

**Borrowing, Altering and Perfecting the Literary Annual Form – or What It is Not:  
Emblems, Almanacs, Pocket-books, Albums, Scrapbooks and Gifts Books**

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“‘The Annuals,’ wrote Southey in 1828, ‘are now the only books bought for presents to young ladies, in which way poems formerly had their chief vent.’ And the young ladies found them much more to their liking than the manuals of conduct” declares Anne Renier (qtd in Erickson 30). Literary annuals are early nineteenth-century British texts published yearly from 1822 to 1860, primarily intended for a middle class audience due to its moderate retail cost (12s.-£3). Initially published in duodecimo or octavo,<sup>1</sup> the decoratively bound volumes – filled with steel plate engravings of nationally recognized artwork and sentimental poetry and prose – exuded a feminine delicacy that attracted a primarily female readership. Published in November and sold for the following year, the annual became an ideal Christmas gift, lover’s present or token of friendship.<sup>2</sup>

This genre was introduced to the British public in November 1822 with the publication of Rudolf Ackermann’s *Forget Me Not*. The popular and successful publisher’s experiment in literary miscellany caused an “epidemic” of literary annual titles – as is described by Jane Wilde, along with many other previous critics. Writing in 1855 retrospectively of the annual’s phenomenon, Wilde refers both to the early proliferation of titles and the “sickness” that caused readers to overwhelmingly desire, own, read and receive annuals (342). The genre nevertheless served a larger purpose of exposing a burgeoning audience of women and girls to “very many of the best lyrical poems of nearly all our most popular contemporary writers appeared in the first instance in their pages,” as is noted in the 1858 *Bookseller* article, “The Annuals of Former Days” (494). John Clare, James Hogg and even Wordsworth and Tennyson established a new

audience through the annuals, an audience of those who had not previously purchased their single-author volumes of poetry.<sup>3</sup>

The volume of reading material was immense at the introduction of literary annuals and competition for consumers was fierce. Periodicals, journals and cheap twopenny newspapers,<sup>4</sup> ranging from one to seven pence, captured the attention of readers who were interested in the mundane topics of daily life. For two to four shillings, ladies' magazines supplied readers with beautiful images and some useful information on a monthly or even quarterly production schedule. Critical and review periodicals published more intellectual copy for two to six shillings. Poetry volumes suffered a steady decline in sales, though, much the same as conduct manuals (Erickson 28).<sup>5</sup> But, almanacs, albums and commonplace books continued to attract consumers because of their raw information and invitation to create content. Even the three-volume novel enjoyed a healthy audience of consumers despite its fifteen to twenty-one shilling price. Sir Walter Scott's best-selling novels topped the list by selling at an enormous thirty-one-shillings each. By 1822, a middle class audience was primed for a literary object that was both beautiful and entertaining but not overtly didactic like conduct manuals.

German émigré Rudolf Ackermann was the right man to capitalize on this audience. He had already experienced financial success and earned a reputation for the beautiful color plates and aquatints that he produced in his magazine, *Repository of Arts*, an "elegant and fashionable periodical Work contain[ing] upwards of 500 coloured Engravings, and forms a Library of itself; it presents entertainment and information to every taste, and will serve as a mirror of the times, and a work of reference to future ages" (Ad, 1824 *Forget Me Not*). Mimicking the very popular *Lady's Magazine*, which began in 1770 and ceased publication in 1837, Ackermann's magazine contained plates of the latest fashionable dresses and hats, descriptions of the fabrics and design

and the occasional fabric sample. At a price of three shillings, six pence this magazine accumulated 3,000 subscribers<sup>6</sup> in its first year, 1809, and appeared regularly until 1828. By its conclusion the magazine had seen forty volumes produced in monthly parts (*Dictionary* 1917, 59) – quite a success considering the reading public's fickle tastes.

As an experienced businessman, Ackermann knew that a physical space for his *Repository of Arts* audience would bolster sales and bring consumers into his shop. He established a tea room, The Repository of Arts, where lectures took place for fashionable ladies (Ford *Ackermann*). Judith Thompson describes it as “the multilevel cultural emporium . . . with a spacious Library and tea-room, decorated with classic busts, draperies and urns, where he also held the evening ‘conversations’ of his dilettanti society, intended ‘for a select number of gentlemen, professors and lovers of literature and the fine arts’” (182). Thompson also points out that Ackermann’s shop brought in £30,000 a year (182). The audience who supported both the periodical and the tea room was primarily the same audience who would later demand his *Forget Me Not*, middle class women (Ford *Ackermann* 64).

