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Peer reviewed

Susan Stewart

Reading a Drawer

an empty silver chocolate wrapper
a wooden darning egg
an inch-tall lightbulb with a brass base
one pair of worn women's Italian black leather gloves
a packet of Earl Grey tea
a funeral yarmulke
a small ceramic ashtray made and signed by a child
a plastic Yamaha recorder
three advanced Italian grammar tapes
a button that says "Say No to Wal-Mart"
a snapshot of cloister at Iona
the joker from a pack of cards
a sewing kit with a gold button
a set of Dominant violin strings
an auction ticket for a white linen tablecloth
a never opened brass bookmark from a national museum of history
a red protractor
a paper clip
a die
a red marble
two five-Euro notes
three one-thousand-lire Maria Montessori notes
sixteen screws of various sizes
a thumb-size plastic Santa's helper
eighty-three coins—US, Italian, English, Czech, French, Hungarian,
Turkish, Fijian, Thai, Canadian and Greek

a ticket to “Thomas Eakins: American Realist”
a watch repair receipt and two shoe repair receipts
a bill for a rolling pin bought at an antique shop
a picture hook and a packet of picture wire
a law-school ID from Spring 1980
four keys
a Utrecht soap eraser
a piece of white chalk
an open box of No. 2 Ticonderoga pencils
four Magic Markers
a handmade book of assembled fortunes from fortune cookies
a plastic insert for playing a 45 on a stereo
a lipstick
a wooden coin exchangeable for a pizza
a small ice-scraper
a brass flange for a doorknob

These are the identifiable objects that have been left in a drawer in a library table that has stood near the front door of my house since 1979. I cannot recall anyone, including myself, ever intending to put something in that drawer. And until I was invited to write this paper, I can't recall ever taking anything out of it, or even taking out the drawer to see what might be there. Unlike neat drawers maintained for paper supplies, or cutlery, or first-aid equipment, where contents can be viewed at once as they wait, ready to hand, this drawer might as well lead into the earth. It is like an opening to a lair that winds downs into some unthinkable region, a destination in pure dust.

Last summer I saw an exhibit at the National Museum of Archaeology in Naples of objects that the resident of Pompeii, Oplontis, and Herculaneum had taken with them as they tried to escape their doomed cities—foremost among them were objects made of precious metals, mostly jewels and coins, and small objects of worship.¹ Those

fleeing tried, obviously, to increase their means of exchange in whatever world was to follow. For surely they could see coming what Heidegger would, in another time and context, say of ruins: “The world of the work that stands there has perished. World-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone. The works are no longer what they once were. It is they themselves to be sure, that we encounter there, but they themselves are gone by.”² But if you grabbed this drawer as you fled my house in a catastrophe, you’d probably find yourself burdened with further trouble.

This drawer is a space without an identifiable function, though like attics, cellars, and other spaces it has become a space whose purpose is to hold and preserve things that have lost their functions, even as they have somehow retained enough worth to continue to exist. Such things are beyond surplus, since they will never be called on to remedy a deficiency—they are, in this regard, a surplus of surplus. Some are metonymic to absence: the gold button belongs to a dress I gave away; the pizza shop has closed; the keys open doors that no longer exist. In the shadow of a Vesuvius, precious metals may promise to keep their values, but the eighty-three coins in the drawer demonstrate that entire systems of currency can disappear; inflation can make a coin worth less than nothing while it is waiting to become a souvenir of itself. Less clearly marked things cannot even become such souvenirs or intrinsic objects, the unmarked photograph of the cloister at Iona will eventually be an unmarked photograph of a cloister, and then, like the photos that fall from the pages of used books or cluster in piles in secondhand shops, an unmarked photography of something, somewhere; the brass bookmaker may be a relic of a national museum of history, but what nation? And what history? A surplus of surplus indicates a status akin to luxury or the preserved detritus of still life or *trompe l’oeil*. But perhaps the ultimate luxury is being able at once to exist and have no determinable value—an in-itself and for-itself akin to the noumenal.

