

## Objects of Affection? Materialising Courtship, Love and Sex in Ireland, C.1800-1830

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### ABSTRACT

This article uses a collection of mementos curated by Robert James Tennent, a middle-class man to interrogate how objects materialised love and sex in Ireland. It problematises readings of courtship tokens as simple objects of affection, and considers how individuals engaged in culturally-sanctioned courtship practices in extra-licit ways. Gifts and tokens took on new meanings when they were accessioned into the personal archives of their owners and catalogued as mementos of past relationships. Read as a collection of courtship mementos and a homemade pornographic archive, this article argues that the collection provides an unique insight into the curation of sexual memory.

### KEYWORDS

Courtship; love; material culture; emotion; sex; Ireland

### Introduction

The Tennent archive in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland is home to a remarkable collection of sixteen objects. Catalogued under the papers of Robert James Tennent, a middle-class man who came of age in nineteenth-century Belfast, one will find a large grey envelope that contains fourteen locks of hair that are individually wrapped in small handmade envelopes; a small envelope labelled 'Hair' (now empty) that may once have held a lock of hair; and a broken ring that has been snapped in half.<sup>1</sup> Of these fourteen locks of hair, twelve are accompanied by the names of their supposed bestowers, eleven are dated, and one includes what appears to be a medicinal remedy endorsed 'With Dr Curie's best regards'. All eleven pieces of hair fall within the period 1810 to 1827, and ten are dated precisely, including the specific day, month and year of their reception or inclusion in the collection. A closer examination of the names and dates reveals that the hair belongs to at least ten different women. The eagle-eyed will also note that there is considerable overlap in the dates the different locks of hair were collected. One will also notice that the condition, quality and quantity of the hair varies considerably: from hair arranged in small, neat plaits, to slim cuts and wisps, to roughly cut masses of hair, balled and packed into their respective envelopes. The locks are awash with colour, ranging from light fair to ash blonde, dark brown to black, and grey. Their texture is likewise variable. Whereas some pieces are straight and smooth, others are tangled or in a state of disintegration. From the hair to the broken ring, each item bears

an individual story of its journey from the head or finger of its owner to the possession of Robert James Tennent, and then to an envelope, stored away in an archive. Taken together, the collection is a rich 'harvest' of entangled emotional practices.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on the Irish Tennent collection, this article extends our knowledge of the interconnections between courtship, sex and material culture, and contributes to recent debates on the role of objects in materialising emotional practices.

The material culture of courtship and its practices is a growing field. A rich body of scholarship exists that sheds light on the central role that objects played in the courtship ritual. Work by historians of England and Scotland has revealed much about the gifts that were employed, their meanings, and the gendered patterns of their exchange.<sup>3</sup> Such extensive studies of courtship and its rituals have yet to be undertaken in respect to Ireland. While social histories of Irish courtship and marriage have flourished in recent years, their materiality has attracted significantly less attention.<sup>4</sup> As Maria Luddy and Mary O'Dowd have recently pointed out, the material culture of marriage customs and practices is worthy of much more research.<sup>5</sup> That is not to say that the materiality of courtship and marriage has been completely overlooked in an Irish context. It is worth noting that these themes have received relatively much more attention from historians of design and craft.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it is within folklore scholarship where the connections between objects, ritual and meaning have been best explored – Linda Ballard's *Forgetting Frolic* (1998) being an excellent example.<sup>7</sup>

Historians such as Sarah Anne Bendall have also shed light on how objects enabled courting couples to navigate the physical and sexual boundaries of their growing relationships. Framed within the context of courtship conventions, women and men could exchange gifts loaded with amorous meaning and intimate intent. Tokens such as gloves, garters and busks were worn on and against the body, allowing young lovers to bridge physical and emotional distance.<sup>8</sup> The erotic and affective properties of hair were likewise widely recognised, explaining the use of hair (including pubic hair) in love magic, as well as its status as an object that signalled marriage.<sup>9</sup> The sexually charged nature of these tokens, however, was sanitised, even sanctioned, by the rituals of gift-giving. Activities that may have been regarded as illicit were made licit through objects: material culture provided a conduit through which sexual energies could be channelled appropriately.

Influenced by the histories of emotions, historians have recently turned their attention towards understanding love as a social and cultural practice. A 2020 Special Issue in this journal on 'Interrogating Romantic Love' explored how love was produced, practiced, and expressed in Britain between the seventeenth- and the twentieth-centuries.<sup>10</sup> A number of contributions considered the role of material culture in understanding the emotional worlds of courtship traditions. As Sally Holloway's piece on Valentine's Day cards demonstrated, material objects make manifest how 'people "do" love'.<sup>11</sup> Objects not only carry affective meaning, they act as tangible expressions of the 'nonverbal language of love'; or as Katie Barclay has argued, they 'materialise love, becoming implicated in what romantic love is'.<sup>12</sup> Other articles explored the ways that individuals negotiated ideas about romantic love, extending and reshaping them to fit relationships that occurred outside of marriage. As Kate Gibson's article revealed, romantic love was employed as a tool in the navigation of extra-marital affairs. Drawing

on the case-study of a woman named 'E.B.', Gibson revealed how women involved in seemingly transgressive relationships manipulated discourses of romantic love to fit their own situations, enabling them to justify the morality of extra-marital sex. Reconceptualised within the discourses of romantic love, adulterous relationships could be reframed as licit by those involved.

That ideas of what love meant, how it was expressed and performed, and where it was located were not fixed concepts, but could be tailored to suit individual circumstances has an important bearing on how we read courtship objects and the ways that individuals engaged with them. As Sara Ahmed has astutely argued, 'shared feelings are not about feeling the same feeling'.<sup>13</sup> In this, historical studies of the connections between objects, emotions and their performance have much to gain from engaging with the work of folklorists. Folklore scholarship provides a useful distinction between the meaning and meaningfulness of traditions that has direct implications for how we think about individuals' participation in social customs. Whereas 'meaning' refers to a 'cognitive understanding of what something represents that is created and shared publicly', 'meaningfulness' or 'felt meaning . . . refers to what it means personally to an individual; that is, what memories and emotions it evokes for them'.<sup>14</sup> In other words, while objects materialise the shared emotional worlds of individuals, the 'meaningfulness' of those traditions may be personalised and individual. As this article suggests, the exchange of gifts may have been recognised as a socially sanctioned courtship custom, but the meaningfulness of that tradition was contingent on the individual. Tokens initially exchanged in courtship could adapt new meanings, as the relationship between giver, recipient and the object changed. Neither objects, nor the meanings attached to them are static; they have agency.