By capitalizing and improving on proven forms of media as well as previous literary and artistic publications, Ackermann and others prepared, produced and packaged poetry, fiction, nonfiction and plates of various scenes (pastoral, foreign, nautical, etc.) in literary annuals. The success was almost immediate. By 1828, 100,000 copies of fifteen separate annuals earned an aggregate retail value of over £70,000 (Altick 362), the *Forget Me Not*, *Literary Souvenir*, *Friendship’s Offering*, and *Keepsake* the leaders among them in both technological innovations and literary quality.<sup>7</sup> Inspired by the sentiment to be remembered, other annuals were titled with a plea, *Remember Me*, or the purpose of the book, *Friendship’s Offering*, *Keepsake*, and *Hommage aux Dames*. By November 1830, the number had climbed to forty-three separate titles

published in Britain alone (Faxon). Not until 1840 did the number of annual titles fall below forty (Faxon).<sup>8</sup>

Despite their phenomenal popularity, literary annuals have never enjoyed critical acclaim until very recently. Over the last few decades, literary scholars have begun to excavate the annuals, their literature, authors and textual form, re-evaluating these things based on a literary aesthetic that considers the annuals as an alternative rather than lesser representation of nineteenth-century culture. But before this revisionary criticism, the annuals were simply denigrated, called "toy-books" (iv) by Andrew Boyle, often-cited historian and indexer of British annual contributors. The literature within them has been qualified as the "left-handed work of great authors" (Erickson 31) and "the sweepings of their desks – the worst poems of the best authors" (Boyle iv).

To combat this characterization, scholars have approached the literary annuals from the perspective of thinking about how they helped various canonical authors. Stephen Colclough proposed that John Clare used the annuals to create an authorial existence during a time which "without access to these texts his work would not have been available to a national audience" (468). So too, Lord Tennyson's contributions to the annuals "provided much needed exposure to a burgeoning new middle-class readership which included a growing number of female readers," as is noted by Kathryn Ledbetter (236). Janette Currie points out that even James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, acquired a devoted audience that gave him "the opportunity of extending his periodical range while taking his literary reputation to a wider audience" (87). The Brontës, according to Christine Alexander, had access to the 1829 *Friendship's Offering*, 1830 *Literary Souvenir* and 1831 *Forget Me Not*, as is evidenced by their "painstakingly executed copies of eight engravings . . . made by Charlotte, Branwell and Emily . . . from these three volumes"

(414). In her article, Alexander finds indisputable similarities between the children's juvenilia and writings published in these annuals, especially Scott's Gothic writings. References and engravings that imitate these annuals' contents pop up in Charlotte Brontë's later novel, *Jane Eyre* (421).

Part of the dilemma has been in defining and identifying the literary annual as a distinct genre. Since it combines elements of various genres as well as solidifying another, the gift book. scholars and libraries have both mis-named the annual, cataloging it inconsistently as "annual," "gift book," "gift-book," "gift books – 19th Century," "miscellany" and "anthology."<sup>9</sup> To combat the annual's frequent misidentification, my December 2005 article, "Feminizing the Textual Body: Women and their Literary Annuals in Nineteenth-Century Britain," offers a definition based on the introduction within and advertisements for the 1823 *Forget Me Not*. The purpose here is to discuss the literary annual's unique form, content and status as defined against several other literary forms, including the emblem, almanac, pocket-book, album, scrapbook and gift book. The goal is not to define these other literary forms but to situate the literary annual genre in conversation with its predecessors and, in one case, its successor.

### **Literary Annual**

The criteria for defining a literary annual are scattered throughout advertisements for and the Preface to the first *Forget Me Not* volume, published November 1822:

- *Purpose*: Annuals are "expressly designed to serve as annual tokens of friendship or affection" (Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*). Ackermann establishes not only the purpose of the volume but also its sentiment and gift-giving status.
- *Publication Time Frame*: "It is intended that the Forget-Me-Not shall be ready for delivery every year, early in November" (Advertisement/Preface to 1823 *Forget Me Not*

- vii). Critics adhere to this criteria and blast any publication that appears outside the holiday time frame (November through January) yet still claiming to one of the literary annual family.
- *Continual Evolution*: "[T]he Publisher has no doubt that, in the prosecution of his plan, he shall be enabled, by experience, to introduce improvements into the succeeding volumes" (vii). Each editor hereafter uses the preface to proclaim improvements to his/her title for each succeeding year. This promise suggests a continued longevity to the title and asks readers to anticipate a better product the following year.
  - *Authorship*: "[H]e shall neglect no means to secure the contributions of the most eminent writers, both at home and abroad" (vii). Ackermann establishes the literary annual as more than an anthology with this promise. The authors are generally contemporary figures of the period instead of classical authors, such as Shakespeare. The primarily British contributors will eventually be touted as representations of English superiority.
  - *Originality*: "To convey an idea of the nature of the pieces which compose the bulk of this volume, it will be sufficient to state that they will consist chiefly of original and interesting Tales and Poetry" (Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*). This claim of originality plagues the editors of the annuals through the 1830s, but most will continue to declare the literature's originality regardless if pieces had been published prior to the annual's appearance.
  - *Engravings*: "[W]hile his long and extensive connexion with the Arts, and the credit with which he has acquitted himself in his various undertakings in that line, will, he trusts, be a satisfactory pledge that his best exertions shall not be wanting to give to this Work in a decided superiority in regard to its embellishments, over every other existing publication

of the kind” (Advertisement/Preface to 1823 *Forget Me Not* vii-viii). With a reminder about his expertise in and success with lithography publications, Ackermann assures readers that engravings and artwork will always accompany the literature within annuals. This marriage of the literary and the visual is an integral aspect of literary annuals: An annual must carry both in order to be considered within the family.