An archaeologist could draw conclusions about the people who lived around this drawer: the extension of their lives in time and space, the climate of their environment, their relative wealth, religions, and level of education, although perhaps these themes inevitably arise in a drawer near a doorway that is the locus for most departures and arrivals. The paper clip alone testifies to an advanced state of civilization and design; children in the culture are encouraged to make ashtrays, but in truth no one here smokes. The mandala-like-insert for a 45 is ripe for misreading as an object of mystical significance. Artifacts of obsolescent skills and technologies seem destined for such a drawer—the objects devoted to repairing, mending, and darning there will probably be unintelligible after another fifty years of consumer culture's disposable values. There are tickets to redemptions that either never took place or didn't require any paperwork after all. With the exception of the little book of Chinese fortunes sewn into cardboard covers as a gift for a child, none of these are the objects of a private nostalgia. Yet any of them could be. We all know by now that meaning does not reside in things themselves.

Nevertheless this is not a drawer that orders parts of a system—if anything, it is the drawer of a particular kind of remainder, suspended between significance and refuse. The drawer could be said to belong to the household before it belongs to any one of its intimates, though perhaps every object in it could be taken in its singularity to speak to someone's sole, yet now forgotten, experience—it's hard to tell. It is as if, under the spell of an internal time system, the objects' materials, their brass and copper, and wood, and plastic, and bits of thread and silk and glass, their reds and blacks and purples, had summoned like to like, gathering things to things under some magnetism that human volition does not know. Just as in those legends that tell how money comes to money under a law of magical production, these things seem to obey a

law of abjection that rules over what is unwanted and discarded, and yet persistent. It could be said of this drawer, “it has substance, but no style,” for style depends on an agency or organizing intention that is absent here. The drawer is like a pocket, a space with a specific gravity and conditions conducive to mixing. It recalls a proposal for an artwork once made by Marcel Duchamp and described in Gabriel Josipovici’s novel *The Big Glass*: “My old dream of a work which celebrates the contents of a pocket. Everything a pocket has ever carried in its time. Has cradled and protected. Has smothered and covered with dust: the sweets of childhood, the matches of adolescence, the pills of maturity. And all the rest of it. My attempt at an inventory of the entire contents of a jacket pocket for 1959.”³

In *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, Karsten Harries describes a deep antinomy between the attitude of Bachelard and Frank Lloyd Wright toward storage spaces like attics and cellars and this drawer. For Bachelard such pocketed spaces are necessary for dreaming and for the development of a certain withdrawn subjectivity and interiority. For Wright, however, such spaces are necessary ornaments, places that accumulate dust.⁴ The ideal space of Bachelard is centrifugal, deepening in significance at the peripheries, whereas the ideal space of Wright is centripetal, gathering significance around a hearth. But a hearth itself evokes both a womb, that warm pocket from which all natality and life will spring, and a sacrificial altar, the cold cover of a coffin. Perhaps the dream space of a house resides always suspended between these same two secrets—the secret of origins and the secret of burial—those thresholds where human life and culture find their limit. Nevertheless, Bachelard’s oneiric architecture gradually acquires significance in solitary, rather alienated, spaces, whereas Wright’s functionalism speaks to a vision of space as made to order, already suited to universals that need not acknowledge the past.