The following article applies this approach to the Tennent collection to interrogate the role that objects played in materialising the emotional and sexual worlds of courtship. It is split into two parts. The article begins by considering the Tennent collection as a source for courtship and locates the locks of hair and broken ring in discussions of emotional objects. The second part reconsiders the 'meaningfulness' of the Tennent collection. Taken singly, each item in the Tennent collection represents a particular moment in time and captures the material exchange between bestower and recipient. Considered as a whole, however, it represents something more. In the act of curating, cataloguing and arranging, Tennent crafted a site of sexual memory, transforming the meaning of his objects and his engagement with them. Read instead as a handmade and homemade pornographic archive, the article complicates our understanding of how objects materialise emotional practices. Following the argument of Ahmed that objects are 'sticky' and 'saturated with affect', this article reveals how objects and their traditions shed and accumulate new meaning as they move through time and space.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Robert James Tennent & his collection***

Before beginning our exploration of courtship, it is useful to pause and introduce the curator of the collection: Robert James Tennent. Born on 30 April 1803, Tennent was a member of one of Belfast's wealthiest families. His father, Robert, initially trained as a medical doctor before making a name for himself as a philanthropist, and his uncle, William, was a wealthy merchant who made his fortune in banking, wine and insurance.<sup>16</sup> Tennent's privileged background afforded him the opportunity of a good education, and

he studied at the newly established Belfast Academical Institution for six years before progressing to University at Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>17</sup> It was during these formative years that Tennent appears to have accumulated his collection. The earliest item, a lock of hair belonging to Miss Ellen Templeton, is dated 1 May 1818, and the latest, a lock of hair bearing the name Ellen Lepper, is dated 26 June 1827. Covering the eight years between Tennent's fifteenth- and twenty-fourth year of life, the collection encompasses the entirety of his adolescence.

Growing up in nineteenth-century Ireland, Tennent inhabited a society wherein extra-marital sex (albeit subject to disapproval) was not that unusual. Illegitimacy rates, while consistently lower than those recorded in Britain and Europe, evidence that Irish women and men did engage in sex outside of marriage.<sup>18</sup> While rates of illegitimacy in Ireland decreased over the nineteenth-century (never rising above 3.8%), the Island continued to return a relatively high infanticide rate by European standards in comparison.<sup>19</sup> As the work of Elaine Farrell and James Kelly has demonstrated, the majority of infanticide cases involved unmarried women and are indicative of attempts to cover up illicit sexual activity.<sup>20</sup> Extra-marital sex even shaped Tennent's own family makeup. His uncle William was well known for his 'non-traditional' lifestyle, having fathered at least 13 illegitimate children before marriage, all of whom he recognised publicly.<sup>21</sup> As a young man, Tennent likewise engaged in numerous romantic entanglements, exchanging details of these trysts (whether real or imagined) in letters with his college friends – the tone of which has been described by J.J. Wright as 'downright ribald'.<sup>22</sup> This paper extends our knowledge of this period of Tennent's life by focusing attention on the materiality of these experiences. It considers what Tennent's collection of objects can tell us about courtship, as also about the curation of sexual identity.

### **An archive of courtship**

Gifts and tokens exchanged in courtship took many forms, and included sums of money, items of clothing, books, small trinkets, ribbons, locks of hair, and rings.<sup>23</sup> Such items were imbued with affective meaning and it was this, more than their financial value, that mattered most. In choosing to send a particular token, the gift-giver communicated a specific message to its recipient and, in return, the recipient indicated their agreement or rejection of this message by either accepting or refusing the gift. As a courtship developed from initial friendship, through to romantic attachment, engagement and then finally, marriage, gifts were employed to mark each stage of this progression, serving to confirm, accelerate or terminate the developing relationship.<sup>24</sup> As Sally Holloway has noted for Georgian England, the exchange of romantic gifts enabled courting couples to 'negotiate the path to matrimony'.<sup>25</sup>

The Tennent collection provides some insight into how material culture figured in its curator's transition to married life. At least one of the locks of hair in the collection belongs to Tennent's future wife, Eliza McCracken. Born sometime around 1804, Eliza belonged to one of Belfast's well-known merchant families.<sup>26</sup> We are fortunate that their correspondence, encompassing their courtship and stretching across their married life, survives and is held in the Tennent archive.<sup>27</sup> The couple's relationship began sometime in 1826 and eventually ended in marriage in June 1830. Their route to marriage, however, was anything but smooth. The major obstacle to their relationship was Eliza's father, who refused to consent to the match until late 1828 and was furious when he

learned the pair had been meeting in secret.<sup>28</sup> Eliza herself also injected drama into their courtship. She called off their relationship at least three times as she 'tested' the strength of Tennent's commitment.<sup>29</sup> As detailed by J.J. Wright in his essay on the pair, Eliza appears to have followed the practice of 'ritualised courtship testing' and manufactured crises in order to stress test the relationship. Indeed, she had 'ample material' to work with: Tennent's financial security, his religious principles, and his chequered romantic past were all fair game.<sup>30</sup>

The trials and tribulations of the Tennent-McCracken relationship have been the subject of recent work by Wright. Yet, what has been less explored is how material culture featured in their bumpy progression from courtship to marriage. Tokens played an important role in their developing relationship. We know from Eliza's letters to Tennent that she sent at least one, perhaps two, locks of her own hair. One such lock she sent to him enclosed in 'a little brooch'.<sup>31</sup> It is possible that the other lock is curated in the Tennent collection. Item 17, a partly unrolled plait of brown hair, bears the label 'Eliza, Where is the Bosom friend dearer than all'.<sup>32</sup> That Eliza sent the hair with flirtatious intent is clear from her letters. For example, in response to Robert's request for a lock of her hair in September 1827, she teased him:

. . . as to the ringlet how could you ask me to spoil my curls for you? Unreasonable man! . . . I will think of it, & if I can give you a small grain without much detriment to my dark wavy tresses perhaps I may so far forget my prudish prudence as to do so. remember, I say, perhaps.<sup>33</sup>

Aside from locks of hair, Eliza's letters were also sent as physical tokens of love and affection. It is well-established that letters played a key role in facilitating romantic relationships. Letters not only bridged the physical distance between courting couples, they were imbued with affective value, enabling women and men to deepen their emotional connection by touching, kissing, and gazing at one and another's missives.<sup>34</sup> Entering into correspondence was a sign that a relationship was serious and developed. Indeed, it is for that reason that Eliza was quite guarded about corresponding with Tennent without her father's permission. For example, in reply to a letter from Tennent in which he voiced his frustration at her lack of letters, Eliza drew a connection between the physical letter and what it symbolised, telling him that: 'corresponding always implies an engagement, no person would believe that we are not engaged did they know that we corresponded'.<sup>35</sup> The affective qualities of letters were likewise recognised by Tennent. In an undated letter penned before a trip to London, he asked Eliza to write him 'one word' that he could 'carry about . . . as a talisman'.<sup>36</sup> The letter connected the writer and its recipient, both physically and emotionally.

