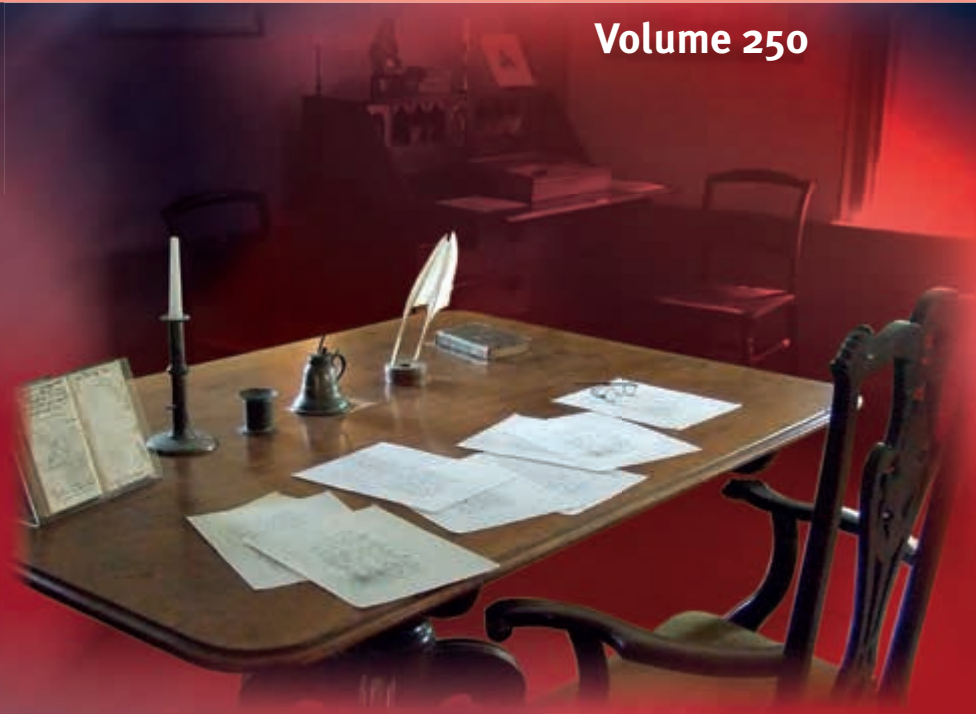
KLARA STEPHANIE SZLEZÁK

“Canonized in History”

Literary Tourism and 19th-Century Writers’ Houses in New England

American Studies ★ A Monograph Series

Volume 250



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Picture of the desk in the second-floor study of
Herman Melville's Arrowhead, Pittsfield, Massachusetts.
Courtesy of the Berkshire County Historical Society.
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In grenzenloser Dankbarkeit für

Luise und Edith Szlezák

In liebendem Andenken an

Lajos Szlezák und Anna Maier

"All about are buildings destined to be called historic when their beauty, their type, or their experience has been left in loneliness by the winnowing of time. Here and there also are buildings already canonized in history. These are part of our inheritance […], and they come down the years to us bearing messages. To recognize and understand such buildings is our birthright, and to protect them is our duty."

Laurence Vail Coleman, *Historic House Museums* 3

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Klara Stephanie Szlezák
Regensburg, April 2015

Prelude

A decade ago I first set foot into a 19th-century writer's house in New England. As a student and teaching assistant at Williams College, in the beautiful Berkshires, I took daytrips on the weekends to visit places such as Herman Melville's Arrowhead in Pittsfield or Emily Dickinson's home in Amherst for the first time, not even faintly imagining I would revisit these places as a doctoral candidate years later. Back then I was "just" a literary tourist, participating in the same phenomenon that ten years later I would analyze from a cultural studies perspective. Back then I was driven by a genuine interest in those locales, which stemmed from my reading of and my admiration for the texts written in these places. When I returned, my interest additionally stemmed from the academic field in which I was earning a degree.

Turning these houses and the contexts surrounding them into a topic of research has fundamentally changed the way in which I look at these houses. Looking at them critically with the tools of observation and analysis that the academic discipline provides has opened up angles and facets of which I had previously not been aware. At the same time, this way of looking at them has taken away some of the immediacy or intuition of my original, academically more unreflected gaze. And yet, it has not broken my fascination with these sites; rather, it has diversified my fascination with them.

Researching this topic, and in the process benefiting from the tremendous hospitality and helpfulness that I encountered at the majority of these houses, I was allowed to glimpse "behind the scenes" and see things and have experiences that otherwise would have been barred from me. Working through museum files on the third floor of Emily Dickinson's home was one such experience. There were many more of them. It has shown me that a critical distance and a discerning and analytical approach to these houses is reconcilable with an appreciation of the charms that they have for the visitors who come to these houses seeking neither criticism nor analysis.

***

1 Introduction: New England Writers' Houses—Cradles of American Literature?

Before long, Chicago will count another major museum among the points of attraction in its city center, when The American Writers Museum will open its doors to the public. The founder and president of The American Writers Museum Foundation, Dr. Malcolm O'Hagan, came up with the idea, initiated the fund-raising for his enterprise, and chose Chicago as its location. In 2011, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that O'Hagan decided in favor of Chicago for two major reasons: the city's potential to attract large(r) numbers of visitors and conventioneers as well as its "'rich literary tradition and culture'" (O'Hagan, qtd. in Jones). But before favoring Illinois's metropolitan center, O'Hagan had plans to "house the museum in New England, the cradle of American literature" (Jones). In the eyes of its founder and board of directors, the museum will fill a major gap in the U.S. museum landscape: "Although there are many wonderful *small* museums that commemorate the lives of individual writers, almost unbelievably, there is not a single museum dedicated to the history of American literature and to American writers" (*AmericanWritersMuseum.org*; emphasis in the original).