Architectural histories and architectural utopias are, as Harries notes, most often drawn to domestic forms.⁵ The stored objects of domestic space, as a surplus that must be protected, seem to arise from the fundamental divisions preliminary and necessary to the maintenance of general economies. Here *oikos* as economy and *oikos* as household find their often-noted common etymology. In his recent, far-reaching study of the literature of medieval households, D. Vance Smith cites the earliest definition of the household in antiquity: Xenophon's claim that "a household is the sum of its possessions."⁶ Hence belongings do not belong to persons so much as persons become attached to, and have duties toward, the maintenance and, at times, transport of belongings. Smith also explains that, as early as Plotinus's *Enneads*, an association between unconscious possession and identity accompanied whatever public obligations to possessions were used to define persons. In a discussion of memory in *Ennead 4.4* Plotinus writes: "There is such a thing as possessing more powerfully without consciousness than in full knowledge; with full awareness the possession is of something quite distinct from the self; unconscious possession runs very close to identity, and any such approach to identification with the lower means the deeper fall of the Soul."⁷ Contrary to the argument of Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and other works, this drawer does not express a particular subjectivity or reveal a state of interiority or secrecy that can be uncovered.⁸ Yet following Plotinus's insight, perhaps here we find something like a collective unconscious at work, one that reaches from the drawer to the larger sphere of objects inherited by default, the forms of cultural significance that are carried through history without any particular attachment to individuals. And perhaps we also can find a remnant of identity that lies in discarded or forgotten experience, experiences of inhabiting the world in time and space that confuse the clarity of private and public knowledge.

Divisions between kinds of possessions, between ways of holding

them, between objects of use and objects to be stored, between the expendable and the accumulated, often become translated into differences between the aesthetic and the functional that still stand at the heart of contemporary debates on architecture's purpose. Underlying and perhaps furthering these divisions are fundamental notions about kinds of persons and the responsibilities they bear to objective culture. In his essay on "drawers, chests and wardrobes," Bachelard objects to Henri Bergson's mechanistic use of the drawer metaphor to indicate a system of rigid classification. Bachelard suggests that the drawer be considered instead as an image that illustrates a "philosophy of having." Bachelard goes on to indicate the relativism of all systems of order when he describes how Henri Bosco's character Monsieur Carre-Bonit thinks of his filing cabinet as a model of positive knowledge only to learn that his maid has used it to store mustard, salt, rice, coffee, peas, lentils, and other provisions.⁹ Monsieur Carre-Benoit's model of reason, Bachelard writes, has become a larder. Yet the relation between sorting and having seems to be a dichotomy to Bosco's character, and to Bachelard himself in this instance, might be reconsidered in light of fairy tales and myths. For in many such stories thought is dependent upon gestures of gathering, sorting, or storing: a female protagonist often must draw on a skill of exactly this kind—sorting straw from gold, or barley from wheat. Inevitably she does not have this knowledge herself but acquires the services of a magical helper, who is usually an aged person or an emissary from the natural world. In the story of Cupid and Psyche, for example, Psyche is helped by a tiny ant, who like Monsieur Carre-Benoit's maid, knows how to separate grain by grain the barley, millet, and poppy seeds that Venus has mixed together as a torment and test for her.

Georg Simmel argued, in a 1911 essay titled *Female Culture* that "culture is distinctive synthesis of subjective and objective spirit. Its ultimate purpose, of course, can be only in the enrichment of individuals."

He goes on to ask, “To what degree, both extensively and intensively do individuals have a share in the contents of objective culture?”¹⁰ Simmel concludes that because of historical developments in the division of labor, women have found their tasks both restricted to the household and more diversified than the specialized occupations of men: “This fundamental structure of the female nature,” he writes, “which achieves historical expression only in its estrangement from culture as specialized and objective—can be epitomized in a psychological trait. Fidelity signifies that the totality and integrity of the psyche are indissolubly connected with one single element of its contents. There is probably universal agreement concerning the observed fact that women, compared with men, have a more constant nature. This began with the woman’s dependence upon old articles of possession—her own as well as those belonging to persons dear to her—and also upon ‘recollection,’ tangible as well as those of the most intimate sort.”¹¹ Simmel is quick to naturalize and mystify those qualities of women’s agency he most desires; fidelity, attachment, unity of being. However, the intimacy here is another aspect of the division of labor and so, part of the public taxonomy of spaces and tasks. Simmel’s response to the central question “how do individuals share in objective culture?” reminds us that an attachment to particular objects can seem to extend, at times like a contagion, to an attachment to objects in general. In the end, his remarks about the division of labor indicate an economy more made than natural—one that masks or conceals two ethical questions that are as inescapable today as they were in antiquity and the Middle Ages: Why should the few enjoy the labor of the many? Why should anyone have more than is demanded by necessity?