The emphasis placed by Eliza on letters and tokens as material evidence of attachment explains her use of them as a 'stress-testing' strategy. Eliza was acutely aware of Tennent's past lovers, even confessing in one letter how she wished he 'had never care for any person' before they met.<sup>37</sup> Two women she named explicitly: Hannah McGee, who she did not 'like the idea of', and M.G., also known as Mary Gray. The latter was a regular source of comment in Eliza's letters. The issue for Eliza was that Mary had once accepted a proposal of marriage from Tennent, and he had subsequently reneged on it. Eliza's investigations into the failed engagement, however, revealed that there was considerable overlap between the cessation of Tennent's relationship with Mary and his

courtship of her. This overlap could be traced through material culture in the form of letters and tokens. It transpired that Tennent had continued to maintain an 'affectionate' correspondence with Mary and her family until late May 1827.<sup>38</sup> While Tennent admitted that he had indeed continued to correspond with the Gray family, he maintained that he done so out of duty, not of love.

Eliza also complained that Mary was still in possession of Tennent's letters, noting that 'so long as she does so [she] considers herself engaged to you'.<sup>39</sup> She was likewise disappointed to learn that Tennent had failed to return small mementos given to him by Mary, including a chain. In a letter dated February 1828, she commanded him to 'return the chain' because his continued wearing of it (unfairly) implied he still harboured feelings for the sender.<sup>40</sup> As indicated by this episode, the rituals of material exchange also played a role in the cessation of relationships. The return of such gifts not only symbolised the termination of a relationship, it cut any ties (both emotional and material) between the gift-giver and recipient.

Interestingly, the Tennent collection reveals how objects were also bestowed upon ex-lovers as a parting gift. Three items in the collection are attributed to a young woman named Hannah McGee: two locks of hair and a broken metal ring. We know that two of the locks of hair belong to Hannah because they bear her name. The first is a neat circular twist of brown hair containing the annotation 'Hair of Hannah McGee' and is dated 1 May 1818 and the other, assembled in a messy un-done plait, is labelled 'September 31, 1820 Sunday, Given me by Hannah McGee'.<sup>41</sup> We are also fortunate that a number of their courtship letters have survived. There are seven letters written between the couple, four from Hannah and three from Tennent, dating to the period between April and July 1821. While a small collection, the letters afford an unrivalled insight into the emotional world of courtship.<sup>42</sup>

Save these items, not a lot of information can be gleaned about Hannah. We can deduce from the letters that she and Tennent appear to have been young sweethearts, striking up an intimate relationship sometime in 1818, when Hannah was almost seventeen years old and Tennent was aged fifteen.<sup>43</sup> The young couple wrote to one and another in the language of love and affection, tinged by their respective desires to keep their relationship hidden from public knowledge. Believing that Hannah's parents would not approve of her relationship with a 'harum scarum youth' like Tennent (a nod to his bad reputation), the pair conducted their courtship in secret.<sup>44</sup> Tennent appears to have been enamoured with Hannah, and he delighted in hearing from others even the smallest scraps of news of her well-being, such as reports from his cousin Theresa of her conversations and movements.<sup>45</sup> In May 1821 Tennent even wrote to Hannah of his desire for marriage, confessing that she was an omnipresent figure in his mind: 'Waking up & sleeping. [A]lone and in company. [Y]ou are present to my thoughts'.<sup>46</sup>

The young couple never progressed to marriage. In July 1821, Hannah wrote a letter to Tennent and ended their relationship, explaining that she feared her father would soon rumble their secret romance.<sup>47</sup> As a parting gift and lasting symbol of their attachment, she enclosed with her missive the token of a broken ring:

I have a little ring which I wore many a day when I was happier than I am at present. I will break it and send you the half of it[.] [E]ver we bejoined it shall be so too if not I at least will remain as it is.<sup>48</sup>

The ring alluded to in the letter is likely the same broken ring that survives in the Tennent collection: a small piece of metal that appears to have been either cut or snapped in half.<sup>49</sup>

Hannah's decision to convey this message with a ring is important when we remember that Tennent had considered marriage. The significance of the ring is further sharpened when we consider its materiality as a folk custom. In folk ballads, tokens were often used to symbolise the strength of romantic attachment, acting as markers of fidelity and trust. As Peter Wood has noted, many folk songs focus on the love between a young couple who seek to be united despite obstacles. Opposition from parents (as in Hannah's case), or estrangement caused by war or military service, caused the young couple to part. A token – most often a ring, was then exchanged to establish the relationship and used for the purposes of reunification.<sup>50</sup> While variants of these 'broken token' songs have been recorded across Britain and Ireland, scholars are uncertain as to whether the ballads reflected social practice. Andrew Rouse, for example, has suggested that broken token ballads refer not to the physical splitting of tokens into two pieces, but to the practice of couples exchanging gimmel rings, also known as linked rings.<sup>51</sup> These tokens were made up of a double (or sometimes triple) link that could be joined together into one solid ring.<sup>52</sup> It was customary practice to split the gimmel ring at betrothal between the persons to be married and their witness. When the marriage took place and the contract was completed, all three parts would be reunited and the ring used in the ceremony itself.<sup>53</sup>

While the ring in the Tennent collection does not appear to be a gimmel ring, the employment of the broken ring suggests that the bestower was at least familiar with the wider folk meanings of broken tokens. Indeed, as Katie Barclay has argued, ballads provide a window into social values and 'even uncover realities'.<sup>54</sup> For Hannah, the broken ring may have symbolised the possibility of reunion, and not the permanent cessation of her attachment to Tennent. As David Bissell has explored in relation to lost objects, the act of reunification 'makes the object more visible, increasing the potential for the object to affectually move others'.<sup>55</sup> Hannah's object of choice was therefore deliberate; the reunification of the ring was a symbol for the rekindling of their relationship.

