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Feminizing the Textual Body: Female Readers Consuming the Literary Annual

KATHERINE D. HARRIS

“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.”¹ Literary annuals are early nineteenth-century British texts published yearly from 1822 to 1856 primarily intended for a middle-class audience (due to their moderate retail cost). Initially published in duodecimo or octavo² (3.5" × 5.5", see Illus. 1), 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. The engravings were copied from various artwork, varied in theme and were verbally illustrated with a poem. They were published in November and

1. Anne Renier, *Friendship's Offering: An Essay on the Annuals and Gift Books of the 19th Century* (London: Private Libraries Association, 1964). Also quoted in Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996), 30.

2. In response to public demand, in 1828 some literary annuals were published in the larger quarto form.

Katherine D. Harris (Department of English and Comparative Literature, San Jose State University, One Washington Square, San Jose, CA 95192) recently completed her dissertation, “The Nineteenth-Century British Literary Annual: A Genre’s Journey from Nineteenth-Century Popularity to Twenty-First Century Re-Presentation,” and has created an online resource for literary annuals, *The Forget Me Not: A Hypertextual Archive* (www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/FMN). She coedits *The Poetess Archive* (www.orgs.muohio.edu/womenpoets/poetess), an online resource focusing on both British and American nineteenth-century women authors.



Illus. 1: At 3.5" × 5.5", this front board of the 1831 *Forget Me Not* (London, Ackermann) represents the standard octavo size and the highly decorated covers of most early annuals. Ackermann, a successful and prominent London publisher, originally published the *Forget Me Not* in green paper boards that mimicked the French *Hommage aux Dames* (1819) and was, in turn, borrowed by American publishers of *The Atlantic Souvenir* (1826). By 1834, Ackermann's publishing house had altered its covering material to mimic the *Keepsake's* red watered silk cover.

sold for the following year, which made the genre an ideal Christmas gift, lover's present, or token of friendship.

Though the volume of reading material was immense at the introduction of the literary annuals, these materials were predominantly periodicals, journals, and cheap twopenny newspapers.³ An annual did not cavort in daily life like these publications. Instead, the volume's contents and physical appearance pursued a different standard of propriety and morality than even the temperance pamphlets. In addition, the annuals' predominant separation from other genres comes from its preparation, production, and packaging of the literary, artistic, and beautiful in such a way that it is transported and translated away from daily life — topics of many of the periodicals and newspapers of the day.

This genre was introduced to the British public in November 1822 with the publication of Rudolf Ackermann's *Forget Me Not* (see Illus. 2). This popular and successful publisher's experiment in literary miscellany with the *Forget Me Not* caused an "epidemic" of literary annual titles — as is described by one contemporary reviewer. In 1828, 100,000 copies of fifteen separate annuals earned an aggregate retail value of over £70,000. By November 1829, the number was up to forty-three different titles published in Britain alone. 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*.⁴

Generally, 80 to 100 entries of prose and poetry were compiled for an annual, with over fifty different authors included in any one volume. Well-published, but "minor" poets (both men and women) earned a comfortable income by contributing to literary annuals. Even members of the British literati, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Percy Shelley (posthumously), Mary Shelley, Scott, Southey, Tennyson, Ruskin, and Thackeray) were coaxed into contributing by lucrative financial remuneration. In fact, Scott was paid £500 for two contributions to the

3. 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).

4. See my *Forget Me Not: A Hypertextual Archive of Ackermann's 19th-Century Literary Annual* (www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/FMN/) for a chronological index of titles. See also Frederick W. Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift Books: A Bibliography, 1823-1903* (Pinner: Private Libraries Association, 1973), 129-40.

1829 *Keepsake*. But, more commonly, well-known authors were paid £50 for a forty-line poem.