- *Useful Information*: “The third portion comprises a Chronicle of Remarkable Events during the past year: a Genealogy of the Reigning Sovereigns of Europe and their Families; a List of Ambassadors resident at the different Courts; and a variety of other particulars extremely useful for reference to persons of all classes” (Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*). Ackermann attempts to establish the literary annual as referential and useful across class boundaries. However, one can assume that Ackermann is not offering this information to the working or lower classes because of the cost (twelve shillings). This element was eventually discarded by all annuals around 1825 in favor of additional creative contributions.
- *Exterior Format*: “The *Forget Me Not* is done up in a case for the pocket, and its external decorations display corresponding elegance and taste with the general execution of the interior” (Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*). The diminutive size (3.5" x 5.5") represents a particular form of femininity that is portable in the pocket or the hand – specifically of a lady. Though the size eventually grew, the annual’s embellished boards mark the elegance of the entire genre and were continued through its lifetime even in the rebindings.

Ackermann created these criteria based on his experience as publisher of the *Repository of Arts* as well as the *Poetical Magazine*.<sup>10</sup>

All but one element became standard to the literary annual form, but Ackermann has very seldom received credit for the specifics. Instead, editors Charles Heath (*The Keepsake*) and Alaric A. Watts (*The Literary Souvenir*) have typically been credited with its innovations – erroneously, though, since Ackermann has pioneered the form from the following successful literary forms:

### **Emblem**

The literary annual, though unique to the nineteenth century in its particular form, developed from a long tradition of both European and British literary works, including the sixteenth-century emblem: a popular form that combined a picture, a motto and a poem to illustrate a moral lesson or meditation (*OED*). Italian Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* (*Book of Emblems*) "had enormous popularity and influence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is a collection of 212 Latin emblem poems, each consisting of a motto (a proverb or other short enigmatic expression), a picture, and an epigrammatic text" (*Memorial Web Edition*). First published in 1531, Alciato's emblems primarily consisted of translations of lyrics and epigrammatic poems from the *Greek Anthology*. Alciato's work evolved into ekphrastic poems when editors and publishers of the first printed edition added crude, unauthorized illustrations to accompany each poem. The author improved on the illustrations for the 1534 Paris edition, arranging each emblem into a more cohesive representation of the verse and adding a motto to each page. However, as Bernhard F. Scholz points out, the typographical arrangement at first unauthorized by the author himself, became tied to the composition of the text itself. Scholz suggests that the emblem form was really an "emergent rather than an ideally distinct form," emergent because it is a "continuing movement toward form kept in check by the constraints of the poetics of *imitatio*" (157).



*Emblematum Liber* was published in 171 editions from 1531 through the late seventeenth century. The book's popularity waned in the eighteenth century with only five editions printed. The genre, however, had caught the public's attention in the eighteenth century: two other emblem volumes, each by George Wither and Francis Quarles, also won favor with the public. However, Wither and Quarles' volumes were religiously oriented and have been described by David Greetham as "collections of quotations from Scripture or other 'improving' literature with accompanying woodcuts and doggerel verses as moral" (*Textual Scholarship* 109).

Similar to the Alciato's emblems, the literary annual reproduces the format but divides the emblematic elements and process: the motto is included on the title page and represents the tenor of the entire volume; the illustration is first engraved and then verbally rendered. Initially, the annual was intended to offer instruction in morality and propriety, allowing readers to meditate on the visual and literary. And, like the *Emblematum Liber*, the early annual's pocket-sized delicacy allowed the book to be a portable reference of morality and propriety as well as an indicator of education, wealth, friendship or leisure. The beautiful binding found a home in the lady's drawing room and on her bookshelf once the year had expired or the volume had been read – intended as a permanent object that enhanced a collection or represented a memory. The annual pays homage to the emblem's original ekphrastic format.<sup>11</sup>

### **Almanac**

Ackermann mimicked the common almanac form that had served publishers and consumers alike for several centuries. In the 1823 *Forget Me Not* Preface, "he professes his obligations to the *Gotha Almanac*, a work of acknowledged accuracy and of high reputation on the Continent... [for] useful articles of reference (v, vii). He also attributes his literary annual form to an earlier almanac, *Almanach des Muses*, published in France 1765 through 1833. This

publication does not rival the *Forget Me Not* because it does not present its literary and informational data as a beautiful object: the original covers are flimsy paper with no board for support; it contains only one engraving, the inferior paper and pressed printing allow the type to interrupt text, and no gilt edges or stamped binding provide a sense of delicacy. The size, however, is that of a pocket-book, like the literary annuals.

