61.

memory: 'I think it was the smell of mignonette, for I can remember when I first smelled it, and the pleasure it gave me, and above all, your singing 'Drimindu,' the Black Cow, which always made me cry.'[69] Sally Holloway shows that Georgian love tokens were often fragrant and not only evoked feeling but intensified emotional bonds between couples.[70] As Morgan's memory indicates, floral fragrance stirred a range of other loving associations too.

Such memories were also central to her self-fashioning, because she associated her father's recollections of Ireland and its songs with her identity as a narrator of the Irish. She declared that they 'were so impressive in their character and musical in their narration … that they were the cause of the first purely Irish story ever written; it has since been known as *The Wild Irish Girl*.'[71] Indeed, she is now identified as one of the early writers of the new romantic genre of the national tale, beginning with her *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale* (1806).[72] It was not only literary figures who made these connections. Henry Angelo (1780-1852), a Master of Fencing, claimed that he abandoned his childhood desire to go to sea on hearing his mother sing a song from Isaac Bickerstaff's nautical opera, 'Thomas and Sally or the Sailor's Return:'

> her singing the favourite air in Thomas and Sally, "For my true love is gone to sea," operating on her too sensitive nerves, frequently set her weeping; and my infantine sympathy making me do the like, the blue jacket, as well as the red jacket, was laid aside, and my profession of arms was doomed to be a very harmless profession.[73]

There are several reasons why music was so powerful for these memoirists. Behavioural scientists show that mother-infant bonding is forged in part through maternal singing, which reduces stress and anxiety in mother and baby, increases emotional closeness, and decreases negative affect.[74] It is therefore unsurprising that memoirists prioritised such sensory memories, although the assumption that this is a primarily mother-child activity is clearly problematic. Moreover, in an era of sensibility, music was understood to stimulate the nerves

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69 *Lady Morgan's Memoirs*, vol. 1, 126. She refers again to the ballad. *Ibid*, 88.
70 Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions, and Material Culture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 85-90.
71 *Lady Morgan's Memoirs*, vol. 1, 41
72 Susan Egenolf, 'Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson) and the Politics of Romanticism,' in J. Kelly, ed., *Ireland and Romanticism* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 109-21.
73 Henry Angelo, *Fencing Master, Reminiscences of Henry Angelo with memoirs of his late father and friends* (London, 1828), 109.
74 Daisy Fancourt and Rosie Perkins, 'The effects of mother–infant singing on emotional closeness, affect, anxiety, and stress hormones,' *Music & Science* (February 14, 2018) https://doi.org/10.1177/2059204317745746

that were the conduit for feeling. Thus, these writers displayed their refined and sensitive selves by recalling their parents singing.[75]

Making the Northumberland Naturalist: Thomas Bewick (1753-1828)

Thomas Bewick was the son of a tenant farmer and collier in Northumberland. A celebrated naturalist and engraver whose works were widely read by children and adults, he began his memoir in 1822. Having set out his childhood pursuits, he lovingly evoked his parental home at Cherryburn, Mickley, in the South Tyne Valley; his vivid sensorial portrait, accompanied by a drawing of Cherryburn, moving outwards in concentric circles to the surrounding common, fields, trees, and its flora and fauna. First, 'Cherryburn House the place of my nativity, and which for many years my eyes beheld with cherished delight' and its situation a quarter of a mile from the river on the south bank of the Tyne. Next, detailed descriptions of plum trees on a burn bank, which 'terminated with the garden on the north of them'. Finally, the lineaments of ash trees 'near the House,' and 'the spring well, overhung by a large Hawthorn bush, behind which was a Holly Hedge'.[76] As the first sentence so powerfully demonstrates, remembered sights stimulated feelings. Like Cappe, his memories of his 'nativity' formed an emotional as much as material landscape, his memories of it bound up with his father. For example, he recalled: 'at that time of life every season had its charms. I recollect well of listening with delight, from the little window at my bed head, the murmuring or the roaring of the flooded Burne, which passed my father's house & sometimes roused me from my bed to see what it was like'.[77]