The annuals were so prolific that reviewer Jane Wilde (along with many other previous critics) declared the genre an “epidemic.” 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.⁵ Though pummeled in the British critical press to the point that a “modern literary lady’s maid [would raise] her eyes from deep melodrama of the *Family Herald* to sneer at the Annuals,” 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 Annual of Former Days.”⁶ Even Thackeray’s maid, Fifi, in *Vanity Fair* (1847) recognizes their value as she absconds with “six gilt Albums, Keepsakes and Books of Beauty” along with “four richly gilt Louis Quatorze candlesticks...a gold enamelled snuffbox...and the sweetest little ink-stand and mother-of-pearl blotting book” (chapter 20).⁷ By November 1829, the number climbed to forty-three separate titles published in Britain alone. John Clare, James Hogg and even Wordsworth and Tennyson established a new audience through the annuals — audiences that had not previously purchased their single-author volumes of poetry.⁸

By 1831, even men became a targeted audience with the publication of *A Father’s Present to His Son* and later the *Young Gentleman’s Annual*. The genre experienced a wild, popular frenzy that drove the success, failure, and recognition of authors, publishers, and editors alike. Not until 1840

5. Jane F. Wilde, “The Countess of Blessington,” *Dublin University Magazine* 45 (1855): 342.

6. “The Annuals of Former Days,” *The Bookseller* 1 (29 November 1858): 494.

7. William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair, a Novel without a Hero* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1917; Bartleby.com, 2000 <www.bartleby.com/305/>), chapter 20. I am indebted to Amy Cruse’s 1930 work on drawing-room books for this reference: *The Englishman and His Books in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1930).

8. See my *Forget Me Not: A Hypertextual Archive of Ackermann’s 19th-Century Annual* (<http://www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/FMN/>) for a searchable index of prominent authors (and their contributions) who published in British annuals.



Illus. 2: This Frontispiece from the 1824 *Forget Me Not* (London, Ackermann) epitomizes the delicacy, femininity and authorship that became synonymous with literary annuals. This steel plate engraving, one of the first used in literary annual artwork, depicts a young, pastoral figure effortlessly carving her desires into stone with only a slim writing utensil. E. F. Burney, original artist; J. S. Agar, engraver.

did the number of annual titles fall below forty. Though the genre suffered ridicule and harsh criticism it carried on, separating into sub-genres, including comic, religious, musical, landscape, and juvenile annuals.⁹ Their initial audience, though, was the impetus for success. The male editors' attempt to commodify a particular form of femininity was subverted as the annual's audience gained strength and pulled its production in new directions.

Here, I show how readers and consumers of the annuals privileged its feminine aspects — not those promoted as such by patriarchal annual producers, but those aspects of these texts best suited to female writers and readers. The literary annual in its textual production is best seen as a female body, its male producers struggling to make it both proper and sexually alluring, its female authors and readers attempting to render it their own feminine ideal.

LOCATING THE ANNUAL IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PRINT CULTURE

Early nineteenth-century readers were exposed to and consumed vast quantities of newspapers, periodicals, journals, novels, magazines, pamphlets, and nonfiction. During a parlor interlude among Eliot's characters in *Middlemarch* (Ned Plymdale, Rosamund Vincey, and Dr. Lydgate), the literary annual stands for "modern progress"¹⁰ not only in literary tastes but also in consumer demand for reading materials (see Table 1). Between 1814 and 1823, a three-volume novel, the more expensive reading material, was sold at a retail price of between fifteen and twenty-one shillings. Newspapers generally presented random and constantly changing contents that did not signal the cohesive purpose that a journal or magazine did. Pamphlets addressed a brief philosophical point and provided practice for reading (if not convinced of its argument). And novels

9. The genre gained even more popularity in the United States and on the Continent until the turn of the century. These British volumes, despite their immense popularity, their concomitant focus on the intonations of romantic love and their demand to "forget them not!", were "forgotten" in twentieth-century criticism until feminist recovery movements re-introduced the genre with substantial scholarship. Annuals are mentioned regularly in anthology introductions on nineteenth-century women writers and studied as brief mentions in well-known Victorian and American novels, including *Middlemarch* and *Huck Finn*.

10. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: New American Library, 1981), 263.

TABLE I

Retail Prices of Reading Materials in Britain, 1814–1835

(Figures Compiled from Richard Altick's *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957], 260–93; 318–47.)