Even before its launch, The American Writers Museum testifies to the significance of literary tourism in contemporary American culture.[1] Founding a museum is a big venture under any circumstances, but especially so in times of heightened economic insecurity and instability. Personal enthusiasm for American literature alone is hardly a sufficient basis to initiate such a project; only reliable and adequate sources of funding and the prospect of broad public interest can provide sufficiently solid foundations to start from. The launch of The American

[1] In *Destination Culture*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has pointed out the dynamics underlying the connection between museums and the tourism industry (131-76). Put simply, museums provide the destinations and attractions that tourism needs, and tourism provides the visitors that museums need. Developments in one field are thus bound to reverberate on the other. Seeing that both are interdependent, I will treat museum and tourism phenomena in conjunction.

Writers Museum must build on both of these components, i.e., financial security and an audience for the project, which suggests that literary tourism cannot be regarded as a negligible branch of tourism in the United States. Its economic profitability or more accurately, especially in the case of smaller museums, its sustainability in addition to its cultural and educational values shifts literary tourism to the fore of American cultural tourism.

Furthermore, The American Writers Museum, prior to its actual opening, exposes two major trends that may shape the future of the American museum landscape. Firstly, the decision to establish the museum in Chicago—"'a large metropolitan city with a rich literary tradition and culture'" and "'a destination city for both tourists and conventioneers'" (O'Hagan, qtd. in Jones)—illustrates the tendency toward a centralization of cultural venues. In contrast to smaller literary museums in more remote, rural areas, an urban location does not require long trips to the sites of attraction and integrates the museum into an inner-city complex of cultural-touristic attractions. It thus no longer caters to a target group that comes for the museum specifically but rather to a target group that visits the museum in the context of a varied sightseeing program.

Secondly, The American Writers Museum approaches its subject matter—American literature—in a specific way. The exhibition follows a survey concept: next to a number of special exhibits, the museum's "core exhibits will provide a chronological overview of the history of American literature. This will be the intellectual foundation of the museum" (*AmericanWritersMuseum.org*). Again, such an approach promises to attract a broad audience. Visitors to the museum do not need to be devotees of one writer or enthusiasts for one literary work specifically. They come to one place, pay an entrance fee once, and get access to a wide range of themes related to American literature. While these tendencies certainly befit a global tourism landscape in which commodities come to play an increasingly big part in the cultural experience, there are both upsides and downsides to this development. From an economic vantage point, these tendencies are entirely plausible: the financial risk involved in opening a museum decreases with a widening potential audience, and the integration in an urban tourism network offers opportunities for support and cooperation. Yet, skeptics of these tendencies might voice concern about the loss of individuality

and especially the loss of spatial particularity. Large museums with encompassing thematic offers might endanger the existence of smaller, more specialized museums, and what would disappear with these small museums is a whole range of unique cultural markers and experiences.

The following study of American literary tourism in its selection of location and scope deviates from the course taken by The American Writers Museum. In contrast to The American Writers Museum, this study will direct attention (back) to what is sometimes called "the cradle of American literature" (Jones), to New England, and will take a closer look at some of these "many wonderful *small* museums that commemorate the lives of individual writers" (*AmericanWritersMuseum.org*; emphasis in original). With the opening of The American Writers Museum approaching, turning toward the small New England museums seems a necessary and worthwhile task. If, as Jones put it, New England is presumed to be the metaphoric cradle of American literature, then these small individual writers' museums can be seen as the metaphoric cradles of American literature on a small scale.

Yet New England is not, in itself, a homogenous entity that would offer the same conditions for museums across all of its states, counties, and cities, in terms of infrastructure, funding, and visitor flows; nor do small writers' museums represent a simple counterpart to a more comprehensive museum. These small museums are in fact vastly different in their approach to the display of individual writers' lives and works. The major purpose of this study is to bring out the many facets that mark the field in its entirety and to demonstrate at the same time the diversity within literary tourism at writers' houses in New England, a phenomenon that is far from homogenous.

Studying museums—their operational and artifactual actualities, their exhibition practices, their narrative strategies—seems particularly rewarding in an era of "lively debates about the death of museums, ascendancy of tourism, production of heritage, limits of multiculturalism, social efficacy of the arts, and circulation of value in the life world" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1), all of which bears upon literary tourism at writers' houses in New England. Sabine Coelsch-Foisner and Douglas Brown's recent essay collection *The Museal Turn* (2012) proposes the term "museal turn" in cultural studies to describe the heightened interest in and extended study of "the dynamics of contemporary museum culture," noting that the "museal turn" is

> crucially polarised between some of present-day culture's most pressing dichotomies: loss and conservation, private and public, self and other, high and popular, individual and collective, learning and entertainment, fact and fiction, authority and democracy, demand and offer. It is in this complex that we understand the 'museal turn': the museum as negotiator between these various dichotomies, both as a cultural institution and as a mode of negotiation. (Coelsch-Foisner 12-13)

All of these dichotomies pertain to the study of writers' houses in New England: their histories are marked by instances of successful and failed preservation; they offer an encounter with the "past other"; they create narratives that simultaneously focus on the individual and consider regional and/or national collectivities; they have been subject to partly conflictual reconciliations between the private and the public, and between "high-brow" and popular culture, both of which ultimately hinge on questions of authority and democracy; they try to juggle visitors' demands; their appeal considerably derives from the oscillation between fact and fiction; and they try to balance the educational and recreational facets of their missions.