As well as natural sounds, he also evoked the landscape through his father's whistling. Bewick recalled his habit of staying out late at the river, fishing. His worried parents could not sleep till he returned:

> & well do I remember to this day, my father's well known whistle which called me home - he went to a little distance from the house, where nothing obstructed the sound, & whistled so loud through his finger & thumb - that in the still hours of the

[75] James Kennaway, 'From Sensibility to Pathology: The Origins of the Idea of Nervous Music around 1800,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 65, no. 3, (July 2010), 396–426. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3935440/
[76] Thomas Bewick, *Memoir*, 1822 (Adam Matthew Publications, microfilm series), 32 and chap. 3.
[77] *ibid*, 11.

> evening, it might be heard echoing up the vale of the Tyne to a very great distance - This whistle I learned to imitate & answer it as well as I could & then posted home.[78]

That piercing whistle became his father's sound. The writer Mary Anne Schimmelpennick (1778 – 1856) similarly recalled her beloved grandfather who she felt had greater affection for her than her siblings. She recalled: 'it used to delight me, when standing near my grandfather in a rustic fishing-house at the farthest end of the pool, he applied to his lips a little silver whistle (such as now, sixty-six years after, I wear in remembrance of him)'. The object and its sound embodied her grandfather and his role in forging her writing persona, publishing travel writings, aesthetic treatises, and religious history, since he taught her natural history and, through this means, 'the word and spirit of God.' [79]

For Bewick, remembering his father's whistle did more than materialise him; it was part of Bewick's sense of self. Later in the memoir, for example, he observed that he also whistled to communicate with his own children, but, more than that, Bewick boasted that he was famous as 'the best whistler in England'.[80] He loved traditional Northumberland ballads and whistled them as an adult. This was not simply an innocent statement of recreational past-times. As a nationally successful engraver, it was part of his regional, Northumbrian, 'natural' sense of self, which was constructed as a rejection of a metropolitan identity.[81]

Bewick's rootedness in this native dwelling and its landscape continued through until his early thirties. From 1777 till 1785 he walked every week from his workshop in Newcastle to see his parents at Cherryburn, a distance of more than twelve miles, often not leaving work until seven in the evening. His memories of these walks united love of place with senses and parents:

> It will readily be believed that if I had not felt uncommon pleasure in these journeys I would not have persisted in them, nor in facing the snow storms, the floods & the dark nights of so many winters – this to some appeared like insanity, but my stimulant as well as my reward was in seeing my father & my mother in their happy home, which I always reflected would have an end & that the time would come when I would have no feelings of warm regard called up on their account.[82]

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[78] *ibid*, 15. The meanings of this section with regard to fatherhood are discussed in Bailey, *Parenting*, 138.
[79] *Life of Anne Schimmelpenninck*, ed. Christiana Hankin (London: Longman, Green et al., 1858), vol 1, 49, 51.
[80] Bewick, *Memoir*, 12, 52, 89.
[81] Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination*, 522-30.522
[82] *ibid*, 110.

As these descriptions indicate, Bewick's memories were moulded by the pastoral, as well as aa nascent 'Romanticism,' his memories recounted through the framework of changing seasons, a motif of pastoral poetry.[83] He was aware of this influence; he said his weekly walks to his parents were an experiential version of James Thomson's *Seasons*; to be in the wood in whirlwinds of snow was 'sublimity itself'.[84] The last line of Bewick's account of walking home, recalling his anticipation of the loss of his parents, hardly seems coincidental when contextualised in the melancholic motif in 'Winter,' the first of Thompson's poem cycle, published in 1726, of the labouring father struggling through the harsh snowy conditions to return home to his wife and children who would wait in 'vain for him' in the 'sacred home' he would never see again.[85]