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Cheap Weekly Magazines | 1.5 <i>d.</i> –6 <i>d.</i> (<i>Mirror of Literature</i> , 1822) |
| Political tracts | 2 <i>d.</i> |
| Cheap Non-Fiction | 6 <i>d.</i> per part 4 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> per complete volume (1827) |
| Weekly Magazine | 6 <i>d.</i> –1 <i>s.</i> |
| Daily Newspapers | 7 <i>d.</i> |
| Recycled | 1 <i>d.</i> –3 <i>d.</i> Illegally hired/lent to multiple readers |
| Reprints (Literature) | 1 <i>s.</i> –12 <i>s.</i> (Shakespeare's plays) |
| Critical Periodicals | 2 <i>s.</i> (<i>Fraser's</i>) |
| Monthly Magazines | 2 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> –4 <i>s.</i> |
| Numbered Series (Fiction) | 2 <i>s.</i> –5 <i>s.</i> per weekly installment |
| Poetry Volume | 5 <i>s.</i> |
| Review Periodicals | 6 <i>s.</i> (<i>Quarterly Review, Edinburgh</i>) |
| Literary Annual | 12 <i>s.</i> –£3 |
| 3 Volume Novel | 15–21 <i>s.</i> (1814–1823) |
| Serialized Novel | 20 <i>s.</i> total for parts 21 <i>s.</i> complete vol. (<i>Pickwick Papers</i> , 1836) |
| Scott Novel | 31 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> (1820) |
| Circulating Library | 35 <i>s.</i> (per year for unlimited access) |

and nonfiction provided singular accounts of life in all types of scenes. The annual genre fell between the sensational cheap reading materials and the expensive “corrupting” novels. They did not contain the indoctrinating evangelical preachings like many printed materials in the early nineteenth century, but they were marketed as “wholesome literature” for the entire family and gifted as valuable memories.

In *The Economy of Literary Form*, Lee Erickson argues that literature is “the art of writing something that will be read twice” and journalism is “what will be grasped at once.”¹¹ The paper materials used in the production of magazines, periodicals, and newspapers were meant to withstand only enough handling by patrons until the next issue was produced and so were not sturdy enough to withstand multiple rereadings; the content was filled with consumable writing that was expended once it had been read once. Erickson concludes that early nineteenth-century audiences “prefer a work in a literary form which will provide the most pleasure upon rereading and has the most satisfying verbal texture. Conversely, when the cost of books is low, readers will care less about the pleasure of prospective rereadings and prefer a work in a genre that gives the most immediate pleasure.”¹² By contrast, an annual — produced as a small, portable volume with paper or leather boards and gilt edges — was marketed as a decadent object because of its rigid boards and material stability and as an object to be desired, re-read, memorized, memorialized, and treasured for its internal and external beauty.

Though the literary annual is often shuffled into the periodicals genre or, more specifically, identified in the category of ladies’ magazines, it is not an anthology, journal, magazine, newspaper, bound novel, or any other such form of popular media, such as the gift book or lady’s album,¹³

11. Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and Industrialization of Publishing, 1800–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996), 10.

12. *Ibid.*

13. The “gift book” was a traditional book that succeeded and incorporated the literary annual phenomenon. In “Creating a World of Books” (*Winterthur Portfolio: A Journal of American Material Culture* 31, no. 1 [Spring 1996]), 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). Though some literary annuals were published only once and may be mistaken for a “gift

that was produced during the genre's lifetime. Nevertheless, the genre capitalized on the popular, successful, and proven forms of media, folding the purposes of a ladies' magazine into its own evolution. Similar to ladies' magazines, an annual typically includes plates of various scenes (pastoral, foreign, nautical, etc.), poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. However, the ornate production of the annual volume marks its luxury, signals its material stability, and promises its morality and propriety — all of which was assured by the initial creators of the annual's form: Rudolf Ackermann, Alaric Watts, Frederic Shoberl, Frederic Mansel Reynolds, Charles Heath, and other male publishers, editors, and authors.

The standard criteria defining a literary annual were presented in Ackermann's first *Forget Me Not* volume, published November 1822:

- *Purpose*: Annuals are “expressly designed to serve as annual tokens of friendship or affection.”¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵ Critics adhere to this criteria and lambast any publication that is published outside the holiday time frame (November through January) yet still claims to be of the literary annual genre.
- *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.”¹⁶ 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 look for 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.”¹⁷ Ackermann

book,” the original intention was to publish the title the following year. They usually disappeared for lack of sales or by being subsumed into another annual.

