



The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel

Elaine Freedgood

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The Ideas in Things explores apparently inconsequential objects in popular Victorian texts to make contact with their fugitive meanings. Developing an innovative approach to analyzing nineteenth-century fiction, Elaine Freedgood reconnects the things readers unwittingly ignore to the stories they tell. Building her case around objects from three well-known Victorian novels—Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, and Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*—Freedgood argues that these things are connected to histories that the novels barely acknowledge, generating darker meanings outside the novels’ symbolic systems. A valuable contribution to the field of object studies, *The Ideas in Things* pushes readers’ thinking about things beyond established concepts of commodity and fetish.

“Ultimately, what Freedgood generates is far more than a new set of readings of key Victorian texts. In her important project of recuperating the meaning of things, Freedgood demonstrates the considerable delights and rewards of literal-mindedness.”—*Victorian Studies*

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