Yet, Hannah's message to Tennent was not just one of reunification; it was also one of heartbreak. Rings appear in another sub-genre of romantic folk ballads: stories that tell of grief and death. In these ballads, the materiality of objects (usually rings) represented the enduring strength of a romantic relationship. In some ballads, rings lost their lustre and changed in colour in response to the changing emotions or 'dying' love of the bestower.<sup>56</sup> In others, the destruction of rings was used as a plot device to symbolise the cessation of a beating heart. For example, in 'Prince Robert' the protagonist is murdered by his mother for marrying without asking permission. Robert's grieving widow attends the funeral and requests that the ring he wore on his little finger be returned to her possession. The mother-in-law replies that the ring no longer exists, remarking that it 'burst in three' at the moment of Robert's death. At this, the widow leaves, her heart also breaking into three pieces.<sup>57</sup> A similar fate befell the ring wore by the male protagonist in 'Lamkin', who learned that his wife has been murdered when the ring on his finger broke into pieces.<sup>58</sup> Employed as a metaphor for her broken heart, Hannah used an object to symbolise her emotions. Indeed, that the token represented

Hannah's broken self is encapsulated in her resolution to remain broken 'as it [the ring] is' if they were never again joined.<sup>59</sup> Hannah and her broken heart became present in the object.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Re-reading the Tennent collection: a homemade pornographic archive***

Thus far we have discussed how gifts and tokens acted as emotional objects that materialised courtship and its practices. Certain aspects of the Tennent collection, however, suggest that it may have been curated and kept for other purposes. Scholars are in agreement that objects are imbued with multiple layers of meaning, representing different things for different people, and used for different purposes.<sup>61</sup> As Ceri Houlbrook has observed, the 'meanings' ascribed to customs can be as 'varied as the practitioners themselves'.<sup>62</sup>

Reading the Tennent collection solely as a deposit of courtship mementos is problematic because we know neither the biography of each individual item, nor the context in which it was collected, curated and kept. Our first access point is the women who gifted their locks of hair. What different motivations underlay their tokens? Might the same intentions underpin the lock of hair that is intricately woven into a neat plait as that which appears to have been cut unevenly from the head of its owner? The difference in the quality of hair ascribed to Catharine Hyndman and that bearing only the street name 'North Road, Belfast' is stark: the former a neat plait, complete with the name of its owner and dated; the latter, a shapeless mass of hair in a fire-damaged envelope.<sup>63</sup> Contextual detail on the majority of those who bestowed their hair is also largely absent from the Tennent archive. Indeed, at least three of the items are not labelled and it is unclear from whom the hair has been collected.<sup>64</sup> We should not therefore assume that all of the hair was bestowed, curated, and kept with romantic intention.

Other items in the collection appear to lack a romantic connection. Item 5 is made up of a large mass of unshaped hair, packaged in a folded piece of paper that contains what might be directions for medicine.<sup>65</sup> Signed off with 'Dr Curie's best regards', the note advises that a powder should be taken 'every other day in a little spoonful of water about the middle of the day'.<sup>66</sup> With no further contextual information available, the connection between the note, hair and courtship is not immediately clear. Analysing the Tennent collection solely as a source for courtship is therefore superficial, and potentially tells us more about the experiences of those who meet it in the archive than it does the origins of the collection itself. As Laura Peers has noted, the 'active lives' of objects are obscured in the archive and are reinterpreted by those who come into contact with them.<sup>67</sup> While it is true that locks of hair were exchanged as part of courtship rituals, we cannot assume that all those items in the Tennent collection were deposited as a result of such practices.

In her analysis of the Disraeli collection, Hay argued that 'hair in the archive has to be recontextualised through the biography of its collector. Such collections tell the story of its possessor and not that of its originator'.<sup>68</sup> This is likewise a point made by Richard Grassby, who has noted that 'things are often more important for their associations'. In order to access the meaning of objects, we need to know why they were acquired and kept.<sup>69</sup> Our second access point is thus the curator of the collection: Robert James

Tennent. For what reasons did he keep this collection of hair? Untangling Tennent's motivations for curating the collection is difficult. We are faced with many questions. In what ways did he engage with this collection? Where and how did he store it? Was this a private collection, intended for his personal use? Did his wife or anyone else know of its existence?

While homemade hairwork and the curation of hair albums were traditionally regarded as feminine pursuits, this did not mean that men were unable or unwilling to participate in these sentimental practices. Helen Sheumaker's study of hairwork, for example, has revealed how it was fashionable for men to wear watch-chains made of hair. Striking the balance between sentimentality and practicality, watch-chains encompassed the two pillars of middle-class manliness: loyalty to work and fidelity to one's family.<sup>70</sup> Men's engagement with hairwork also took place on a private level too. Some men kept private collections of hair that had been bestowed by their wives, keeping note in their diaries of their emotional engagements with it.<sup>71</sup> It was also not unusual for men to craft emotional objects of their own. As Joanne Begiato's work has demonstrated, men who were absent from home gifted handcrafted objects in order to 'prompt remembrance' in the minds of their loved ones.<sup>72</sup> Soldiers and sailors sewed verses into cigarette silks and made heart-shaped pincushions decorated with beads and pins.<sup>73</sup> Tennent's collection of hair, however, is not in wearable form. Nor does it seem to have been created in order to be a gift to a loved one. What other reason may explain its curation?

A case can be made that the collection acted as a specially curated site of sexual memory, akin to a trophy cabinet, connecting Tennent to his roguish past as a 'harum scarum youth'. As Meghan Roberts has demonstrated in her study of prisoners in revolutionary France, everyday objects (such as butter dishes) were imbued with 'tremendous affective power', transporting the imprisoned emotionally to the 'safe embrace' of their families and homes.<sup>74</sup> I would argue that a similar process was at play here. Tennent's collection makes manifest his carefully curated sexual history. Like the items of homemade and handmade pornography studied by Lisa Siegl, Tennent's collection provides an unique insight into a personal narrative of sexual experience. As Siegl points out, the erotic objects crafted by individuals, from whittled figures to pornographic pamphlets, tell us much about how individuals 'told stories about sexuality in their own idiom'.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, as Maya Wassell Smith has argued, the act of handmaking is 'emotionally transformative' because it invests objects 'with social and emotional agency'.<sup>76</sup> When men crafted objects, they were not 'simply *thinking* through making, but *feeling* through making too'.<sup>77</sup> Tennent's collection of hair can be read in a similar way. While he may have received these objects as part of a courtship custom, his subsequent curation of them altered not only their meaning, but also their meaningfulness. Like notches on a bedpost, the Tennent collection provides an unique insight into how one man understood and documented his sexual experience.<sup>78</sup>