As John Brewer explains, Bewick formulated his professional, political, and moral identity through the local landscape and its animals and pursuits, displayed in his increasing absorption in local flora and fauna, immersion in its sensory delights, his emerging empathy with the natural world, and his compulsive drawing from his surroundings. [86] Furthermore, he identified his sensorial, material and emotional memories of his parents at Cherryburn as forging his selfhood. His walks along the South Tyne Valley to visit them facilitated his art, effectively his unique genius and enduring fame. They also forged his physical, gendered self, rooted in his rugged, hardy manliness, and his inner self: 'while thus exercising, my mind was commonly engaged in considering upon plans about how I should conduct myself in life & of forming resolutions on such as I approve of'.[87]

Like Cappe, the emotions Bewick felt for his parents coloured his perceptions of the landscape and thus could change. Indeed, Bewick specifically named two periods of great happiness in life: his return to Cherryburn between late 1774 and summer 1776 at the completion of his apprenticeship, and 1777 to 1785 when he walked home to his favourite place and his parents every week. Though Bewick's love of his natal home and native landscape did not end when his parents died, he did not engage with that location in the same way again. Its pleasures ended in 1785 when his mother, eldest sister, and then his father all

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[83] Bewick, *Memoir*, 29.
[84] *ibid*, 110.
[85] Cited in *The New Lady's Magazine, Or, Polite and Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* (London, 1788), vol. 3, 601.
[86] Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination*, 522-3, and chapter 13.
[87] *ibid*, 69. The quotation in the published version ends at 'life'.

died, and he ceased walking to Cherryburn. Thereafter, he said, Cherryburn 'became a place, the thoughts of which now raked up sorrowful reflections in my mind'.[88]

Making the Woman of Sorrow: Mary Robinson (1756/8 [?]-1800)

Mary Robinson, the Bristol-born author and actress, began her memoirs a couple of years before her death in her early forties; a successful attempt to rebut her scandalous youth as the mistress of notable men, including George IV, and reconstruct her public identity by reinventing herself as a lady of letters.[89] She began her memoir by describing her birth place: the Minster House in Bristol, its back supported by 'the antient cloisters of St Augustine's monastery', faced by a small garden, the gates of which opened to the Minster-Green, or College-Green, its west side bounded by Bristol Cathedral. As she declares, 'A spot more calculated to inspire the soul with mournful meditation can scarcely be found amidst the monuments of antiquity'.[90] Like the other life-writers Robinson linked her natal home and its environs with her personality finely-tuned sensibility and the capacity to feel 'too' deeply.[91] She recalled St Augustine's Cathedral at her birth and on two visits in 1773 and in 1777. As Sharon Setzer, observes, 'The sequence demonstrates Robinson's artistic endeavour to identify a meaningful pattern in her life and to define an essential, coherent self, dating back to "earliest infancy."[92]

Robinson evoked the Gothic cathedral to construct her identity as contemplative; a personality antithetical to dissipated vices, harnessing, as Szreter explains, the cultural associations of the Gothic with the sublime to refashion her identity.[93] For example, Robinson says that her infancy was spent in a nursery that was 'so near the great aisle of the minster' that she could hear the deep tones of the organ and the singing of the choristers, which made a 'sublime impression' upon her feelings.[94] Indeed, while there is no doubt that

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88 *ibid*, 117.
89 *Memoirs of the late Mrs Robinson, written by herself, with some posthumous pieces*, in four volumes (London, 1801). For a brief overview of the developments of the large scholarship on Robinson, see Culley, 'Women's Life-Writing,' 4.
90 Robinson, *Memoir*, vol 1, 3.
91 G Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (New York: Metheuen, 1986).
92 Sharon Setzer, 'The Gothic Structure of Mary Robinson's Memoirs,' in *Romantic Autobiography in England*, ed., Eugene Stelzig (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 34. For other readings of Robinson's construction of self, see Anne K. Mellor, 'Making an Exhibition of Her Self: Mary 'Perdita' Robinson and Nineteenth-Century Scripts of Female Sexuality,' *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 22 (2000): 271-304.
93 Sharon Setzer, 'The Gothic Structure of Mary Robinson's Memoirs,' in *Romantic Autobiography in England*, ed., Eugene Stelzig (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009) 31-48.
94 Robinson, *Memoir*, vol 1, 12.