Charles Malo's *Hommage aux Dames* is a better example of an older relative to Ackermann's literary annual format. Published 1813 through 1830 by Chez Janet in Paris, *Hommage aux Dames* is a traditional almanac as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

an annual table, or (more usually) a book of tables, containing a calendar of months and days, with astronomical data and calculations, ecclesiastical and other anniversaries, besides other useful information, and, in former days, astrological and astrometeorological forecasts. (*OED*)

The 1815 volume is filled with the traditional factual information expected of an almanac, including monthly astronomical data in the first pages after the title page and blank pages for monthly entries in its last few pages. This French volume, though, extends beyond the traditional almanac style to include 148 pages of poetry, prose, a dramatic scene and forty-four unpaginated pages that include all six engravings – a different tactic than the literary annual, which publishes the engravings interspersed throughout the volume and alongside their literary renderings.

Similar to the annuals, this almanac caters to a decidedly female audience, as can be seen with the opening poem, titled "Preface":

Préface aux Dames Air: Je ne suis plus de ces Vainqueurs	Preface to Women <sup>12</sup> Melody: I am no longer of these Victors.
Quand vingt peuples de l'Univers Quelques soient leurs mœurs, leur langage Depuis mille ans, en prose, en vers Vous offrent partout leur <i>Hommage</i> ; Quand vous soumettez a vos loix Tout ce qui respire sur terre: Le Français, ingrat une fois Peut-il admirer . . ! Et se taire.	When twenty nations of the universe, Whatever their customs, their language, For one thousand years in prose, in verse, Pay their tribute to you When everything that breathes on earth Submits to your laws Can the French, ungrateful, Admire, for once... and remain silent.

Though this poem concludes with a reprimand of the French, its complete message refers to the tradition of worshipping women and their femininity. *Hommage aux Dames* encourages the tradition: its literature is dedicated to women; its diminutive size (3 ½" x 4 ¾") and delicate presence are contrasted against the universal laws of femininity; and its engravings and stiff, glazed paper-covered boards reflect a leisure class who will appreciate the rich attire of the volume's presentation, similar to Ackermann's impending British production.

While there are similarities between this almanac form and Ackermann's literary annual form, their differences distinguish the annual genre as a unique phenomenon. Internally, the arrangement and pagination differ from Ackermann's final product: In the *Hommage aux Dames*, the six engravings (with their accompanying prose and poetry pieces) are included in the unpaginated first forty pages of the volume; the pagination begins with a poem entitled "Hommage aux Dames"; the Table of Contents, alphabetically arranged by author, appears after the last piece of writing and is followed by blank monthly pages. Obviously, the engravings are not privileged in this volume as they are in the literary annuals, and the unpaginated engravings, poems and prose could be excised in the re-binding of the volume.

In addition, many of the *Hommage's* features do not seem to follow a logical progression

of information as the contents of the annuals did. Editors painstakingly arranged poetry, fiction, non-fiction and engravings in a fluid order that would most benefit the reading experience and the reception of each work. In the French *Hommage*, the table of contents privileges the authors rather than the content. Some of the first annuals listed every literary work without an author in order of pagination. Even after audiences declared their dismay for this anonymity, the table of contents still listed each entry with the piece's title and then the author. Sometimes, only "the Author of..." accompanied a title instead of the author's actual name. This practice eventually revealed that the title of "author" was specious because it was not so difficult to achieve; poems were published to curry favor and attract consumers much to the chagrin of reviewers and literati.

The *Hommage*'s blank pages are preceded by a "Souvenir" title page, which allows readers to incorporate their memories into the volume. Since the almanac was meant to be kept throughout the year, as is intimated by the monthly astronomical data and the monthly diary pages, the *Hommage aux Dames* serves as a "souvenir" of a particular moment, "a remembrance, a memory" (*OED*). By writing on those blank pages, the writer becomes part of the work and will be read alongside the printed material. This insertion of a unique author makes every *Hommage aux Dames* a unique object and one that more fittingly privileges that reader-author over the printed literature and engravings.

Though Ackermann borrowed from this French form, he most likely was very familiar with the traditional almanac form that was popular in England, especially London, during the early nineteenth century. *Simpson's Gentleman's Alamanack and Pocket Journal*, published in London, exemplifies this traditional definition and is filled with information about the stock market, public holidays, interest rates, taxes, weather, post office rates, government, royal

lineage and bankers. It also contains one hundred twelve ruled pages for memoranda, appointments and cash accounts. The 1816 volume of this almanac is only 4" x 6" and bound with a soft cover. The small size and soft binding allow for portability and heavy use, i.e., a soft binding will not crack from daily openings. The 1823 *Forget Me Not*, with its stiff paper-covered boards, delicate binding and charts, including British Consuls abroad, Genealogy of European Sovereigns and detailed Population of England, could not withstand more than ten to fifteen openings – a limited use at best. With Simpson's almanac, its ruled pages invite the user not only to reference the information but also to record data himself, much like the 1824 and 1825 volumes of *Friendship's Offering*, another very successful British literary annual which dropped this feature this feature with the 1826 volume. The ruled pages are not an invitation, however, to include creative writings simply because of limited space and the interference of astronomical data, holidays and important dates on the page. In this volume, readers are allowed the luxury of only one completely blank leaf (recto and verso) on which to write.<sup>13</sup>

The format of Ackermann's first two volumes of the *Forget Me Not* mirror the almanac-style in form and very quietly in purpose: He intended the *Forget Me Not* to serve as a reference text that would become valuable and therefore constantly, but not daily, opened and retained throughout the years by its owner and/or her heirs. It is the third volume, published in November 1824 (for 1825), that abandons the factual for the memorable. Regardless of Ackermann and editor Shoberl's surrender of the almanac form, other editors and publishers noticed the quiet purpose of the first *Forget Me Not* and published their own versions of almanac-style literary annuals.