That Tennent returned to this collection of tokens as passports to his bachelorhood is suggested by the labelling and physical state of some of the items. For example, the lock of hair attributed to Miss Catharine Louisa Lawless has been curiously amended to make clear its actual reception date: 'Hair of Catharine Louisa Lawless, 1820, Dublin November 10, 1820 or rather 10 o'clock morning November 11, 1820'.<sup>79</sup> It is not clear why this amendment has been made. One possibility is that the phrasing acted as a veiled indication that Tennent retrieved the hair the morning after a night-time tryst. The

amendment is made in the same ink and the initial date is not crossed out: the phrasing draws attention to the passing of the day. It may also simply reflect a desire to record the context of the gift accurately for posterity. Whatever the reason, the amendment suggests a desire to meticulously record the circumstances the hair was received. The correct curation of the items was clearly important to Tennent. That the collection was used as a way of reconnecting to past memories may also be suggested from the physicality of the items. Tokens were rubbed, stroked and smelled by their owners, tactilely transporting them to places, events and people that held valued memories. It is entirely probable that some of the misshapen and unformed locks of hair in the collection are direct consequences of excessive touch. The hair of Catharine Louisa Lawless, for instance, may have once been formed into a neat plait.

A further question we may ask of the collection is its use. While it is not likely the collection was ever assembled as a 'gift' to another, was it curated solely for private use? Is it possible that others may have been privy to its existence? Given Eliza McCracken's feelings on the retention of courtship gifts and tokens discussed earlier, it is highly likely that Tennent kept the existence of this collection from her notice. A closer inspection of the items reveals that at least two locks of hair were entered into the collection at the same time he was courting his wife. Whereas item 9 in the collection labelled 'Hair of Lucretia Belfast' is dated 13 December 1826, item 15, belonging to Ellen Lepper, is dated 26 June 1827.<sup>80</sup> The hair could potentially stand as evidence of Tennent's roving eye and/or infidelity – matters we can assume he would want to keep from his wife.

It is possible that Tennent may have shared his growing collection with his male friends as a symbol of his fledgling sexuality. As discussed by Wright, Tennent and his friendship group shared ribald stories of flirtations and sexual encounters (both attempted and successful) with various women.<sup>81</sup> All fourteen locks of hair in the collection date to the period before Tennent's marriage to Eliza McCracken, and nine of the items pre-date the beginning of their courtship. Given the nature of the young men's correspondence, it is possible that these locks were kept as trophies which acted as visible evidence of their owner's romantic liaisons.

This point is further strengthened when we consider how deeply embedded hair was in the sexual consciousness of contemporaries during this period. Novels, poetry and song with a sexual element regularly utilised hair as metaphors and plot devices.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, in the mid nineteenth-century, a sexual fetish for hair-cutting was recorded across Germany and France, and was debated at length by psychiatrists and sexologists. Diederik F. Janssen has drawn attention to the case of a man recorded by the nineteenth-century sexologist Emile Laurent (1891), who collected hair from women he 'loved' on his travels across Europe. According to Laurent, the man in question 'carefully labelled and tied [the hair] with silk favours' and claimed that it was 'enough for him to touch or sniff one of [the] locks . . . to immediately evoke the image of the one to which it belonged, to remember the special perfume that she spread and the sensations she gave him'.<sup>83</sup> Hair was imbued with sexual value.

Tennent and his friends were likely aware of the wider cultural associations between hair and sex. J.J. Wright has noted that Tennent and his adolescent friends were not only avid readers of romantic literature in general, they were keen admirers of Byron who was famous for his scandalous private life. As students at the Belfast Academical Institution, the young men would have been well versed in texts that invoked hair as sexual metaphors. For example, they would likely have been familiar with Alexander

Pope's mock-epic, *Rape of the Lock* (1712), the story of which hinges on the forceable cutting of Belinda's coveted hair and acts as an allegory for sexual violence. Tennent and his friends may also have been aware of other literary takes on sexual violence, such as the classical story of Lucretia, whose heralded chastity and virtue was violated by rape.<sup>84</sup> Interestingly, one of the locks of hair in the Tennent collection is labelled simply as 'Hair of Lucretia Belfast' and may point to the owner's knowledge of the story and the literary significance of hair in stories of courtship and sex.<sup>85</sup>

Other evidence that points to the possibility of a shared collection is the medicinal remedy that accompanies item 5.<sup>86</sup> As noted, traditions can be participated in for different reasons. Individuals may participate in a ritual practice but for their own reasons, subverting the tradition in the process. Read in this way, it is possible that the 'gift' of hair with this note is not a gift at all but a tongue-in-cheek reference to venereal disease. The 'remedy' has perhaps been 'prescribed' for the consequences of unrestrained romantic attachment. Hair was commonly included as an ingredient in rituals involving sympathetic magic and in love potions.<sup>87</sup> As the work of Andrew Sneddon has demonstrated, 'remedies, rituals and charms' were employed across nineteenth- and twentieth- century Ireland by individuals who sought help for a range of ailments and complaints.<sup>88</sup> While it is unclear if the remedy was used as a cure for venereal disease, its inclusion with the ball of hair may indicate a shared knowledge of the wider culture of folk medicine and healing in Ireland. The Tennent collection fits into what Lisa Siegl has categorised as 'surprise pornographies': objects that appear to be one thing to an outsider, but which are in fact something else, known only to the creator. They hide 'representations of sex beneath a respectable veneer'.<sup>89</sup> Disguised as a personal collection of mementos, and cloaked in the language of the tradition of gift-giving, Tennent's trophy case bears the hallmarks of a sexual collection that is only discernible to those who are 'in the know'. This may have included his group of male friends, who likewise boasted and bragged of their sexual activities.