Although writers' houses in New England might appear to be a fairly restricted field, both geographically and thematically, they in fact offer wide-ranging materials for study—so wide-ranging that further restrictions are necessary. The geographical and thematic limitations are complemented by a temporal-thematic: only houses in New England in which mid-19th-century writers once lived were integrated into the study. While the vast majority of the processes and subjects that this study investigates have unfolded in the 20th and 21st centuries, what has been put on display is the mid-19th century.[2] The 19th century as a theme for museum display makes it possible to combine a broad range of interrelated contexts specific to this historical era, which proves

[2] While some of the 19th-century writers whose houses are open to the public in New England today either started their careers in the early 19th century or were productive well into the late 19th century, the majority produced their masterpieces in the middle decades of the century, which shall be the time frame of particular interest here; yet, for reasons of simplicity, I will speak of "19th-," rather than "mid-19th-century writers" in the following.

particularly fruitful for the questions that this study aims to tackle.[3]

These restrictions, however, still leave a potential corpus of fourteen houses: the Wadsworth-Longfellow House in Portland and the Sarah Orne Jewett House in South Berwick, both in Maine; the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace in Haverhill, the John Greenleaf Whittier Home in Amesbury, the Longfellow House–Washington's Headquarters in Cambridge, Emerson's Home, the Old Manse, The Wayside, and Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House in Concord,[4] the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst, William Cullen Bryant's Homestead in Cummington, and Herman Melville's Arrowhead in Pittsfield, all of which are located in Massachusetts; the Mark Twain House and the Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Hartford, Connecticut.[5] Out of this wide range of options, I have selected three houses which serve to illustrate certain thematic complexes in more detail: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's house in Cambridge, Emily Dickinson's house in Amherst, and Herman Melville's house in Pittsfield.[6]

[3] Selecting a different historical era would certainly be equally fruitful but would create different contexts and generate different questions.

[4] For reasons of simplicity, whenever I talk about Concord in the following, I will be referring to Concord, Massachusetts. Noticeably, sites commemorating Henry David Thoreau are missing from the literary sites listed for Concord. This is due to the fact that this study is concerned with historic houses that can be toured. For an intriguing analysis of the 'Thoreauvian Pilgrimages' to Walden Pond, see Buell's eponymous article. I have explored the present-day diversity of Thoreau tourism in Concord elsewhere ("Keeping").

[5] This list necessitates two clarifying remarks. First, Edith Wharton and Robert Frost, although they were born in the 19th century and had houses in New England that are open to the public today, are not included since I hesitate to consider them 19th-century writers, seeing as their major works date from the early 20th century. Secondly, other 19th-century writers' houses, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's house in Brunswick, ME, or James Russell Lowell's Elmwood in Cambridge, MA, are excluded since, though they are still standing, they cannot be toured; visitability was thus another selection criterion.

[6] Even though all three case studies are located in Massachusetts, I will speak of 'New England writers' houses' throughout the study. Thomas J. Brown predicted in 2000 that Massachusetts "will likely remain a crucial place for the exploration of American memory" (n.pag.); and with respect to the time period reflected in the houses, i.e., the mid-19th century, Stephen Nissenbaum claims

Undertaking a study on literary tourism in New England with a focus on 19th-century writers' houses and not including as a central point of interest in this study the town of Concord, at first glance might appear to be a daring idea. Yet, once initial hesitations were set aside, excluding sites in Concord proved to be a decisive step toward determining the final corpus. Three arguments supported this decision. Firstly, it seemed as if Concord, being so prominently associated with literary tourism, already attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention.[7] Concord looms large in authors' and scholars' consciousness and its grounds seemed (to be in the process of being) covered by literary and cultural scholars. Secondly, and following from the first argument, Concord's centrality and its status as the American "literary mecca" entail the risk of marginalizing other, equally noteworthy literary sites in New England. The probable neglect of writers' houses outside of Concord was incentive enough to direct the gaze away from the center towards other locations. This does not mean that no previous studies on literary tourism outside of Concord exist; however, Concord undoubtedly monopolizes the discourse on New England literary tourism, and studies that link houses outside of Concord are scarce. Finally, despite its manifold literary associations, Concord might not be the best place to study New England literary tourism. Due to the town's high density of tourist sites, many of which are unrelated to literary history, it is not transparent to what extent tourists who visit Concord's writers' houses have originally come to Concord for that purpose, and the actual role of

that "by [then] [the pastoral heart of New England] had shifted [from Connecticut] to Massachusetts" (39). Still, most observations made here are applicable to houses in New England outside of Massachusetts, and most of the issues discussed here are not specific to Massachusetts, but set within a larger New England context.