Such questions cannot be answered by a simple counterclaim that distributive justice should rule. Justice must be shaped by a prior political will that recognizes the lives of others as intrinsically worthwhile. The

earth does not yield its resources, including the resources of human production and reproduction, at a steady rate; contingent nature alone demands the storing up for surplus—hence our need for sheltering spaces on the one hand, and tools and machines, like Psyche’s magical ant, to supplement our labor on the other. Nevertheless, like all ethical quandaries, these questions regarding surplus accumulation and the use of others’ labor begin where they are painful to contemplate—with the fact of paradoxical values, the necessity of explanation for one’s own actions and a prediction of consequences. Aristotle took up these questions directly in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, section I, writing: “Things meant for use can be used well and badly, and wealth is a useful thing. Now, any particular object is put to the best use by a man who possesses the virtue proper to that object. Accordingly, wealth will be put to best use by him who possesses the excellence proper to material goods, and that is the generous man. Use, we think, consists in spending and giving material goods, while taking and keeping them is more properly called ‘possession.’”¹² Spending and giving, taking and keeping, are not opposing functions but complementary and mutually dependent ones. The proper working depends on another mode of possession: the interiorization of virtue, of which we might say that the more it is expended, the more it increases. Expenditure is the required consequence to gathering and enlists others in its interest.

Aristotle also emphasized gender roles as a central aspect to the origin of the division of labor, writing: “Human beings live together not merely for procreation, but also to secure the needs of life. There is division of labor from the very beginning and different functions for man and wife. Thus they satisfy one another’s needs by contributing each his own to the common store. For that reason, this kind of friendship brings both usefulness and pleasantness with it, and if the partners are good, it may even be based on virtue or excellence. For each partner has

his own peculiar excellence and they can find joy in that fact.”¹³ Here, too, “the common store” is the place of incoming and outgoing goods in an economy of use and pleasure.

If we compare Aristotle’s household economy to Plutarch’s account of the creation of a common polity in founding of Rome of Romulus, we find the gathering of a common store preceding a process of sorting.¹⁴ Plutarch writes that after Romulus buried his brother Remus, he dug a pit around what is now the Comitium, “and in this were placed the first fruits of all things whose use is thought good by custom and necessary by nature. Finally, each man threw in a small share of the soil of his native land and they mixed it in together. They call this pit the *mundus*, the same word they use for the heavens. Then, taking this as the center, they marked out the city around it.

Next [Romulus], fixing a bronze blade on a plough and yoking a bull and a cow, himself drove a deep furrow for the boundary lines, while those who followed behind him had the task of turning back inside the city all the clods that the plough threw up, allowing no

clod to lie turned outwards.” The plough was lifted from the ground at intervals wherever a gate was wanted—the wall was then declared sacred, import and export.¹⁵ Here we could say that discriminating between objects, deciding what is good and necessary, precedes storage, and storage precedes the determination of boundary, site, and building. Only through the establishment of the *oikos* as holding/household can the *oikos* as economy begin to work. Eventually this site of accumulated, then sorted goods becomes the Comitium itself, the location of political aggregation and affiliation.