14. Advertisement, in *Forget Me Not, A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1823*, ed. Rudolf Ackermann (London: R. Ackermann, 1823), at conclusion of volume.

15. Rudolf Ackermann, “Preface,” in *Forget Me Not, A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1823* (London: R. Ackermann, 1823), vii.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

establishes the literary annual as more than an anthology with this promise; the authors are generally contemporary figures of the time period instead of the classic greats.

- *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.”¹⁸ This claim of originality will plague the editors of the annuals through the 1830s, but most continue the declarations of originality that Ackermann set up in this initial advertisement for the 1823 *Forget Me Not*.
- *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.”¹⁹ Though this is a standard claim of superiority, Ackermann means to use his experience and established audience to create visual entertainment in addition to the literary. 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.”²⁰ Ackermann attempts to establish the literary annual genre as referential and useful across class boundaries. However, it is assumed that the working or lower classes are not included in this declaration because of the cost (twelve shillings). Because it is mere information, this element was eventually discarded 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.”²¹ Though the size eventually grew, the annual’s diminutive size (3.5” × 5.5”) repre-

18. Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*.

19. Ackermann, “Preface,” viii.

20. Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*.

21. *Ibid.*

sents 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 decadence of the entire genre and will be continued through its lifetime (even in the rebindings).

Each of these elements comprise the definitive literary annual. Any straying from them automatically disqualifies a volume from the genre's family. Even editors who discount Ackermann's role in creating the literary annual adhere to these criteria.

With these general criteria in mind, the literary annual format altered according to public demand, alterations which affected readers and authors alike. The first major shift occurred with the publication of Alaric Watts's *Literary Souvenir* in 1825, a volume which excised the almanac-like informational pages and excluded the album-like blank pages. With the debut of the 1828 *Keepsake*, Charles Heath and Frederic Mansel Reynolds caused an administrative alteration by producing an extravagant annual in larger form with silk boards and exceedingly well-paid literary names. By 1830, regardless of the hostile criticism towards the genre, the annuals flourished into subgenres, including Thomas Hood's parody, the *Comic Annual*, which ushered in many other parodies. In addition, these symbols of femininity became representations of an empire when they were (re)produced in Bengal and Calcutta: "A love of the arts is also kindled by [the literary annuals'] presence in the remotest corners of the empire, whither such admirable specimens of the pencil and the graver might not otherwise have reached in the course of a century"²² — a comment that suggests the indigenous inhabitants of India were not capable of the ingenuity and creativity offered by the British homeland.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF LITERARY ANNUALS

My study of literary annuals assumes a particular form of textuality aligned with textual theorists Don McKenzie, Jerome McGann and David Greetham. This particular textuality, the sociology of the text, assumes that any text or "work"²³ is a living material record of human interaction

22. Review of 1825 *Literary Souvenir*, *The Monthly Review*, October 1825, 279.

23. The terms, "text" and "work," are hotly debated issues in bibliographic and textual scholarship. My arguments align with Jerome McGann in his study, *A Critique of Modern Criticism* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1996), in which he defines a "work" as a series of specific "texts," a series of specific acts of production, and the entire process that both of these series constitute. *The "text" is a*

that evolves with each encounter. It gains meaning not just from its reader but is instilled with multiple levels of meaning at every mode of physical and creative production, and then again with each consumer or reader's engagement with the work and its collective memory — in essence, palimpsest-like traces similar to Freud's "mystic writing pad."

In "A Note on the 'Mystic Writing Pad,'" Freud describes memories as permanent traces of an original act. In order to avoid distorting that memory, people use writing as a mnemonic apparatus, a simulated memory. Freud points out that memories lose their importance over time and are occasionally jettisoned from the perceptual apparatus of the mind, meaning that we voluntarily forget (or purge the hard drive). The physical manifestation of a memory through writing allows us to replicate the mind's attempt to preserve original acts. However, the simultaneous permanence of writing and limitations of a medium (i.e., a sheet of paper) does not allow us to forget. Or, conversely, if written upon a chalkboard, which is completely ephemeral, the memory will become completely lost upon erasing the chalkboard. Freud is searching for a model which allows "an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and [an apparatus which] lays down permanent — even though not unalterable — memory-traces of them."²⁴ He finds a model to approximate memory in a child's toy, the "Mystic Writing-Pad": "an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of notes that have been made upon it."²⁵ Emotion, creativity, and humanity are expressed through written