[7] For instance, Patricia West dedicates a chapter in her book *Domesticating History* (1999) to the Alcotts' house; Susan Cheever explores the history of Concord and its writers by investigating their personal relationships (*American Bloomsbury*; 2006); Robert A. Gross sets Concord tourism in relation to Transcendentalism; the only New England writers' houses that Anne Trubek discusses in her *Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses* (2011) are the ones in Concord (see ch. 4, "The Concord Pilgrimage").

literary tourism is thus hard to determine.[8] That tourists happen upon writers' houses is not rare nor by any means particular to Concord; "Many patronize heritage sites in general," David Herbert observes, "and see literary places as part of that wider experience" (326). For instance, people who come to the Berkshires to attend the Tanglewood festival or to see a more lavishly decorated writer's house, Edith Wharton's The Mount, may stop by at Melville's house on the way. Yet in no other New England town, it seems, are writers' houses in such immediate vicinity of other highly attractive tourist sites. For example, Hawthorne's Old Manse literally lies within a stone's throw of the North Bridge. One of the earliest texts to mention New England writers' houses, the article "The Homes of America: Some New England Houses III," published in *The Art Journal* in 1878, remarks on the multifaceted attractiveness of Concord:

> […] Concord […] enjoys a triple fame; that of having been one of the spots where the first collision took place between the British and the Revolutionary patriots, the home of a remarkable group of philosophers and men of letters, and one of the prettiest and most attractive towns in New England. Its repose, its shaded streets, its neat old-time houses […] have a charm of their own, apart from the distinction it has received from the doughty struggle of '75, and the fact that it has been the home of geniuses like Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau. (164)

The "triple fame" persists to this day and makes it hard to assess literary tourism in a context that is so profoundly influenced by other branches of tourism.

[8] The tourist sites associated with the Revolutionary War are spread all over Concord; the predominant points of attraction, battlefields and structures, are part of the Minute Man National Historical Park. Hawthorne's second home in Concord, The Wayside, serves as a good example to illustrate the issue: when the historic house was up for sale in the 1960s, no one stepped up right away to buy it and it faced severe deterioration. Finally, the National Park Service bought it, saved it from decay, and it was integrated into the Minute Man National Historical Park—despite the fact that the house, even though it dates further back than Hawthorne's days, was not an important locale during the Revolutionary era.

When looking for case studies outside of Concord, the principal criterion for selection was diversity—the study was to take into account the breadth of factors, however slight, influencing the way literary sites in New England look and function today. This diversity manifested itself in four rather distinct areas. First of all, to avoid a clustering of sites, geographical location mattered. Picking houses that were scattered across the state increased the probability that respective local conditions would reflect on the houses. Indeed, Cambridge, Amherst, and Pittsfield are diverse places in terms of demographics, infrastructure, and tourism networks, all of which had and have an impact on the houses. Moreover, the diversity of the houses' histories appeared as a crucial factor. Depending on the duration of the writers' residence in the houses and depending on what happened to the houses before and after their residence, operators and visitors find themselves in entirely different circumstances. The houses' histories delimit to a significant degree their operators' possibilities in presenting the houses and the visitors' experiences at the houses. With the historical development of a house evolve also its physical appearance as well as the scope and kind of narratives it presents. A third domain in which the diversity among the houses has far-reaching implications is their present-day mode of operation. Different operators deal with historic houses differently: they formulate different mission statements, handle the house with varying degrees of professionalization, and work with different budgetary constraints, all of which shapes decision-making. A national organization, a college, and a local historical society can have decidedly different agendas. Finally, the houses can be contrasted according to a criterion that relates less directly to the houses themselves: the reception of the writers. Ultimately, the degree of familiarity and popularity among the audience that a writer enjoys influences the development of the house and the presentation of both house and writer to visitors. A writer's success with the readership and the critics, diachronically and synchronically, is always of relevance to the public space that his or her house has become or is about to become.

This last criterion should, however, not distort the approach and the goals of this study. First and foremost, this is a study about houses. It is not a literary study but a study that projects to explore how literature materializes in specific domestic settings, how literature interrelates with a myriad of other themes that relate to specific historic houses, and how

this interrelation opens up a host of meanings for present-day visitors, communicated through and modified by historically grown museum displays, museum narratives, and interpreter-visitor interaction. This study will proceed from a first, theoretical and conceptual chapter to three chapters that, with the help of case studies, shift the spotlight to particular issues raised in a general context in chapter one.

2 Literary Tourism and 19th-Century Writers' Houses in New England: Contexts, Perspectives, Implications

Once a house that was formerly occupied by a celebrated writer is turned into a visitable site, it is made available for literary tourism. A writer's house, just as any historic house once it has become visitable, is a site harboring multiple sights. Some of these sights distinctly relate to literary culture and thus qualify the site for literary tourism. Others bear no immediate relation to literary culture and still add to the cultural and touristic[9] appeal of the site. The following theoretical reflections will revolve around this connection between literary tourism and what Bella Dicks has coined as "visitability." Both phenomena intersect, overlap, and enter into a dialogue in 19th-century writers' houses in New England.