literary self-identification was a crucial aspect of Robinson's memories of Bristol Cathedral and Minster House, these contiguous buildings were not solely deployed as literary devices. They were also vessels for Robinson's emotions regarding her family, and thus, her subjective self, predominantly sorrow and melancholy. For instance, as soon as she describes her gloomy birth place and time, she quotes her mother: 'I have often heard my mother say that a more stormy hour she never remembered ... Through life the tempest has followed my footsteps; and I have in vain looked for a short interval of repose from the perseverance of sorrow'.[95]

Here the juxtaposition of her mother's memory of portentous 'Gothic' storms heralding her birth in the Minster House with her own sense of being at the mercy of fate is noteworthy. The memories of her home under the shadow of Bristol Cathedral were placed alongside or followed descriptions of powerful familial relationships and crisis moments in Robinson's life. Like Cappe and Bewick, Robinson linked the natal home and its material and spatial environs to emotional rupture. In her childhood, Robinson's family moved away from Minster House to a large 'convenient' residence, stocked with the luxuries of silk furniture, plate, and foreign wines. This seemed to herald good times, but when she was nine years old her father left home to establish a whale fishery on the coast of Labrador. This led to his family's downfall, since he separated from his wife and then failed in business.[96] Robinson's memoir located this as the cause of the chain of events that resulted in 1773 to her 'consenting' at 15 to marry a young duplicitous lawyer. She blamed her mother for the marriage, because she persuaded Robinson to wed to safeguard her reputation, which she felt was threatened by her daughter's extreme beauty and lack of paternal protection.[97]

Robinson's recollection of visiting Bristol Cathedral on the way to Wales to visit her husband's family home, following the union, thus enabled her to discuss the symbolic and real end to childhood. She revisited, 'The house in which I first opened my eyes to this world of sorrow,' and the cathedral, with a 'sweet melancholy interest.'[98] She longed to take up again her place beneath the brass eagle in the middle aisle, where she would sit as an infant

[95] *ibid*, 4.
[96] *ibid*, 17-27.
[97] *ibid*, 56-68.
[98] *ibid*, 79

and read and join in singing the 'loud anthem' of the morning service.[99] Like the other memoirists, music was the sensory fixer of these memories; as she recalls:

> Language cannot describe the sort of sensation which I felt, when I heard the well-known, long remembered organ flinging its loud peal through the Gothic structure. I hastened to the cloisters. The nursery windows were dim, and shattered; the house sinking to decay. The mouldering walk was gloomy, and my spirits were depressed beyond description: - I stood alone, rapt in meditation: "Here," said I, "did my infant feet pace to and fro'; here did I climb the long stone bench, and swiftly measure it, at the peril of my safety. On those dark and winding steps, did I sit and listen to the full-toned organ, the loud anthem, and the bell, which called the parishioners to prayer." … Ah! How little has the misjudging world known of what passed in my mind, even in the apparently gayest moments of my existence![100]

Her natal home and its auditory landscape of chants, organ music, and bells not only defined her Gothic personality; its ruin was a metaphor for her personal destruction through scandal and a claim to emotional authenticity and moral virtue.

Her next visit in 1777 followed a family tragedy. Robinson's second infant: Sophia, was born in 1777, but died six weeks later. Sophia's death devastated her, unable to appear again on stage that season, she went to Bath to recover. From there, she visited Bristol, declaring:

> *Bristol*! Why does my pen seem suddenly arrested while I write the word? I know not why, but an undefinable melancholy always follows the idea of my native birth-place. I instantly beheld the Gothic structure, the lonely cloisters, the lofty aisles, of the antique minster: - for, within a few short paces of its walls, this breast, which has never known *one year of happiness*, first palpitated on inhaling the air of this bad world! Is it within its consecrated precincts that this heart shall shortly moulder?[101]