## Conclusion

This article has highlighted the explanatory potential of material culture in unlocking the emotional worlds of Irish courtship practices. Courting couples employed objects as they navigated their way towards marriage, using tokens to signify the development of their relationships. Objects were likewise employed as a way of ending those relationships, and gifted items were expected to be returned. At the same time, the Tennent collection brings into sharper focus the challenges in locating individual experiences within these wider social practices. As Woodham et al have pointed out, the difficulty in unlocking and understanding the 'family archive' lies in the fact that it is 'largely intangible'; 'its meaning [is] held between specific individuals'.<sup>90</sup> Each of the sixteen items in the Tennent collection has its own individual story that charts its eventual placement in the archive. Where each item originated, how they ended up in Tennent's possession, and the relationships between bestower and owner are largely unknown. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that objects, like their owners, are multi-authored. As Ceri Houlbrook and Rebecca Shawcross have argued in relation to concealed shoes, objects are shaped by their complex biographies, which change in meaning as they move between their makers, users, finders, keepers and discarders.<sup>91</sup> Our understanding of the Tennent collection is likewise shaped by the complex biographies of the items. The hair

in the collection was imbued with intangible meaning at the moment it was cut from the head of its possessor; when it was transferred to Tennent's possession and curated in his collection, it again shifted in meaning, moving from a gift to an object of memory; and when the hair was accessioned into an archive, it shifted once more from a personal collection of mementos to a public one, devoid of contextual memory. Indeed, the collection is subject to yet more transformations: it is a teaching tool in my family history classes, and it forms the basis of this article. The same process applies to the broken ring.

In order to appreciate the significance of the collection we must instead reimagine it, not as an archive of courtship, but as a site of curated memory. Indeed, as Christiane Holm has argued, it is more important to understand how objects 'sustain acts of memory' through the processes of 'hiding and revealing, absence and presence, anonymity and naming' than it is to know their original contexts.<sup>92</sup> Read in this way, the Tennent collection is better understood as a personal archive of one man's romantic and sexual history. In curating the collection, Tennent engaged in a culturally-sanctioned memento-making tradition but he did so in an individual way. His collection tells us not only about the existence of his past romantic relationships, but those he felt were important enough to memorialise through objects. This does not mean that none of the items were bestowed and curated as objects of affection; rather, it recognises the fact that objects can mean many things to one person and that those meanings are neither static nor inflexible.

## Notes

1. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, hereafter PRONI, D1748/G/802/1-17 Locks of hair of numerous young ladies and a broken ring, 1818–27. There are, in fact, only 16 items in the collection: there is no item with the label number 10.
2. Daisy Hay, 'Hair in the Disraeli Papers: a Victorian Harvest', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19.3 (2014), p. 344.
3. David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1996), pp 263–66; Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 57–98; Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions and Material Culture* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 69–117; Sarah Ann Robin, 'Male Choice and Desire: Material Offerings in Seventeenth-Century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 17:3 (2020), pp. 279–93; Jennine Hurl-Eamon, 'Love Tokens: Objects as Memory for Plebeian Women in Early Modern England', *Early Modern Women*, 6 (2011), pp. 181–86; Laura Gowing, *Domestic dangers: women, words and sex in early modern London* (Oxford, 1996), pp 160–61; Ginger S. Frost, *Promises broken. Courtship, class and gender in Victorian Britain* (Virginia, 1995); Katie Barclay, 'Love and courtship in eighteenth-century Scotland' in Katie Barclay and Deborah Simonton (eds), *Women in eighteenth-century Scotland: intimate, intellectual and public lives* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp 37–54; Katie Barclay, *Love, intimacy and power: marriage and patriarchy in Scotland, 1650–1850* (Manchester, 2011), pp 87–95. The literature on Wales, like Ireland, is not as developed. The recent work of Angela Joy Muir is redressing this gap. See, Angela Joy Muir, *Deviant maternity: illegitimacy in Wales, c. 1680–1800* (London: Routledge, 2020); Angela Joy Muir, 'Courtship, sex and poverty: illegitimacy in eighteenth-century Wales', *Social History*, 43:1 (2018), pp 101–33; Angela Joy Muir, 'Illegitimacy in eighteenth-century Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 26:3 (2013), pp 351–88.
4. Maria Luddy and Mary O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland, 1660–1925* (Cambridge, 2020); Leanne Calvert, "'He Came to her Bed Pretending Courtship": Sex, Courtship and the

- Making of Marriage in Ulster, 1750–1844’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 42:162 (2018), pp. 244–64; Juliana Adelman and Ciaran O’Neill, ‘Love, Consent and the Sexual Script of a Victorian Affair in Dublin’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 29:3 (2020), pp. 388–417; Maeve O’Riordan, *Women of the Country House in Ireland, 1860–1914* (Liverpool, 2018); S. J. Connolly, ‘Family, Love and Marriage: Some Evidence from the Early Eighteenth-Century’, in Margaret MacCurtain & Mary O’Dowd (eds) *Women in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1991), pp. 276–291; Orla Fitzpatrick, ‘The Material Culture of Marriage: What Wedding Gifts Can Tell Us About 1940s Dublin’, *Éire-Ireland*, 46:1–2 (2011), pp. 177–93; Jacqueline Borsje, ‘On Love Charms in Early Medieval Ireland’, *Peritia*, 21 (2010), pp. 172–90; Salvador Ryan (ed.), *Marriage and the Irish: A Miscellany* (Dublin, 2019).
5. Luddy and O’Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland*, p. 4.
  6. Liza Foley, ‘“Gloves of the Very Thin Sort”: Gifting Limerick Gloves in the Late-Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth Century’ in Charlotte Nicklas and Anabella Pollen (eds), *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practice* (London, 2015), pp 33–47; *idem*, ‘From Hide to Hand: the Leather Glove as Material and Metaphor in Polite English Culture, ca. 1730 to 1820’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, 2018).
  7. Linda M. Ballard, *Forgetting Frolic: Marriage Traditions in Ireland* (London, 1998); Margaret Humphreys, ‘Gender Relationships, Matching and Marriage Customs in an Irish Rural Community’, *Folk Life*, 48:1 (2010), pp. 13–34; C. Ó Danachair, ‘Marriage in Irish Folk Tradition’ in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin, 1985), pp. 99–115.
  8. Sarah Anne Bendall, *Shaping femininity. Foundation garments, the body and women in early modern England* (Bloomsbury, 2022), p. 213; *idem*, ‘“To write a distick upon it”: busks and the language of courtship and sexual desire in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England’ *Gender & History*, 26:2 (2014), p. 207.
  9. Jeffrey R. Watt, ‘Love magic and the inquisition: a case from seventeenth-century Italy’, *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 41:3 (2010), pp 675–89.
  10. Katie Barclay and Sally Holloway (eds), ‘Special Issue. Interrogating Romantic the Love’, *Cultural and Social History*, 17:3 (2020).
  11. Sally Holloway, ‘Love, Custom and Consumption: Valentine’s Day in England, c. 1660– 1830’, *Cultural and Social History*, 17:3 (2020), p. 296.
  12. Katie Barclay and Sally Holloway, ‘Interrogating Romantic Love’, *Cultural and Social History*, 17:3 (2020), pp. 272–73; Katie Barclay, ‘Doing the Paperwork: the Emotional World of Wedding Certificates’, *Cultural and Social History*, 17:3 (2020), p. 316.
  13. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 10–11.
  14. Lucy M. Long, ‘Introduction’, in *idem* (ed.), *The Food and Folklore Reader* (London, 2015), p. 13.
  15. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, p. 11.
  16. J.J. Wright, *The Natural Leaders” and their World: Politics, Culture and Society in Belfast, c. 1801–1832* (Liverpool, 2012); *idem*, ‘Love, loss and learning in late Georgian Belfast: the case of Eliza McCracken’, in David Hayton and Andrew Holmes, eds., *Ourselves Alone? Religion, Society and Politics in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2016), pp. 169–91; *idem*, ‘Robert Hyndman’s Toe: Romanticism, Schoolboy Politics and the Affective Revolution in Late Georgian Belfast’, in Catherine Cox and Susannah Riordan, eds., *Adolescence and Youth in Modern Irish History* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 15–41; Leanne Calvert, ‘“Your Marage Will Make a Change With Them All .. When You Get Another Family”: Illegitimate Children, Parenthood and Siblinghood in Ireland, c. 1759–1832’, *English Historical Review* (forthcoming, 2022); *idem*, ‘“Do Not Forget Your Bit Wife”: Love, Marriage and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in Irish Presbyterian Marriages, c. 1780– 1850’, *Women’s History Review*, 26 (2017), pp. 433–54; *idem*, ‘“What a Wonderful Change Have I Undergone .. So Altered in Stature, Knowledge & Ideas!”: Apprenticeship, Adolescence and Growing Up in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, *Irish Economic and Social History*, 45 (2018), pp. 70–89; *idem*, ‘The journal of John Tennent, 1786–90’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 43 (2012), pp. 69–128; W.A. Maguire, ‘Banker and Absentee Landowner: William Tennent in County Fermanagh, 1813–32’, *Clogher Record*, xiv (1993), pp. 7–28; W.A. Maguire, ‘William Tennent (1760–1832)’ in J. Maguire and J. Quinn, eds., *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols., Cambridge, 2009).
  17. Wright, ‘Robert Hyndman’s toe’, pp. 20–24