2.1 Literary Tourism: Definitions, Variants, and Development

Handbooks and surveys on tourism studies offer definitions of literary tourism, which try to capture the phenomenon in its essentials. The entry in the 2010 volume *Key Concepts in Tourist Studies* characterizes literary tourism as "tourism activity that is motivated by interest in an author, a literary creation or setting, or the literary heritage of a destination" (Smith, MacLeod, and Robertson 108). In the *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, published in 2000, literary tourism is defined in very similar terms as "a form of tourism in which the primary motivation for visiting

[9] In the epilogue to the 1989 edition of his highly influential work *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell ponders on the precise meaning of the adjective "touristic": "[the] trouble with the term 'touristic' is that it tries to crowd the line between different kinds of thought and behavior; between human curiosity and desire to share experience on the one side, and attempts to profit from that curiosity and desire on the other" (189). As this is not the place to further reflect on the problematic nature of the term, I will use it merely in the sense of "relating to tourism."

specific locations is related to an interest in literature" (Butler 360). While such definitions direct attention to what motivates literary tourists, they fail to see that an interest in writers and their works is not sufficient to initiate literary tourism. Nicola J. Watson proposes a shorter but more useful definition when she describes literary tourism as "the interconnected practices of visiting and marking sites associated with writers and their works" (Introduction 2). Watson integrates the perspectives of both visitors *and* operators when she points out that sites need to be "marked" in order to be visited and identifies the basic dualism of the writers' biographies and their works as subjects of display.

In their 2002 collection *Literature and Tourism*, especially in the first two essays, Mike Robinson and Hans Christian Andersen offer a comprehensive approach to the multiple connections between literature and tourism, taking into account various kinds of literature and various manifestations of tourist responses to literature. Robinson and Andersen point out that literary tourism comprises "the consumption, production, re-production, commodification, transformation, communication, and distribution of literature for tourism purposes" (2), highlighting the commercial side of the phenomenon: visiting and making sites involves to varying degrees appropriation, (com)modification, and the workings of supply and demand.

Literary tourism is by no means limited to writers' houses. Besides homes of both living and dead writers, destinations include actual and fictitious places that figure in and are associated with literary works (Butler 360; Robinson and Andersen). Literary sites can be split into three larger categories: factual sites, i.e., places linked to a writer's biography, such as birthplaces, homes and temporary lodgings, or cemeteries; imaginative sites, where works of prose, drama, and poetry are set; and socially constructed sites, which are "deliberately created in order to attract visitors," such as literary trails, book towns, or literary festivals (Smith, MacLeod, and Robertson 110). While critics have pointed out the blurred boundaries between the first two categories—naturally, places with a connection to the writer's life often enter his or her works—, the third category is not entirely unproblematic either. Being "socially constructed" and "deliberately created" is a feature shared, in varying degrees, by all three categories. Calling to mind Watson's inclusion of the "marking" of sites into the definition of

literary tourism, it becomes obvious that "construction" is inherent in the phenomenon as such.

Among the many variants of literary tourism, the present study pursues a concise focus on the *past homes* of *dead* writers only. The writer's home, as "arguably the most powerful tourism resource with appeal across a range of markets," holds an unmatched "potential for intimacy" (Robinson and Andersen 15; see also Marsh). Nowhere else do visitors seem to get closer to the inspiration of the literary genius and the actual process of literary production than when accessing the chambers in which the writer in archetypal isolation penned works of lasting fame and significance. More so than other literary sites, writers' homes allow the visitors' emotional engagement and provide a foil for their imaginative projections. Harald Hendrix concisely states: "Writers' houses have meaning, even beyond their obvious documentary value as elements in the author's biography. They are a medium of expression and of remembrance" ("Writers' Houses" 1).

In most of its forms, literary tourism has a long history as a phenomenon, but its institutionalization is more recent. Hendrix calls it an "ancient cultural practice" and contextualizes it within more general memorial practices in antiquity, "dedicated to honouring illustrious men whose intellectual heritage was considered particularly present in the places where they had lived, worked and died" ("From Early Modern" 13-14).[10] In the English-speaking world, Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon is possibly the most widely known literary site and has been operated for more than 250 years. Beginning in the 16th and continuing through the 17th and 18th centuries, tourists[11] visited literary sites as part of the Grand Tour through Europe, such as literary landscapes popularized in the works of Virgil, Horace, and Cicero (Smith, MacLeod, and Robertson 109). Regular visits to Petrarca's houses as of the 1530s, as part of wider travels, are often quoted as the onset of literary tourism in the modern Western world (Hendrix, "Epilogue" 242). The onset of Romanticism boosted literary tourism,

[10] Hendrix further states that despite fluctuation in the popularity of literary tourism "it is the continuity of the practice that strikes most" ("Epilogue" 236).

[11] Despite their different implications, "visitor" and "tourist" are used interchangeably. In ch. 1.3, I will address the terminology explicitly.

particularly in Great Britain, where Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, and others triggered floods of visitors. The appeal of literary sites has been unbroken for centuries; today, literary tourism meets with unprecedented visitor interest and, as Hendrix observes, "[…] in recent years writers houses have grown into a major asset of heritage tourism" ("Writers' Houses" 2).