By the time she was writing, the buildings of her childhood home did not only generate fashionable feelings of melancholy and sensibility or offer a means to adopt a Gothic literary persona, they were sensory and emotional embodiments of her beginning and her end. When her daughter completed the unfinished memoir, she noted that Robinson had hoped to return to die 'in the place in which she had first drawn breath, and terminating her sorrows on the

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[99] *ibid*, 81
[100] *ibid*, 81-2
[101] *ibid*, 10-11.

spot which gave her birth'.[102] To her distress, she could not afford to make the trip, and was buried in Old Windsor Church Yard. Even so, her tomb was adorned with melancholic inscriptions intended to memorialise her carefully crafted public persona: 'But ah! While Nature on her favourite smil'd,/And Genius claim'd his share in Beauty's child,/Ev'n as they wove a garland for her brow,/Sorrow prepar'd a willowy wreath of woe'.[103]

The form and function of such material, emotional, and sensory memories of the spaces and places of childhood homes changed over time and intersected in different ways with identity. Bewick, Cappe, and Robinson recalled childhood homes from their outside, evoking the sights, sounds, and smells of the physical dwellings and their cultivated and natural surroundings. In doing so, they positioned themselves as viewers of the pastoral cottage so central to sensibility and sentimentality.[104] From the early nineteenth century the combined forces of industrialisation, consumption, and domesticity increasingly meant that middling-rank houses were evaluated through the objects that they contained. Memoirists writing later in the nineteenth century, therefore, recalled childhood and family homes of the early nineteenth century from the inside, describing the numerous objects housed in them, such as pictures, books, furniture, ornaments, and decorations.[105] Childhood houses remained sites through which life-writers constructed and articulated specific class and gender identities. In twentieth-century working-class autobiographies, for example, natal houses were less middle-class refuges from the changing outside world than emotionally fraught places to escape, in the act of making the new self. In them, financial precariousness was symbolised by descriptions of the difficulties in acquiring sufficient goods to perform status and dysfunctional family relationships were rendered through smashed ornaments; all indicators of how far an individual had travelled through life.[106] A recent study of working- and middle-class family memory, reveals that houses have become symbols of the economic trajectory of one's family over time. Owning a house exhibits social advancement; 'lost houses,' or those inherited by other lines of the family, represents blocked routes to self-improvement. These memories of houses allow individuals to retain a sense of 'self-worth in the face of family adversity … by grounding their personal identity in family circumstances prior to the pivotal

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[102] *ibid*, 153.
[103] *ibid*, 165.
[104] Ann Bermingham (ed), *Sensation and sensibility: viewing Gainsborough's 'Cottage Door* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Sarah Lloyd, 'Cottage Conversations: Poverty and Manly Independence in Eighteenth-Century England,' *Past & Present* 184, no. 1 (August 2004): 69–10.
[105] Tebbe, 'Landscapes of Remembrance', *passim*.
[106] Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (London: Penguin, 1990), chap. 2.

event'.[107] For all this considerable change over time, looking back at one's childhood home was ever a deeply nostalgic act.

Making Sense of Nostalgia and the Longing for Home

Nostalgia, a phenomenon with a complex history, thus offers further insights into the role of remembering childhood homes in the formulation of selfhood. Scholars' focus on nostalgia in the long eighteenth century is on the medicalisation of what Thomas Dodman usefully calls an 'emotional disposition'.[108] The term is a neologism dating to 1688, categorising as a clinical disease a bundle of physical and psychological symptoms perceived to result from displacement from home typically defined as both a dwelling and its location.[109] It was a profoundly sensory phenomenon too. Armies banned music strongly associated with specific locales since it triggered dangerous homesickness in soldiers who heard it.[110] Its meaning changed over time. Dodman traces nostalgia in France and its empire from a dangerous medical condition in the late seventeenth century to a benign and comforting longing for the past by the late nineteenth century. His work is thus particularly useful in identifying two aspects that contribute to conceptualisations of nostalgia. In its medicalised form, the condition was a response to spatial displacement and separation from home. It was, thus, diagnosed in soldiers and migrants who were unable to access their homes. The second form was temporal, where the sense of dislocation was due to time passing and the yearning directed to a past lost in time.