18. Maria Luddy and Mary O'Dowd have suggested that a 'conservative' estimate of 10% of all brides in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries were pregnant on their wedding day. Luddy and O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland*, p. 149.
19. Calvert, ' "He came to her bed"', p. 246; S. J. Connolly, 'Illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy in Ireland before 1864: the evidence of some Catholic parish registers', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 11 (1979), p. 10; Elaine Farrell, 'A most diabolical deed': *Infanticide and Irish society, 1850–1900* (Manchester, 2013), p. 18.
20. Calvert, ' "He came to her bed"', pp 245–4; Luddy and O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland*, 151; Farrell, 'A most diabolical deed': *Infanticide and Irish society, 1850–1900* (Manchester, 2013), p.18; *idem*, "'Infanticide of the ordinary character': an overview of the crime in Ireland, 1850–1900", *Irish Economic and Social History*, 39 (2012), p. 59; James Kelly, ' "An unnatural crime": infanticide in early nineteenth-century Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 46:1 (2019), 66–110.
21. Calvert, ' "Your marage will make a change to them all" '.
22. Wright, 'Natural Leaders', p. 187.
23. Luddy and O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland*, p. 140.
24. O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, pp 57–98; Cressy, *Birth, marriage and death*, p. 263.
25. Holloway, *Game of love in Georgian England*, p. 69.
26. J.J. Wright has noted that the exact date of Eliza's birth is unknown and cannot be confirmed with church baptismal sources. See, Wright, 'Love, loss', pp. 171–72.
27. Correspondence of Robert James Tennent to Eliza McCracken, 1827–50 (D1748/H/46/ 1-205) and Correspondence of Eliza McCracken and Robert James Tennent, 1826–50 D1748/G/378/1-301.
28. Wright, 'Love, loss', p. 181.
29. *Ibid*, pp. 169–91.
30. *Ibid*, pp. 178–180.
31. PRONI, D1748/G/378/10 Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 10 September 1827.
32. PRONI, D1748/G/802/17 'Eliza. Where is the Bosom friend dearer than all, [10 September 1827].
33. PRONI, D1748/G/378/8, Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 1 September 1827.
34. Holloway, *Game of love*, p.70.
35. PRONI, D1748/G/378/10 Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 10 September 1827.
36. PRONI, D1748/H/46/7A&7B Robert James Tennent to Eliza McCracken, n.d.
37. PRONI, D1748/G/378/11 Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 14 September 1827.
38. See, PRONI, D1748/G/378/20B; 21A&21B Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 28 November 1827; 21 December 1827. The 'friend' who passed this information to Eliza was Fanny Ferar, an acquaintance also of Mary Gray.
39. PRONI, D1748/G/378/21A&21B, Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 21 December 1827.
40. PRONI, D1748/G/378/23 Eliza McCracken to Robert James Tennent, 9 February 1828. Emphasis retained from original letter.
41. PRONI, D1748/G/802/6;11 Hair of Hannah McGee, 1 May 1818; 3 September 1820.
42. PRONI, D1748/G/407/1-7 Letters between Hannah McGee and Robert James Tennent.
43. These ages have been estimated from the earliest dated courtship memento given to Robert by Hannah on 1 May 1818. It is possible to estimate Hannah's age from a hand-written note referring to her twentieth birthday, which was recorded as being 18 May 1821, making her almost seventeen years of age in 1818. Robert, we know was born in 1803, and he would have been 15 years old in 1818. See PRONI, D1748/G/407/3 Hannah McGee to Robert James Tennent, 18 May 1821.
44. PRONI, D1748/G/407/1 Hannah McGee to Robert James Tennent, 2 April 1821; PRONI, D1748/G/407/5 Robert James Tennent to Hannah McGee, May-Jun. 1821.
45. PRONI, D1748/G/407/5 Robert James Tennent to Hannah McGee, May-Jun. 1821.
46. *Ibid*.
47. PRONI, D1748/G/650/1 Katherine Templeton to Hannah McGee, 7 January 1821; PRONI, D1748/G/407/6 Hannah McGee to Robert James Tennent, 12 July 1821.