component in the production of a "work." This distinction (and debate) is important because it highlights the sociological aspects of producing a piece of writing and places responsibility for production beyond the singular author's creative imagination — this singular authority stemming from an ideal advanced with the Romantic-era author. Here, I am purposefully reductive in my discussion of textual theory. My work relies on the various schools of thought: bibliography, textual materialism, social textual criticism and *l'histoire du livre* (a French tradition of book history). For a complete discussion of these various schools of thought, see "Society and Culture in the Text" in David Greetham's *Theories of the Text* ([New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999], 367). For reference in this article, I use "text" to refer to the characters on a printed page; "work" refers to McGann's sociological product.

24. Sigmund Freud, "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad,'" in *Collected Papers*, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1925), 176.

25. *Ibid.*, 177.

language and deposited as symbolic codes on a sheet. When that sheet is lifted, the writing disappears (much like the child's toy). Though the markings have been erased — the visual manifestation of language and all its symbolic content — the impression (or indentation) of the writing remains. More writing is then composed on the same sheet, entangling what was written and its impressions with what is being written and its symbolic meaning (i.e., language).

The Mystic Writing-Pad represents symbolic negotiation between impression and expression much the same as memory and life co-exist in a book allowing an historical text to contain a memory of its original birth (including authorship, creative imagination, literary value, printing, binding, selling, material value as an object, readers, ownership — its contemporary performance), a re-enactment of that moment as a historical object and a rebirth not as an object, but as an interaction with a future audience (what Jerome McGann calls a “human act” in the “textual condition”²⁶). Unlike the Mystic Writing-Pad, a book consists not only of writing, but of relationships necessary to the creation and survival of the book itself. The book is a community of influences that continues to acquire meaning. Each entity imbuing meaning is like a permanent trace on the Writing Pad, not necessarily made use of for, as Freud points out, “it is enough that they are present.”²⁷ Editors and publishers of annuals consciously market their works as completed memories and thereby imbue the physical object with a humanity or intellect. With this in mind, we can see the literary annual as a particular form of transmissive interaction and not merely a channel of transmission.²⁸

In his “Preface,” editor Frederic Shoberl personifies the 1834 *Forget Me Not*, presenting a human body instead of a textual object:

This year, Reader, the *Forget Me Not* presents itself to thee as “an old friend with a new face”; but, though somewhat altered in external appearance, its spirit remains unchanged. Thou wilt find that, though increased in size, and clothed in a different garb from that which it has been accustomed to wear, it is governed by the same earnest desire as ever to minister to thine amusement and information; to touch thy kindly sympathies and affections; and, while it conveys good-humoured reproof of the vices, the follies and the frailties of mankind,

26. Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), 3, 4.

27. Freud, 179.

28. McGann, 3, 16.

to encourage the higher and nobler feelings of our nature. Wouldst thou have strong evidence of this than our assertion — to turn to its pages.²⁹

Shoberl portrays his latest volume as an intimate figure in a fragmented body. The public face is refreshing because of its amended presentation, but its clothing hides a body from public view, suggesting an atmosphere of individuality, secrecy, and intimacy. This body, like a female body, is sequestered behind appropriate coverings. However, the sentimental and moral guidance still exists underneath the improved clothing. And that guidance was to exist beyond the immediate fashionable experience of receiving a volume. A reader was to reengage with the work throughout her (and the annual's) lifetime, drawing some new morsel of meaning with every reading.