Dodman acknowledges that a generic 'longing for home' preceded the medicalised understanding of nostalgia, claiming that the spatial and temporal forms of nostalgia overlapped. Despite this, he claims that French soldiers in the Napoleonic wars were 'the first "modern" nostalgics – that is, the first people to experience nostalgia as a temporal phenomenon'.[111] For him, a de-medicalised version of nostalgia became naturalised and instinctive in France from the mid nineteenth century as a response to a society unmoored and destabilised. This form was a more benign feeling that functioned as a 'coping

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[107] Green and Luscombe, 'Family Memories,' 6-8, 12.
[108] Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was* , 3, 193.
[109]For the categorisation of nostalgia in 1688 within ideas about parochialism and new understandings of the brain, see Alex Davis, 'Coming Home Again: Johannes Hofer, Edmund Spenser, and Premodern Nostalgia' *Parergon* 33 No. 2 (2016): 17-38.
[110] Sarah Cohen and Downing Thomas 'Art and the Senses: Experiencing the Arts in the Age of Sensibility' in Vila (ed), *A Cultural History of the Senses*, 194-5.
[111] Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 1, 14, 122. For pre-modern nostalgia, Davis, 'Coming Home Again,' 17-38.

mechanism'.[112] The modern period is considered to exacerbate nostalgia. Jennifer Green Lewis, for example, argues that the advent of photography produced a conscious experience of time passing, meaning that nostalgia is a particularly modern condition.[113]

Autobiographical memories offer a way into historicising and bringing into focus the emotional disposition of a yearning for one's past and its function in one's present. There is no doubt that a 'backward looking aesthetic' was exacerbated by the act of photography, which recorded the passage of time through one's family members. As the life-writers above illustrate, however, it did not originate with such acts of family remembrance.[114] The Georgian life-writers explored here had their own 'longing lingering look behind,' a phrase from Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), which many of the writers cited in their memoirs.[115] It was typically deployed when discussing parents and natal homes, a material and sensorial form of nostalgia for the childhood home through which people made sense of themselves in both place and time. [116]

It was not only a powerful contributor to selfhood, it facilitated the building of a national culture too, comprising part of what John Brewer has identified as a provincial perspective, driven by sensibility, which focused on the local, especially the sensual pleasures of its landscape, instead of the metropolitan. This was, nonetheless, a form of nation building where Britain was perceived to consist of provincial cities and the landscape of the British Isles.[117] Raymond Williams traced the lineaments of such longing at the collective level in pastoral fiction, evident from antiquity to modern times, wherein the countryside was the imagined location of a better past and the feeling a response to social and economic change.[118] It has been suggested that such practices were gendered. According to Susan Stabile, literary women in America between around 1760 and 1840 deployed genealogies of family and home in their national memory building. These were material and textual acts of preservation that nonetheless focused on the local, particular, and domestic.[119] The life-writers here suggest, however, that nostalgia for the places and spaces of childhood homes

112 Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was*, 128, 139 and *passim*.
113 Jennifer Green Lewis, *Victorian Photography, Literature, and the Invention of Modern Memory: Already the Past* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
114 Lewis, *Victorian Photography*, xix.
115 Bailey, *Parenting*, 126-7
116 See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Vintage Classics, Penguin, 2016); Rowan Rose Boyson, 'The Senses in Literature: Pleasures of Imagining in Poetry and Prose', in in Vila (ed), *A Cultural History of the Senses*, 163.
117 Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination*, 493-8; 618, 659.
118 Williams, *Country and the City*, chap. 2 and 3.
119 Stabile, *Memory's Daughters*, pp. 3-4.

was equally powerful for men as well as women, and forged overlapping personal, local, and national identities. For male working-class autobiographers using the 'self-help' format of the later nineteenth century, attachment to a place was disentangled from the home in order to stake a claim to notability.'[120] With extensive emigration, the self-conscious rituals of curating familial and homely objects, heirlooms, and family souvenirs into the 'memory-palaces' and 'mini-museums' were increasingly harnessed to new narratives of public, explicitly nationalist, memory in the later nineteenth century.[121] Today, nostalgia for childhood is commercialised and politicised, less an act of personal memory or benign form of self-soothing than a collective desire to make-over the present into a mythologised national past.