Literary tourism in the United States can be traced back to the 19th century. While Americans practiced literary tourism within the framework of the Grand Tour of Europe, domestic literary tourism only began to evolve in the 19th century.[12] Albeit not a tourist guidebook proper, the 1853 publication *Homes of American Authors* testifies to the growing awareness at mid-century of writers' houses as notable sites in the American cultural landscape and as sights at which to direct the tourist gaze.[13] Nearly half a century later, in 1897, Joseph Edgar Chamberlain elaborated on American literary tourism—implicitly, without using the term—in his article "Memorials of American Authors," published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He commented on the

[12] Paul Westover examines the development of American literary tourism in the 19th century against the backdrop of the interrelation between American and British literary culture at the time, revolving around the poles of appropriation and imitation, on the one hand, and rejection and distinction, on the other. Westover highlights the role that Washington Irving and his connection to Sir Walter Scott and his home Abbotsford played for the emergence of American literary tourism (see also next chapter); see Westover. More generally, Richard Gassan's monograph *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790-1830* traces the beginnings of American tourism in the Hudson Valley, and identifies literature (by Washington Irving, but also by other writers, such as James Fenimore Cooper or Catharine Maria Sedgwick) as an influential factor in popularizing this area for tourism.

[13] The term "tourist gaze" was coined by John Urry in his study *The Tourist Gaze* (first published in 1990). In this highly influential work, Urry differentiates the tourist gaze from other forms of looking and gazing, characterizes it as "socially organised and systematised" (1), and argues that it is essentially directed toward features that are clearly distinct from home and everyday life. See esp. chapter 1 in Urry, *Tourist Gaze*. While more recent studies challenge Urry's focus on the 'gaze' as too restricted, it remains one integral part of the tourist experience.

recent fashion "[of purchasing] the houses in which our American authors have lived, and [setting] them apart forever as shrines in the great men's honor," yet expressed doubt whether "the house of a literary man should be deemed his most appropriate memorial […]" (64). About the same time that Chamberlain voiced his skepticism, the first writer's house opened to the public in New England: only six years after his death, John Greenleaf Whittier's home in Amesbury, MA, became a visitable site.[14] Other writers' houses in the area followed throughout the next few decades.

How American literary tourism spread can be derived from the number of book publications that introduced readers to writers' homes and thus helped instigate trips to these sites. Books such as Richard Henry Stoddard's *Poets' Homes: Pen and Pencil Sketches of American Authors and Their Homes* (1877), David E. Sherman and Rosemarie Redlich's *Literary America* (1952), John Deedy's *Literary Places* (1978), Glynne Betts's *Writers in Residence* (1981), or J.D. McClatchy's *American Writers at Home* (2004) employ a mixture of biographical information, personalized character sketches, and visualizations of the houses' interiors to capture their readers' interest in the sites. The existence of an audience for these publications indicates the existence or promises the emergence or further growth of an audience for the actual literary sites.

Book publications were complemented by newspaper and magazine articles, and later by audio-visual as well as virtual media.[15] Next to the publicization of these sites through the media, improvements in transportation and accessibility proved equally important for the growth of American literary tourism. Like any other form of tourism, literary

[14] In *A Skeptic's Guide to Writers' Houses* (2011), Anne Trubek cautiously writes: "The first writer's house to open to the public was *probably* the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow house in 1901" (3; emphasis added). According to my research, the first writer's house to open in the United States was actually not Longfellow's childhood home in Maine—although it counts among the very first—but Whittier's home in Amesbury (*WhittierHomeAssociation.org*).

[15] See, for instance, Elizabeth Emery's *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum (1881-1914)* of 2012, which uncovers in an intriguing analysis the interconnection between literary tourism and photojournalism in France.

tourism benefited from the spread of the automobile. In her book *See America First: Tourism and Identity, 1880-1940*, Marguerite Shaffer aptly assesses the role of the automobile for the development of American tourism:

> In effect, the automobile completely transformed the tourist experience and the rhetoric of nationalism associated with tourism. […] the automobile […] brought the tourist into the landscape. […] Thus, as automobile touring became increasingly more popular after World War I, prescriptive literature publicizing the landscapes of tourism began to promote historic sites, places associated with historic events, and the local color of particular places, in addition to the scenic attractions typically associated with railroad tourism. Touring came to be understood as a much more intimate, personal, and authentic experience. (132)

Given that most of the writers' houses in New England are remote from urban centers, the fact that "the automobile […] brought the tourist into the landscape" cannot be overrated. With respect to New England in general, Dona Brown comes to similar conclusions, stating that the automobile altered the tourism experience in New England and that the New England states hoped to increase tourism by constructing extensive new roads with the help of state funds at the turn of the century, such as the Mohawk Trail in 1915 (*Inventing* 203, 208). Shaffer further identifies the combination of war and political instability in Europe, an improved road system and roadside facilities, including standardized road marking, as well as affordable cars as the source of an increased stateside tourism in the early 20th century (160-61). In the course of the 20th century, literary tourism in the United States diversified, as more and more sites related to American writers opened and the destinations increasingly extended across the continent.[16]

[16] For example, the sites treated in *Homes of American Authors* (1853) are all located in the Northeast, while *American Writers at Home* (2004) includes houses in Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and California.

2.2 Literary Tourism in the Academy

Scholarly interest in literary tourism did not emerge on a broader scale until the 21st century, with the notable exception of Lawrence Buell's early investigation into the field with his article "The Thoreauvian Pilgrimage: The Structure of an American Cult" of 1989. While the phenomenon has been addressed in countless publications over the decades, these are primarily descriptive surveys, guidebooks, and coffee table books, and scholars have only recently begun to establish theoretical frameworks and to engage in thorough analyses. *Literature and Tourism*, edited in 2002 by Mike Robinson and Hans Christian Andersen, counts among the first scholarly book-length publications dedicated to literary tourism, uniting theoretical essays and case studies from the European context. With a specific focus on Victorian Britain, Nicola J. Watson's 2006 monograph *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* outlines various ways in which (literary) tourists can approach literature, via the authors or via their fictions, using examples from the British context only. Another recent contribution to the field is the 2008 essay collection *Writers' Houses and the Making of Memory*, edited by Harald Hendrix, which shifts the emphasis toward the writer's house as a space within which different agents create memory, resulting in the subsequent attraction of literary tourists.