48. PRONI, D1748/G/407/6 Hannah McGee to Robert James Tennent, 12 July 1821.
49. PRONI, D1748/G/802/16 Half a broken ring, c. 12 July 1821.
50. Peter Wood, 'The unrecognized returning lover and broken-token songs. A survey', *Folk Music Journal*, 12:1 (2020), p. 14; Broken tokens feature in the work of Robert Burns, such as his 1789 poem 'I love my love in secret'. An Irish variant of this genre, collected in in Ballymacaldrick, Dunloy, County Down is 'Lurgan Town'. See, Gale Huntington (ed.), *Sam Henry's songs of the people* (Athens, Georgia, 1990), p. 316.
51. Andrew Rouse, 'Songs of separation, non-recognition and uniting', *From folklore to folk music: on memory* (2018), pp 105–07.
52. Robert Chambers, *The book of days. A miscellany of popular antiques in connection with the calendar* (Edinburgh, 2 vols, 1863), volume 1, p. 220. Chambers includes a number of illustrations of these rings, see pp. 220–21.
53. Chambers, *Book of days*, p. 220.
54. Katie Barclay, "'And four years space, being man and wife, they lovingly agreed": balladry and early modern understandings of marriage' in Elizabeth Ewan and Janay Nugent (eds), *Finding the family in medieval and early modern Scotland* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), p. 25.
55. David Bissell, 'Inconsequential Materialities: The Movement of Lost Effects', *Space and Culture*, 12:1 (2009), p. 109.
56. 'Bonny Bee Hom' tells the story of a woman who bestowed her military lover a ring that had the power to keep him safe while away. The lustre of the ring also reflected the strength of their attachment, and its 'fade or stain' or change to 'another hue' was said to symbolise the death of the bestower. In the month following his departure, the man noticed that the stone of the gold ring had turned 'riven', and within the space of three months it had turned 'black and ugly' and 'burst in three' pieces. Realising that she had 'died for love of me', the man also perished – the cause of death in one variant being a broken heart. See, Francis James Child (ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular ballads, part 4* (London, 1886), pp. 317–18.
57. Child, *English and Scottish Popular ballads*, pp. 284–287.
58. *Ibid*, p. 328.
59. PRONI, D1748/G/407/6 Hannah McGee to Robert James Tennent, 12 July 1821.
60. Bissell, 'Inconsequential Materialities', p. 110.
61. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, 'Introduction. Writing Material Culture History' in *idem* (eds), *Writing Material Culture History* (London, 2014), p. 2.
62. Ceri Houlbrook, 'The Mutability of Meaning: Contextualizing the Cumbrian Coin-Tree', *Folklore*, 125:1 (2014), p. 41.
63. PRONI, D1748/G/802/2 Hair of Catherine Hyndman, 23 October 1822; PRONI, D1748/G/802/7 'Tennent Esq North Road'.
64. The following are unidentified: PRONI, D1748/G/802/1; 5; 7.
65. PRONI, D1748/G/802/7 'Tennent Esq. North Road'.
66. *Ibid*.
67. Laura Peers, 'Strands Which Refuse to Be Braided. Hair Samples from Beatrice Blackwood's Ojibwe Collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum', *Journal of Material Culture*, 8:1 (2003), p. 76.
68. Hay, 'Hair in the Disraeli Papers', p. 336.
69. Richard Grassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35:4 (2005), p. 595.
70. Helen Sheumaker, *Love Entwined: the Curious History of Hairwork in America* (Pennsylvania, 2007), p. 136.
71. *Ibid*, p. 134. See also, Ila A. Wright, 'Hair watch chains and flowers', *Western Folklore*, 18:2 (Apr., 1959), pp 114–117.
72. Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain, 1760–1900. Bodies, Emotion and Material Culture* (Manchester, 2020), p. 145.
73. *Ibid*.
74. Meghan K. Roberts, 'Laclós's Objects of Affection: Venerating the Family During the French Revolution', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 51:3 (2018), p. 292.

75. Lisa Z. Sigel, 'Handmade and Homemade Vernacular Expressions of American Sexual History', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 25:3 (2016), pp. 440, 459.
76. Maya Wassell Smith, '“The Fancy Work what Sailors Make”: Material and Emotional Creative Practice in Masculine Seafaring Communities', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 14:2 (2018), p. 3.
77. *Ibid*, p. 6.
78. Deborah Cameron, 'Naming of Parts: Gender, Culture, and Terms for the Penis Among American College Students', *American Speech*, 67:4 (1992), p. 376.
79. PRONI, D1748/G/802/3 Hair of Catharine Louisa Lawless, 1820.
80. PRONI, D1748/G/802/9;15 Hair of Lucretia, Belfast and Hair of Ellen Lepper, Holywood.
81. Wright, 'Robert Hyndman's big toe', pp. 27–34.
82. Holloway, *Game of love*, pp 69–70.
83. Emile Laurent, *L'Amour morbide* (Paris, 1891). Quoted in Diederik F. Janssen, 'Rape of the lock: note on nineteenth-century hair fetishists', *History of Psychiatry*, 30:4 (2019), pp 473–74.
84. William Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), and Thomas Heywood's *The rape of Lucrece* (1608) are two examples.
85. PRONI, D1748/G/802/9 Hair of Lucretia, 1826.
86. PRONI, D1748/G/802/5 Unidentified hair, n.d.
87. Jacqueline Borsje, 'Love magic in medieval Irish penitentials, law and literature: a dynamic perspective', *Studia Neophilologica*, 84:1 (2012), pp 6–23; Watt, 'Love magic'.
88. Andrew Sneddon, 'Gender, Folklore and Magical Healing in Ireland, 1852–1922' in, Jyoti Atwal, Ciara Breathnach, Sarah Ann Buckley (eds), *Gender and History: Ireland 1852–1922* (Routledge India, open access, forthcoming). I am grateful to Andrew for sharing the unpublished version of this with me. See also, *idem*, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015).
89. Siegl, 'Handmade', p. 452.
90. Anna Woodham, Laura King, Liz Gloyn, Vicky Crewe and Fiona Blair, 'We Are What We Keep: the “Family Archive”, Identity, and Public/Private Heritage', *Heritage & Society*, 10:3 (2017), p. 206.
91. Ceri Houlbrook and Rebecca Shawcross, 'Revealing the Ritually Concealed: Custodians, Conservators, and the Concealed Shoe', *Material Religion*, 14:2 (2018), p. 169; Ceri Houlbrook, '“The Stone Axe From Way Back”: a Mutable Magical Object in Folklore and Fiction', *Folklore*, 130:2 (2019), p. 192.
92. Christiane Holm, 'Sentimental cuts: eighteenth-century mourning jewelry with hair', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38:1 (2004), p. 140.

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