Scholars see nostalgic memories of childhood homes as doing the dual work of building personal identity and constructing security in a rapidly changing world.[122] Retrospective acts of family memory, for example, provided bridges between past and present for nineteenth-century migrant families.[123] Moreover, the construction of home as a 'sanctuary of nostalgia,' which Friszsche identifies as occurring in America and Jason Tebbe sees in Germany in the later nineteenth century, had a restorative, compensatory function at a time of change.[124] There is no doubt that the Georgian life-writers discussed above recalled the mnemonic assemblage of childhood home during a period of rupture. After all, they were formulating their deep attachment to the natal home and parents just as the centrifugal forces of modernity were beginning to spin people out into the world in the form of idealised 'cosmopolitan, unfettered, happy individuals.'[125] Yet, nostalgia was less consolatory and benign in their imaginations and subjectivities. For them, temporal nostalgia was more a reflective than restorative act. Svetlana Boym distinguishes between 'restoration', which 'signifies a return to the original stasis, to the prelapsarian moment,' and 'Re-flection [which] means new flexibility, not the reestablishment of stasis. The focus here is not on the recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth, but on the meditation on history and the passage of time'.[126] For Bewick, Cappe, Robinson and the like, the 'longing, lingering look behind' to the

120 Donna Loftus, 'The self in society: middle-class men and autobiography' in *Life writing and Victorian culture* ed., David Amigoni, (Aldershot, Hants: Routledge, 2006), 80, 82.
121 Fritzsche, *Stranded*, 164, 188, 192-5, 200. Tebbe, 'Landscapes of Remembrance,' *passim*.
122 Tebbe, 'Landscapes of Remembrance,' 191, 201, 207.
123 David A. Gerber, 'Moving backward and moving on: nostalgia, significant others, and social reintegration in nineteenth-century British immigrant personal correspondence,' *The History of the Family* 21 no. 3 (2015): 291-314.
124 Fritzsche, *Stranded*, chap. 5; and Tebbe, **'**Landscapes Of Remembrance', *passim*.
125 Matt, *Homesickness*, 28.
126 Svetlana Boym, 'Nostalgia and its discontents,' *The Hedgehog Review* 9 no. 2 (2007): 14-15.

childhood home recalled through sounds and smells was a personalised meditative act associated with hard-edged negative emotions as well as pleasant consoling ones. Life-writers' memories were thus reflective and mutable, since the same places could conjure resentment, sadness, grief, and despair when recalled in relation to different family members and other points in their life-course.

Conclusion

In sum, the mnemonic assemblage of childhood home and parent was a powerful matrix for Georgian life-writers to ruminate on themselves and their place in the world. Its power is clear in the way that some writers alluded to the first place of origin, the Garden of Eden, to describe it and its location.[127] It was also historically and culturally specific. Later memoirists remembered their childhood homes in different ways and assigned different meanings to place, as possession of material culture expanded, the cultural and social meaning of buildings and objects changed, and they adopted different expressive vocabularies. This also helps historicise nostalgia, indicating that in the long eighteenth century the medicalised synchronic notion of nostalgia coexisted with an experiential version of it as a primarily diachronic phenomenon. For the memoirists writing in the later Georgian period, it was a temporal rather than spatial yearning for an irretrievable past; all of them, after all, could bridge the relatively short distance to revisit their natal homes when they wished. Yet it was spatial in the sense that it helped locate people in a national culture. All in all, material and sensual retrospection and nostalgia were crucial parts of the construction of modern selfhood at the turn of the eighteenth century.

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[127] This was a trope used throughout the Atlantic world, for an example see Matt, *Homesickness*, 29.