While these books and essays reflect a broad range of cases from the British Isles and continental Europe, case studies from the United States are still noticeably scarce. Four essays on American literary tourism can be found in the 2009 essay collection *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, edited by Nicola J. Watson. Hilary Iris Lowe's 2012 monograph focuses on *Mark Twain's Homes and Literary Tourism*. A forthcoming volume on American literary tourism, *Literary Foundations: The State and History of American Literary Tourism*, edited by Jennifer Harris and Hilary Iris Lowe, focuses on literary tourism in the United States exclusively and is the first concerted effort in book form to explore the myriad facets of the field in a distinctly American context, with contributions ranging from surveys, such as a contribution on 19th- and 20th-century literary guidebooks, to case studies, such as an essay on Edith Wharton's The Mount. These recent scholarly efforts successfully begin to tackle the "invisibility" of literary

tourism (Watson, Introduction 2) as an academic field. With literary tourism in the United States further thriving, it is very likely that scholars on both sides of the Atlantic will monitor and discuss its development and diversification.

Despite the gradually growing body of scholarly studies, in the introduction to the aforementioned *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* Nicola J. Watson underscores and deplores the fact that literary tourism has so far not received the critical attention it deserves. Watson speculates as to whether this lack of critical attention is

> the result of [literary tourism's] troubling interrogation of the boundaries between those disciplines and sub-disciplines between which it has to date found itself situated: literary and cultural studies (especially work on travel-writing and the history of the reading experience), history and heritage studies, cultural geography, and tourism studies. (Introduction 3-4)

Yet, this "troubling interrogation of the boundaries" between disciplines may be less of an obstacle than the very source from which literary tourism may draw its richness as a scholarly subject and its appeal for academia. When Watson calls literary tourism "an emergent and vibrant field within literary and cultural studies" (Introduction 2), this implies that both literary scholars and cultural studies scholars, each with their own set of approaches, can turn to questions arising from literary tourism. But it also implies that literary tourism allows to a significant degree the integration of methods from literary studies and cultural studies. Work in the field of literary tourism can overcome some of the divides between these two disciplines, and many others.

Writers' houses in particular, harboring evidence not only of a writer's biography but also of the conditions under which his/her oeuvre was created, touch upon a wide range of disciplines. In many cases the writers have explicitly named the houses as sources of inspiration. In other cases the boundaries between fact and fiction, between the actual house and a fictitious locale based on it, are barely perceptible. They may thus hold special interest for literary scholars. As historic houses, writers' houses may be studied before the background of architecture, decorative arts, or more generally, material culture studies. As sites of memory, in which various techniques of memorialization are at work,

they deserve scrutiny from the perspective of memory studies. And as spaces that presently welcome, inform, and entertain a public audience they are of interest to scholars from the fields of historic preservation, museum studies, as well as public history.

Yet, Watson detects another reason for the neglect of literary tourism within academia in the feeling of "embarrassment" (Introduction 5) which it evokes: while literature is associated with "high, national culture, and […] highbrow difficulty and professionalism," tourism is generally depreciated through its association with "mass popular culture, mass travel, unthinking and unrefined consumption of debased consumables, amateurishness, and inauthenticity" (5).[17] Instead of evoking embarrassment, this discrepancy may just as well account for the fascination of the topic and may be taken as a point of departure for questioning some of these apparent contradictions.

This supposed feeling of embarrassment originates from the "seemingly incompatible discourses" (Lipsitz, "Listening to Learn" 322) of "high" culture and popular culture. This dichotomy between "highbrow" culture and popular culture[18] has long been drawn into question and has been losing its legitimacy within American Studies. Tom M. Lansford observes:

[17] Dona Brown makes a similar statement when saying that the "tourist industry is not a business held in high repute" (*Inventing* 2).

[18] Unlike Watson, Tom M. Lansford more accurately differentiates between "mass culture" and "popular culture," arguing that popular culture may contain mass culture elements, alongside influences from folk culture. Mass culture is marked by homogeneity and an implied mass production; popular culture implies appreciation by a mainstream or mass audience (n.pag.). Michael Kammen also differentiates between popular culture, which he sees as "participatory and interactive," and mass culture, which he describes as "[inducing] passivity and the privatization of culture" (*American Culture* 22). For more detail on the dwindling distinction between 'high' and popular culture and the benefits that American Studies as a field can derive therefrom, see Lipsitz, *Time Passages*; Lipsitz, "Listening to Learn." For more reflections on the interrelations between the notions of 'high' culture and popular culture within literary tourism, see chapter four in this book.

> The study of popular culture is one of the core components of the field of American studies. […] One of the more enduring debates has been between the value of so-called "high" culture versus the more popularly accepted "low" or mass culture. […] The result of [a variety of] factors has been the steady development in the United States of a popular culture that is accessible and understandable by all classes, and one that minimizes the differences between high and low culture. (n.pag.)