“ I would suggest that this desire to call on hidden resources and to mask the basis of our reliance on the labor of others survives in the impulse to aestheticize and externalize architectural space. ”

Nevertheless, all getting and spending relies on a plenitude that precedes and follows it; every economy comes out of the invisible resources of nature and goes back into them. Mirroring this, the earliest Roman gods of the household were invisible and yet always present. Ancestral spirits were linked to the *lares*, domestic spirits linked to the *penates*—those spirits of the cupboards who help with the maintenance of the Roman house and are vital to the sustenance of life. Annie Dubourdieu's recent summary of archaeological and textual evidence of these deities summarizes their relation as follows: the *penates* were attached to the house while the effects of the *lares* extended into the larger world. The *penates* had benevolent effects on the household while the *lares* were more ambivalent, no doubt because of their connection to the dead.¹⁶

In the later folklore of Western Europe and Britain, fairy figures such as the “Billy Blin” of the Scottish ballads or kindly but easily offended dwarves, kobolds, or brownies attach themselves to particular households. Like the *lares*, they are singular, devoted to the service of the house, hairy, clad in rags and expecting offerings of meal or milk. But unlike the ancestral spirits, these domestic figures can come and go from one house to another. If, for example, a householder makes a mistake and lays out a suit of clothes as a gift for a brownie, the brownie will be much offended and will move on to another site. This is the “drudging goblin” of Milton's *L'Allegro*: he will churn the butter, brew the drinks, make the dough rise, sweep the floor, wash the dishes, and lay the fire. He will also betray any member of the household who is lazy or disloyal. He must be given a bowl or cup of milk set out on a stone or the hearth. He is often described as being the size of a child and having the face of an old man. At times these household spirits are said to be the ghosts of servants who had worked in the house, and the two traditions of ancestral and domestic spirits are thereby merged.¹⁷

As household helpers, such fairy figures solve the problem of labor's unending repetition. The futility of repetitive labor in the face of our inexorable progress toward death, these magical beings are neither worn down nor renewed by labor, they pursue their tasks within a perpetual cycle that is akin to the activities of Nature itself.¹⁸

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt writes that “the distinctive trait of the household sphere is that in it men lived together because they were drawn by their wants and needs. The driving force was life itself—the *penates*, the household gods, were, according to Plutarch, ‘the gods who make us live and nourish our body’—which, for its individual maintenance and its survival as the life of the species needs the company of others. That individual maintenance should be the task of the man and species survival the task of the woman was obvious [i.e., to Marx], and both of these natural functions, the labor of man to provide nourishment the labor of the woman in the giving birth, were subject to the same urgency of life.” Yet the task of laboring was also a “constant unending fight against the processes of growth and decay through which nature forever invades the human artifice, threatening the durability of the world and its fitness for human use.”¹⁹ And this struggle is conducted by means of the monotonous performance of daily repeated chores.” Arendt writes that even though the tale of Hercules cleaning the Augean stables is a heroic one, “the resemblance to heroic deeds; the endurance it needs to repair every day anew the waste of yesteryear is not courage and what makes the effort painful is not danger but its relentless repetition.”²⁰

For human beings, the diurnal cycle of making and unmaking, in which contingent nature is overcome and then faced again inevitably, as inevitably as the sun rising, is broken through only when the objects of its labor are reified into intelligible form. Of course such forms are themselves doomed to decay and disappearance and must be

maintained and cared for. But there is a distinction to be made between the consequences of labor absorbed in the generalized conditions of furthering one's life and the products of work as manifested by forms in time. From the late eighteenth century forward, the nouns *oeuvre*, *werk*, and *work* were increasingly used for forms of art. A "work" and "one's work" arose at the same time as the concept of the aesthetic came to prominence in the thought of Kant and others as that which was seed for use and appetite.²¹ In the division of labor between men and women that finds its culmination during the periods of industrialism, women, as Simmel noted, are responsible for more and more of the diversified tasks of everyday maintenance that are truly labor, and men take on the reification of objects of commodities by means of work.