### **Pocket-Book**

Ackermann also admittedly borrowed from the German tradition of the "Taschenbuch,"<sup>14</sup>

or pocket-book, "a small book, adapted to be conveniently carried in the pocket" (*OED*), which focuses less on "useful information" and more on literature. Ackermann never publicly admitted to "borrowing" more than the format of this German tradition, but many clues point towards the *Forget Me Not* as the British version of a German pocket-book, the *Vergissmeinnicht*, which translates literally to *forget me not*. As a German émigré with professional ties to Leipzig, the origin of the *Vergissmeinnicht*, Ackermann would have seen copies of this German pocket-book.<sup>15</sup> Though we don't have explicit evidence of Ackermann's knowledge of the *Vergissmeinnicht*, we can see tangible links between the two titles, the least of which is Ackermann's publication of an English translation of "Mimili," a German short story by H. Clauren (Karl Heun) that was overwhelmingly successful in 1815 Germany and had been translated into several languages by 1824.<sup>16</sup> Because of Clauren's international success and an extremely public plagiarism lawsuit, Londonites would have been familiar with Clauren's name. After all, he was the epitome of the literary annual writer: prolific, popular and profitable (Kontje 136). As it turns out, Clauren also edited the very successful *Vergissmeinnicht*. By including Clauren's best-selling short story in his 1824 *Forget Me Not*, Ackermann ties himself to a German tradition of literature and print culture that he only mildly acknowledges in print. The title and Clauren are not the only connections, though.

The *Vergissmeinnicht*, initially published in 1818 in duodecimo, contains only poetry and prose. Its format evolved to include a series of unpaginated poems which were accompanied by engravings interspersed among these first twenty-five pages; the more significant number of remaining pages contains only prose pieces. The 1821 volume opens with an emblematic sonnet, similar in topic, tone and poetic focus to the 1823 *Forget Me Not*.

Sonnet<sup>17</sup>

Modestly, I bloom along the streams

Whose little ripples refresh me  
 What glares from out my eye, however,  
 Will speak to you in confident timbre.

“Do you wish to tear me from the little stem?  
 Am I simply to be plucked for the lady-love?  
 [or] For the boyfriend, who, constantly clasps hands with you?  
 At all events, on account of fragile weakness of the heart?”

So the little flower – An emblem of its image  
 Is found in this little book, and it [book] echoes its [flower’s] words.  
 Ah! A heart rich only in feelings:  
 May it reach its kindred heart.  
 Then every leaf will proclaim it widely/openly,  
 That – Forget-me-not – should be its motto.

In the last stanza of the *Vergissmeinnicht*’s opening sonnet, the flower encourages an invisible listener (and potential flower-picker) to equate the sentimental flower with its namesake book and “pluck” from the book instead of the flower from the stream’s bank. With this book, the romantic feelings inspired by the flower will be transmitted to the recipient of the book. This person will then “forget me not” – “me” being the listener, the book and the flower, a motto echoed in Ackermann’s *Forget Me Not* and many other literary annuals.

With flowers referenced in British literary annual titles (e.g., *Iris*, *Blossoms at Christmas*, *First Flowers*, *Amaranth*), poetry meditating on flowers and engravings reproducing bouquets of flowers, the literary annual could be a metaphorical bouquet of poetry and prose – an “anthology” of sorts, which is traditionally defined as “a collection of the flowers of verse, i.e., small choice poems, especially epigrams, by various authors; originally applied to the Greek collections so called” and, alternatively, “with some reference to the original meaning (in Greek) of a flower-gathering” (*OED*). While the literary annuals are collections of metaphorical flowers, the genre differs from a traditional anthology because of its intended audience (women), engravings, annual publication and purpose (gift-giving). Andrew Boyle claims that Robert

Southey's *Annual Anthology*, printed in 1799 and 1800, is a precursor to the literary annuals (iii). While Southey's volumes contain original poetry from authors of the Romantic period, the volumes did not rival the beauty of the annuals nor did they include any engravings. In addition, anthologies collect both previously published and unpublished works for printing. Even in Ackermann's initial forays, the literary annual format was heralded to contain previously unpublished, original works – a claim vociferously defended by its editors.

### **Album**

The next two categories represent a type of work that was not completed at the printers. Instead, these books invite owners to author and collect memories.