Alaric Watts, editor of the very successful *Literary Souvenir* annual, contends that poetry will cause this continued re-engagement, even though poetry was decided to be more difficult than prose and not appropriate for this female audience. In the 1835 *Literary Souvenir* "Preface," Watts openly and decidedly privileges poetry over fiction, continuing the debates surrounding fiction's literary value: "with poetry, which without entering into minute detail, may illustrate, in a page, the true spirit of a picture; and which, being a branch of the Fine Arts itself, is less out of place in such a work. A poem, moreover, if it be good for any thing, will bear reading a second time, which is more than can often be said of a prose tale."³⁰ Since the short story had begun to hijack much of the space in magazines and periodicals, Watts's defense protects not just annuals (and encourages readers to buy them for the economy of reading), but also the sale of any poetry volume. Poetry, defined by Watts as a "branch of Fine Arts," further invites an annual's owner to reengage the material in multiple moments of reading. This engagement adds to the literary annual's meaning, a continuous archiving of intellect and memories.³¹

29. Frederic Shoberl, "Preface," in *Forget Me Not; A Christmas, New Year's and Birthday Present*, ed. Frederic Shoberl (London: Ackerman [*sic*] and Company, 1834), 3–4.

30. Alaric Watts, "Preface," in *Literary Souvenir and Cabinet of Modern Art*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Whittaker and Company, 1835), vi–vii.

31. The material object is traditionally defined as closed once it is produced. But it is my contention (aligned with Jacques Derrida) that the textual object, the physical book is also an archive of creation, memories, moments — especially the literary annual, which was intended to represent memories. In *Archive Fever* (trans. Eric Prenowitz [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996]), Derrida suggests that the moments of archivization are infinite throughout the life of the artifact: "The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (17). Archiving occurs at the

This archive resonates with future intentions as well as past forms. Ackermann's *Forget Me Not* was originally intended as an example of propriety and beauty, clothed in the garb of a moral instructor. With the 1834 volume, Shoberl maintains that instruction in a format that resonates with the didactic form of an eighteenth-century conduct manual. However, the annuals lack that self-conscious scolding inherent to the conduct manuals. By the 1820s, young women had already been exposed to Mary Wollstonecraft's cry for women's education of women with the 1792 publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which blames society for oppressing women's intellectual capabilities. Wollstonecraft's early treatise was well-founded, as is noted by Anne Renier:

[Because of the] rising standard of living, particularly among the middle classes prospering from the great industrial and commercial advances of these years, daughters were being given education of sorts...to attract suitors.... The young lady was taught to play the piano or the harp, [but] her more serious studies went little further than a smattering of literature, a modicum of history and geography...and the rudiments of a foreign language.³²

Wollstonecraft indicts the cultural practice of young girls' partial education in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* at a time when women were publishing their words, but not quite with the economic success of men. Wollstonecraft points out that men wrote the conduct books for women and girls, and that male dictatorial authorship of female conduct created a totally unrealistic ideal of femininity: "One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers...."³³

moment that the previous representation is overwritten by a new "saved" document. Traces of the old document exist, but cannot be differentiated from the new. At the moment an archivist sits down to actively preserve and store and catalogue the objects, the archiving is once again contaminated with a process. This, according to Derrida, "produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future" (68). Literary works become archives not only in their bibliographic and linguistic codes, but also in their social interactions yet to occur. It is the reengagement with the work that adds to an archive and that continues the archiving itself beyond the physical object.

32. Renier, 16–17.

33. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in *A Wollstonecraft Anthology*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1989), 112.

Conduct manuals (ranging as far back as the seventeenth century) focused on making “young women desirable to men of a good social position” and “represented a specific configuration of sexual features as those of the only appropriate woman for men at levels of society to want as a wife,” as Nancy Armstrong points out in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.³⁴ Armstrong also suggests that conduct manuals, squarely opposed to the leisure of novel-reading, focused on producing a woman who was educated *enough* to perform her duties:

This writing assumed that an education ideally made a woman desire to be what a prosperous man desires, which is above all else a female. She therefore had to lack the competitive desires and worldly ambitions that consequently belonged — as if by some natural principle — to the male. For such a man, her desirability hinged upon an education in frugal domestic practices. She was supposed to complement his role as an earner and producer with hers as a wise spender and tasteful consumer.³⁵

Instead of coordinating servants, meals and children, the novel presented an opportunity for women of all ages to linger in bed or the dressing room — or so that image is presented to the public.