Arendt draws an important distinction between the division of labor—which is the quantitative separation of tasks, a separation requiring political coordination between individuals but no necessary distinction in skills—and the specialization of work, which is a qualitative separation of tasks necessary to the production of finished products of some complexity.²² As we saw in fairy tales and myths, sorting, discrimination, and judgment are preliminary to any participation in an economy—especially those regarding impossible tasks and the magic needed to perform them. Indeed, when work transforms the world and the self, it aspires to the conditions of magic. Human violation is transposed into the power of the tool, which is both inertly ready to hand, in anticipation of human desires, and readily animated. This aspect of the tool is discussed in a passage in Aristotle's *Politics* that Arendt cites, "[If only] every tool could perform its own work when ordered . . . like the statues of Daedelus or the tripods of Hephaistus which, says the poet, 'of their own accord entered the assembly of the gods.'" Then "the shuttle would move and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hind to guide them . . . the process of life that

requires laboring is an endless activity and the only ‘instrument’ equal to it would have to be *perpetuum mobile*, that is, the *instrument vocale* which is alive and ‘active’ in the living organism which it serves.”²³ When the witches in *Macbeth* exclaim, “Double double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble,” it is labor itself (toil and trouble) that magically becomes magical. But no tool, as the extension of one’s own bodily energy, even when animated by magic, is as effective as the service of another person. Arendt writes that “the service of the one servant can never be fully replaced by a hundred gadgets in the kitchen or half a dozen robots in the cellar,”²⁴ a remark that remains true even given a later proliferation of gadgets and robots.

I would suggest that this desire to call on hidden resources and to mask the basis of our reliance on the labor of others survives in the impulse to aestheticize and externalize architectural space. Turn the pages of any architecture journal and the vast and intimate emptiness of the depicted spaces will be broken on occasionally by a human figure whose only purpose is to determine a sense of scale. Non-function is the caption of even the most “functional” of architectural designs. An inhabited house, a place where action and labor meet in the making of a world, is here counted by a history of first dispelling from the house the presence of gods, and then dispelling the presence of human labor. Popular culture and high art link forces to give us an image of household that is either an expression of individual (most often female) interiority and withdrawal or an empty site of ascetic harmonies—in either case existing in a paradoxically timeless novelty. Representations of, imaginations of, architectural interiors are often powerful statements about the absence of those who inhabit them; such spaces seem to exist without acknowledging their own demand to be looked at from outside, or afar. Yet from the ancient gods of the households to the belief in magical helpers and ghosts haunting in the recesses and unseen parts of

houses comes another sense of human absence, the sense that the world is not made for or by us, but is given to us by forces that come from beyond our spheres of habitation.

Perhaps in this regard the drawer indicates what has haunted my discussion of it from the beginning: it is not meant to be opened completely by anyone who has put something in it. There is something posthumous about the disorder of this drawer—it is a space that is destined to be revealed after death, after perhaps the last death of the house, and to look into it now is a travesty akin to that of going back to the womb or attempting to look into one's own occupied coffin. It is futile to attempt to “straighten” such a drawer—nothing in it belongs to it; the only alternatives are to empty it or close it up, quickly, once again.

Nevertheless, out of this drawer come certain questions: What would an architecture of habitation look like if it acknowledged the presence of those who took part in its making and imagined that presence in other, as yet unknown, terms? And, on another scale, to what purpose could a surplus be put if we reevaluated our terms of necessity? I believe such an architecture of presence and persistent, indeterminate memory might begin to provide an answer.

A poet and critic, Susan Stewart is the author of *The Poet's Freedom: A Notebook on Making* (2011), *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002), *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1993), as well as numerous collections of poetry. She is a former MacArthur Fellow, the recent recipient of an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Avalon Foundation University Professor in the Humanities, Princeton University. Professor Stewart has graciously allowed us to reprint “Reading a Drawer,” from the book *Architecture, Ethics, and the Personhood of Place* (ed. Gregory Caicco, University Press of New England, 2007).

[Endnotes]

1 “Storie De Un’Eruzione: Pompei, Ercolano, Oplontis,” *Museo Archeologico Nazionale*, Napoli, 21 Mar.-31 Aug., 2003.