"Albums," also referred to as commonplace books, were nothing but blank pages bound decoratively and used to collect autographs and writings. Albums were the less-formal cousin to the literary annual and were filled up in emulation of annuals' contents. Later, that emulation was reversed. The general assumption is that album owners were young women who carried the albums with them in hopes of receiving a line or two from admirers or local literati.<sup>18</sup> The more well-established authors, including Hemans, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Lamb, complained vociferously about this practice. Felicia Hemans, while visiting William Wordsworth at Dove Cottage in 1830, writes to John Lodge that her privacy and seclusion were interrupted by American tourists who had discovered that she was visiting the area. Because of their association with a colleague of Hemans', she could not refuse seeing them. She becomes annoyed not only with the intrusion, but also with their requests: "The young ladies, as I feared, brought an Album concealed in their shawls, and it was levelled at me like a pocket-pistol before all was over" (Wolfson *Felicia Hemans* 510). Hemans describes the encounter with violent images, as if she is being robbed with her authorship as the coveted prize. She is doubly



annoyed by the duplicitous hidden agenda concealed by their clothing. However, for the remainder of her visit, she was bothered with these requests only twice and was able to shirk “the dust of celebrity” (511). Being asked to contribute to an album was a sign of fame and marker of credibility. Authors who grumbled also recognized their own fame and begrudgingly contributed a few lines to savor (even if mildly) this fact.

Though authors complained of this deluge, they not only contributed but also requested verses from other literati as favors for family and friends. The album, then, is a scrapbook of miscellany generated by others but motivated by its owner. An album without any content is simply a beautifully bound book of blank pages that invites, even entices, its owner to reveal and publicize admiration and desire – albeit a desire for ownership of writing, but nonetheless a desire. With women as the dominant owners of these blank spaces, the fulfilled album becomes a feminized space that represents her identity — a process that is mimicked intellectually instead of physically in the literary annual, specifically the *Literary Souvenir*.

The *Literary Souvenir* included printed facsimiles of authors’ signatures in its last three to six pages. Though the autographs are intended to “authorize” the annual’s literary contents with the imprimatur of its famous contributors, in effect the tactic closes the owner’s written influence on the work. With the exception of an inscription or presentation plate, no blank pages or calendars or memos are provided for scribbling as in an album. Based on the success of the *Literary Souvenir*, consumers apparently wanted a completed product, a *souvenir* of the moment in which the reader or owner never ventured into “authorship.”

### **Scrapbook**

A scrapbook, much like an album, is intended as an informal receptacle of unassociated and impromptu clumps of words and images. A scrapbook may entertain different moments or

memories or may be a snapshot of a life. The annuals adopted many elements of the scrapbook, including an accumulation of seemingly disparate information that formed an intellectual moment. In the 1832 *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*, Landon offers a collection of engravings (landscape scenes, portraits and events), their poetic illustrations and any thoughts or historical facts that inspired the poems. For instance, the engraving entitled "Lismore Castle" is accompanied by a four-stanza poem of the same title as well as explanatory notes, a practice not common to annuals. In these particular notes, Landon introduces the inspiration for the poem, citing *O'Driscoll's History of Ireland*, Spenser's *Fairy Queen* and Henry II's rule over Ireland. To verbally illustrate another engraving, "Blarney Castle," she declines from offering a poetic illustration and instead tells her readers that "it is impossible better to illustrate Blarney Castle, than by compositions which embody its very spirit" (45). She includes brief verse from Voltaire, Marmontel and Marie Antoinette and a few paragraphs of reflections on the same.

By inserting notes, Landon subscribes to "a local detour or a momentary fork in the text," as Gerard Genette points out in *Paratext* (328). These "original notes" are undefinable as either text or paratext, according to Genette. The notes, sometimes thought to "disorder the text," in fact do not interrupt the text's effect. Instead, they act as an extension of the text, allowing the author a "second level of discourse" (328). With this, Landon provides another level of information for her readers – essentially an insight into the creative process as well as the work's historical impetus. She creates a printed, as opposed to handwritten, layering of information much the same as a scrapbook. In the 1832 and 1833 volumes, Landon agonizes about the forced creative process and reveals her dismay within some of the poems themselves.

In *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* for 1832, Landon writes in the Preface: "the ideas that seem at first so delightful are grown common, by passing through the familiarizing

process of writing, printing, and correcting” (3). Even Landon in this same Preface acknowledges that this type of commercialized poetics of “mere description is certainly not the most popular species of composition.” Catherine Boyle and Zachary Leader, in *Romantic Period Writings*, suggest that this relationship between print and poetic product “hints at this ‘familiarization’ process by drawing attention to the poem as product, the result less of inspiration than of the contingencies of commerce and labor” (187).