If the weakening, or even dissolution, of the "high/low"-culture dichotomy is at the core of American Studies and if literary tourism is located at that very interface between "high" and "low"-culture, this only turns literary tourism into a captivating subject for Americanists all the more.[19] Literary tourism can thus serve as a prime example of how these categories, which have long been accepted as irreconcilable, overlap and fuse into each other.

It is not only the eroding divide between "high" and popular culture that makes literary tourism especially apt to be studied from an American Studies perspective. The distinctly interdisciplinary potential of literary tourism and writers' houses in particular, as mentioned above, turns it into an engaging topic within the realm of American Studies, which traditionally embraces interdisciplinarity as one of its core principles, upheld from its inception as an academic field regardless of continuing methodological inquiries and (re)orientations.[20] This study, integrating a broad range of questions and angles, contributes to the field of literary tourism studies both in terms of theory and application, as it directs attention to a specific region in the United States and views the phenomenon from an American Studies perspective.

[19] The areas of popular culture which mainly are being investigated include popular literature, television, film, music, and sports (Lipsitz, "Listening to Learn" 323), yet tourism does not figure prominently.

[20] Interdisciplinarity, as Simon J. Bronner has noted, is not entirely unproblematic as a characteristic of an academic discipline as it risks blurring the very boundaries that set this discipline apart from the ones with which it interacts. Therefore, interdisciplinarity in the context of American Studies needs to be understood less as "a mix of multiple perspectives from other disciplines" (Bronner, n.pag.), but rather as an inherent openness of the discipline toward stimuli from other fields for the sake of enhancing its own specific purposes.

2.3 Methodological and Conceptual Parameters

This study explores literary tourism at 19th-century writers' houses in New England while at the same time directing the gaze beyond the display of literary culture at these houses. In order to achieve this, and to still remain within the limits of feasibility and consistency in the thematic and theoretical approach, the concept of visitability[21] as introduced by Bella Dicks in her 2003 study *Culture on Display* proves to be a methodological asset. In the introduction to her book, Dicks argues that

> visitability is dependent on the display of culture but culture in particular ways. [She explores] how culture comes to be produced in visitable form, and the effects this has for its representation. Culture is central to the production of visitability for it enables a place to become somewhere to go. In the process, it becomes something for everyone to experience (not just for the well-educated 'literati'). (1)

This study will also be concerned with the question of how culture turns places—former homes of writers—into "somewhere to go" and how they invite as broad an audience as possible. Dicks goes on to note that display has permeated our everyday surroundings and has reached unprecedented extents: "As more and more space is turned over to viewability and visitability, an increasingly mundane expectation takes root—that the spaces we move through will address us, presenting us with a coherent and 'legible' set of symbols and messages and, in short, become 'talking environments'" (17). She claims that display "seeks to conserve culture as both *spectacle* and *knowledge*; it feeds both the eye and the brain" (13; emphasis added)—a claim that holds true for the cultural display in the writers' houses this study explores.

[21] In the glossary at the end of her book, Dicks offers a definition of visitability: "I use this term to describe the production of visitor-friendliness in public spaces, shops and institutions. The production of visitability refers to the ways in which culture is deliberately used in these settings to attract the tourist gaze. Visitability is simultaneously an economic and a cultural phenomenon. Although far from new, it is something which is increasing as consumer-led display proliferates" (199).

Dicks's concepts of visitability and culture on display are smoothly applicable to literary tourism, as "tourism turns culture into displayable objects and visitable places" (41). The concepts serve as helpful analytical tools for the study of literary sites as they allow the inclusion of many other parameters, such as space, travel and tourism, exhibition, commodification, and consumption. They moreover help overcome longstanding binaries that affect the production and reception of writers' houses as tourist sites, such as "high" culture and popular culture, private and public space, as well as education and entertainment.

The study of writers' houses can bring together the concepts of visitability and a broader display of culture and literary tourism. Within typologies of tourism forms, literary tourism ranges under "cultural tourism" and overlaps with a number of subcategories of cultural tourism.[22] While it lies in the nature of typologies to be reductive of the actual conditions, they are nevertheless useful for a first orientation in the field. Recapping the current state of research,[23] Smith, MacLeod, and Robertson define cultural tourism vaguely as "tourism that focuses on cultural attractions, activities and practices as major motivating factors for travel" and underline that the difficulty of defining cultural tourism hinges on the difficulty of defining culture (30). Calling to mind the term's two major, yet incompatible senses—"high" culture or a "way of

[22] The term "cultural tourism" is not used uniformly within tourism studies. Nelson Graburn, for instance, prefers the term "culture tourism," as the one of two larger categories, besides "nature tourism." According to his typology, historical tourism is a subcategory of culture tourism, while ethnic tourism is situated between culture and nature tourism (32). Valene Smith, however, draws up five large categories (ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational tourism), which may overlap, and understands ethnic and historical tourism not as subcategories of "cultural tourism" but as the two categories that frame it and overlap with it. Whereas her understanding of cultural tourism primarily "includes the 'picturesque' and 'local color'" (Introduction 4), Graburn identifies as one of its characteristics the "emphases on the great traditions" (32). The divergence between Smith's and Graburn's views exemplifies the lack of terminological clarity, primarily due to diverse definitions of 'culture.'

[23] Smith, MacLeod, and Robertson chiefly refer to Richards (2007) and Melanie K. Smith (2009).