2 Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks,” *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1950), 30; trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Poetry Language Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 40-41

3 Gabriel Josipovici, *The Big Glass* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1991), 64.

4 Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 206-7. Harries quotes Wright: “I had the idea that every house in that low region [the open prairie] should begin on the ground, no in it, as they then began, with damp cellars”; and, “First thinking in building the new house, get rid of the attic . . .” (207).

5 *Ibid.*, 284: “Inquiries into the origin and essence of building have tended to focus on the house.”

6 D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 7.

7 Plotinus *The Enneads* 4.4., trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Penguin, 1991), 289. See Smith, *Arts of Possession*, xvii, for a discussion of this passage with a slightly different translation; the passage follows the distinction between merely having, as opposed to internalizing or possessing, knowledge in Plato’s *Theaetetus*; see *Theaetetus: The Theaetetus of Plato*, ed. M. Burnyeat, trans. M.J. Levett (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990), 333 (197d-198).

8 “The images of intimacy that are in harmony with drawers and chests, as also with all the other hiding places in which human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets.” Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 74.

9 *Ibid.*, 77-78: “his reasoning cabinet had become a larder.”

10 Georg Simmel, “Female Culture,” in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 46-54 (46).

11 *Ibid.*, 50.

12 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1962), 83-84.

13 *Ibid.*, 239.

14 Plutarch *Life of Romulus* 11.1-3.

15 Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion: A Sourcebook* (Newburyport, Mass.: Focus Publishing, 2002), 17.

16 Annie Dubourdieu, *Les origines et le developpement du culte des penates a Rome* (Rome: Ecole Francaise de Rome, 1989).

17 See Katherine Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 11-37: as well as Nancy Arrowsmith and George Moore,

Field Guide to the Little People (New York: Hill and Wang, 1949), 363-65. I have drawn a more extended discussion of the history of these archaic household beings in my essay on George Eliot's *Silas Marner*: "Genres of Work: the Folktale and Silas Marner," *New Literary History* (Autumn 2003): 513-34.

18 Walter Pater's Victorian novel, *Marius the Epicurean*, is suffused with the simple piety of these early Roman practices of the hearth, practices Pater associates with the pacific reign of Numa. Pater emphasizes that this is "a religion of usages and sentiment rather and of facts and belief, and attached to very definite things and places," and he begins his story by quoting Tibullus's "Poem to Messalla" 1.3.33-34:

At mihi contingat patrios celebrare Penates

Reddereque antique menstrua tura Lari

(And many times it was up to me to stand before the shrine of my family's penates, to offer incense, as the months cycle by, to the ancient of Lar of my house.) hearth was an altar and locus for the genii of the household dead is also the place for propitiation; "the dead genii," Pater writes, "were satisfied with little—a few violets, a cake dipped in wine, or a morsel of honeycomb. Daily, from the time when his childish footsteps were still uncertain, had Marius taken them their portion of the family meal, at the second course, amidst the silence of the company." Pater's book deeply concerned with issues of animal suffering and animal sacrifice. His conclusion suggests a symmetry between the simple propitiation of the ancient gods with foodstuffs that are by-products of nature and the transformations of the Christian eucharist, which replace animal sacrifice with symbolic sacrifice through the consumption of foods. Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, ed. Michael Levey (1885; reprint London: Penguin, 1958), 37 and 41.

19 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998), 29ff.

20 Ibid., 100.

21 Ibid., 81, n. 5.

22 Ibid., 123.

23 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253b30-1254a18. In these passages Aristotle also draws a useful distinction between instruments of production and of action: "The shuttle, for example, is not only of use; but something else is made by it, whereas of a garment or of a bed there is only the use. Further, as production and action are different in kind, and both require instruments, the instruments which they employ must likewise differ in kind," 1254a, as translated in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1131.

24 Arendt, *Human Condition*, 122.

[Chapter figure part of "Souvenir Nostalgia Photo Series." Photograph by Andrew Manuel. 2014.]