In *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book* for 1833, an exasperated Landon throws up her hands in the first three lines of a poem accompanying the engraving, “Macao, China.” The poem does anything but illustrate the engraving. Landon’s exasperation was most likely due to the fact that she provided the text for every *Fisher’s* until her death in 1839. However, this poem comes in 1833, only the second year of the annual’s publication. Already, Landon was stretching for ideas in the forced labor community of poet-for-hire, as was apparent when in the poem following “Macao,” Landon directs readers away from the engraving, “The Chinese Pagoda,” and registers her regret in producing a poem with a forced subject. Not only does she expose the labor of writing, but she also laments her distance both emotionally and creatively from the Chinese landscape. This poem resonates with the poet instead of the subject. In Landon’s effort to fill space, she has exposed herself to public view and has voiced discontent and rebellion with the practice of privileging the engraving over authorial creativity. Though she submits to her publisher’s wishes, in the end she subversively avoids their demand for a verbal illustration and rebels against the notion that poetry is decorative. Since her publishers allowed these poetic entries into the annual, they seem to have mounted the poems only as filler to each engraving’s visual spectacle.

*Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book* completely deviates from the standard pocket size of

annuals. While most publishers issued their volumes in both a smaller octavo and a larger quarto, *Fisher's* was issued only as 9" x 11" quarto. In issuing an octavo and a quarto, most publishers used the same plates which means that the larger quarto pages contained more margin than did the octavo, but the text and engravings were the same size. By publishing *Fisher's* in quarto only, the printers had to prepare only one set of plates which were appropriately larger than the octavo of any other annual and still maintained a one and a half inch margin on each page of text. Hence, the engravings in *Fisher's* were 6.5" x 9.5" – a decadent size by comparison. This title, though officially demarcated as a literary annual, deviates from the original format and is evidence of the genre's evolution into a second generation.

### **Gift Book**

The "gift book" was a traditional category that succeeded and incorporated the literary annual phenomenon. In "Creating a World of Books," Cindy Dickinson corrects a misconception regarding gift books and literary annuals: "The distinction between annuals and gift books is a technical one. Unlike annuals, true 'gift books,' which developed out of the annuals genre, were published only once. However, these two genres seem to have been indistinguishable for gift-giving purposes, and the two terms were usually used interchangeably" (54). Some literary annuals were published only once and are mistaken categorized as a "gift book." However, if the original intention was to publish the title the following year and the volume conforms the standards discussed above, it is a literary annual. Some unfortunate literary annuals disappeared for lack of sales or were subsumed into another annual.

### **Conclusion**

In the last ten years, scholars including Bill Bell, Harriet Jump Devine, Paula Feldman, Ann Hawkins, Sonia Hofkosh, Harry Hootman, Kathryn Ledbetter, Margaret Linley, Laura

Mandell, Jerome McGann, Anne Mellor, Morton Paley, Judith Pascoe, Judith Thompson and Susan Wolfson have ignored the derogatory criticism leveled against annuals and published more than seventy articles and book chapters that discuss the role of literary annuals in British nineteenth-century literature and culture.<sup>19</sup> The *Poetess Archive* acknowledges this interest in literary annuals and intends to provide a substantial full-text collection of both British and American literary annuals. The collection will also house many of the engravings, bindings and boards discussed above to provide a visual as well literary archive of the annual's popularity and phenomenal success.

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Notes

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<sup>1</sup>This term refers to the codex format and "is used to indicate the size of a volume in terms of the number of times the original printed sheet has been folded to form its constituent leaves. Thus in a folio each sheet has been folded once, in a quarto twice, in an octavo three times; the size being thus respectively a half, a quarter and an eighth that of the original sheet" (Carter 106). In response to public demand, in 1828 some literary annuals were published in the larger quarto form.

<sup>2</sup> In a March 2006 presentation at the British Women Writer's Conference, Paula Feldman presented evidence that questions the annual's long-accepted representation as a token of affection. According to her review of over 300 literary annual inscriptions, Feldman discovered that a majority of the (admittedly small) sampling were given as gifts between family members and awards for school performance instead of between lovers. The results of Feldman's research appeared in the *Keats-Shelley Journal* (Vol. 55).

<sup>3</sup> Though Thackeray is often noted for his acerbic review of the later annuals, but this did not keep him from contributing. Vanessa Warne discusses Thackeray's role in and critique of literary annuals in "Thackeray Among the Annuals: Morality, Cultural Authority and the Literary Annual Genre."

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of the twopenny newspaper's cultural capital, see Brian E. Maidment's article, "'Penny' Wise, 'Penny' Foolish?: Popular Periodicals and the 'March of Intellect' in the 1820s and 1830s," in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

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<sup>5</sup>Because of these declining sales, publishers (including Smith Elder, John Taylor, Longman and John Murray) refused to publish new poetry as well as second editions of major poets, including P.B. Shelley, Keats and Byron, regardless of their respective posthumous fame (Erickson 33). In the event of the few volumes that were published during the late 1820s and early 1830s, publishers often asked a poet to underwrite her or his volume's publication in order to guarantee against unprofitable sales. Erickson further argues that "despite lower printing costs, publishers found that most poetry appealed to an increasingly smaller portion of the reading public and so kept its price high," selling for approximately five shillings for over one hundred years (35). However, the single-author volume's demise does not account for the literary annual's success. Quite possibly, at twelve shillings and more, the annual's variety of authors, genres and engravings appealed a broader audience than a single-author volume of poetry.

<sup>6</sup> By selling subscriptions, essentially a pre-order of a magazine or book made by individuals as opposed to booksellers, publishers could ideally determine budgets and profits before committing an issue to print. Literary annuals were at first produced for a subscriber but were quite rapidly converted to consumer publications which were pre-ordered by various booksellers depending upon the authors, editors and publishers involved in a title. Orders also increased if the annual had a reputation for selling well during the previous year. Of course, reviews and circulation numbers were important in these decisions. Though many scholars have been able to track circulation numbers as offered by the original publishing houses or revealed in an editor's preface, it has been virtually impossible to assess actual ownership, gift-giving or readership of literary annuals. Inscriptions give us some idea about a particular volume's provenance and ownership, but the literary annuals are not held in a cohesive-enough collection to assess these

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issues. The *Poetess Archive* is working on this and includes inscriptions, slipcases and annotated pages in its collection of literary annuals.

<sup>7</sup> See Paula Feldman's facsimile of *The Keepsake for 1829* along with its introduction to literary annuals, bibliography of secondary criticism and list of electronic resources.

<sup>8</sup> Even in its demise, the literary annual gained so much popularity that it became a character in many British and American nineteenth-century novels, among them George Eliot's 1872 novel, *Middlemarch* (set in 1820s England), Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (set in 1830s America) and William Thackeray's 1847 *Vanity Fair*. See Amy Cruse, "The Englishman and His Books in the Early Nineteenth Century," for a long list of references to drawing-room books and literary annuals in nineteenth-century novels.

<sup>9</sup> Taken from the New York Public Central Research Library's catalog listing of 375 entries for literary annuals. Many catalogs have normalized the categorization of literary annuals as "gift book" in compliance with the Library of Congress' subject headings.

<sup>10</sup> The impact of various literary forms on the literary annual is the subject of a longer chapter that will be included in the book-length study currently titled, "**Error! Main Document**

**Only.** Forget Me Not! The 'Unmasculine & UnBawdy Age' of British Literary Annuals."

Tracing Ackermann's actual use of emblems, albums, almanacs, commonplace books, etc., is addressed in this book-length literary history of the literary annual. I am grateful to Richard Sha, whose work *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* has greatly influenced this study, for comments on both Ackermann's self-serving marketing strategies and the need for further investigation into the actual link between Ackermann and other literary forms -- a task that is ongoing in the book-length project.

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between ekphrasis and literary annuals, see Vanessa K. Warne's dissertation, "'Purport and Design': Print Culture and Gender Politics in Early Victorian Literary Annuals."

<sup>12</sup> Translated by Christophe Pouchot (March 5, 2004), c/o Matt Gold.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1816 volume that I reviewed these two pages are the only two marked in the text, and they contain brief notes and the dates of a priest's ordainment.

<sup>14</sup> Ackermann and subsequent literary historians capitalize and italicize the word "taschenbuch" when writing about its influence on the *Forget Me Not*. In English, this grammatical structure infers that the word is a title. In German, though, all nouns are capitalized.

<sup>15</sup> Todd Kontje, in "Male Fantasies," suggests that 1770 marks the establishment of a German culture, including a national literature, distinct from any other nations' influence and just five years before Ackermann sets up shop in London's printing district (131).

<sup>16</sup> The young shepherdess, Mimili, represents the story of ultimate propriety and chastity. A foreign traveler (a young man) approaches her home and is welcomed by her father. The young man falls in love with Mimili and offers descriptions of her voluptuousness for the reader. He makes several advances and is rebuffed. By the time he must leave, he begs Mimili's father for permission to marry her. Her father, not wanting to be hasty and acknowledging that this young man is the first that Mimili has encountered, asks him to return in a year to see if the passion still burns between them. During this year, the young man joins the military and disappears after a long battle. When Mimili receives a friend's letter informing her of her young man's fate, she mourns endlessly until the moment when the young man miraculously appears, having been

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wounded and survived the battle. They are married as evidence of their fortitude and genuine love. Ackermann's translation follows the same didactic path as the German original, including the more lascivious tests of Mimili's chastity.

For a discussion of "Mimili" as it relates to German nationalism, authorial control and German parodies, see Todd Kontje's "Male Fantasies, Female Readers: Fictions of the Nation in the Early Restoration."

<sup>17</sup> Translated by Professor Scott Westrem, CUNY Graduate Center.

<sup>18</sup> Recent scholarship insists that men also used albums in the same fashion during the nineteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> Most recently, Kathryn Ledbetter has produced a monograph, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context*, that includes discussions on literary annuals. Harry Hootman has graciously provided both the *Poetess Archive* and the research community with a hypertextual version of his dissertation work with Paula Feldman: Index of British Literary Annuals (<http://www.britannuals.com>) and overview of British Literary Annuals and Gift Books (<http://www.geocities.com/britannualsinfo/>). Both studies will be included in the general introduction to literary annuals which is forthcoming on the *Poetess Archive*.