Armstrong points out that conduct books meant to reinforce “domestic ideology and [articulate] a specific understanding of the relationship between reading, sexuality, and social control.”³⁶ These manuals are teaching tools to enact an idealized femininity and do not offer a leisure-reading experience. Contrary to standard conduct manuals, in her *Female Reader* introduction, Wollstonecraft urges her woman reader to improve “of her mind and heart” as “the business of her whole life” and then presents a compilation of short stories.³⁷ Wollstonecraft donned a masculine pseudonym (Mr. Creswick) for this publication, certain that advice from a woman author would not be considered authoritative for moral instruction of her own sex. Previous conduct manuals (by various authors) were incredibly popular through 1820, at which point they were replaced by several other media forms focused on women’s behavior.

34. Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 59.

35. Ibid.

36. Nancy Armstrong, quoted in Jacqueline Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain, 1750–1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 46.

37. Mary Wollstonecraft [Mr. Creswick], *The Female Reader*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1989), 52.

This tradition of *training* young women in conduct instead of *educating* them continued well into the nineteenth century.

With the conduct manual as one of its guiding principles, the literary annual presents itself as a fragmented physical and mental conflation of both masculine and feminine qualities: the feminine, the annual's appropriate coverings or proper dressing of what is represented as a female friend, and the masculine social control via marketing strategies that locate its content within male-generated codes of propriety and morality. The book is represented as a feminine body regulated by masculine intellect. The way that the conduct manual's content, male-dictated forms of propriety and morality, appears in literary annuals is best understood through Althusser's notion of "interpellation."³⁸ The 1834 *Forget Me Not* hails readers into a world regulated by propriety, moral education, and beauty. This relationship creates a community between work and reader. The reader constructs meaning through her own truth values, and with this a multiple presence is scripted onto the work itself, becoming part of the textual condition in which the only immutable law is the law of change.³⁹ The already extant ideology incorporated into the annual combines with the reader's beliefs, creating an archive of intersecting ideology and intimate subjectivity in the annual itself.

"FEMININE" TRADITIONS IN IDEOLOGY AND READING

Gauging reading practices has always been a difficult task, unless readers' notes or a reading journal are uncovered. However, with the annuals, the actual reader is even more difficult to assess because of the valuable nature of the annual — no markings would have been committed upon the annual's pages except in the appropriately invited blank space, i.e., inscription page or early album pages. And yet so much was written during the time about women readers that we have a good sense of what editors felt they needed to do to market their wares. Kate Flint argues that the "woman" reader continued to be a problematic category even during the nineteenth century:

From one point of view, reading was a form of consumption associated with the possession of leisure time, and thus contributed to the ideology, if not always

38. For a complete definition of "interpellation," see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984).

39. McGann, 3, 4, 16.

the practices, which supported the ideal of the middle-class home. Yet it could also be regarded as dangerously useless, a thief of time which might be spent on housewifely duties. Although a means of extending one's knowledge and experience beyond the bounds of one's personal lot — hence, perhaps, becoming a fitter marital companion in the process — reading was often, none the less, unavoidably associated with woman's "inappropriate" educational ambition.⁴⁰

To pose annuals as a cure rather than a disease, the initial editors and publishers of the annuals often competed to present the most beatific representation of family, woman, and the domestic in their annuals.

To escape censure for encouraging women to read, regardless of the status of the material, the editors had to provide guidelines for proper reading in their prefaces. They also drop names, not only acknowledging the artists, but also impressing upon the reader the importance of the volume's selections (especially considering that the competition for consumers was fierce within the first four years of the annual's appearance). In *Paratexts*, Gerard Genette points out that a preface, written after the compilation of the entire work, is written to "ensure that the text is read properly."⁴¹ The editorial preface emphasizes control of the reading experience by guiding the reader through the labor, importance, and purpose of that particular volume. Within the first few sentences, editor's generally express some sort of metaphor about the volume, whether it was a debutante (indicating a bourgeois class of leisure readers, *Keepsake* 1828⁴²), a card game (establishing jovial and somewhat illicit community⁴³) or a banquet (with images of consumption and overindulgence⁴⁴) — all "directing attention to the merits"⁴⁵ within each completed volume. The editors use these metaphors to "get the book read" and "to get the book read properly."⁴⁶

40. Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 11.

41. Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 197.

42. Frederic Mansel Reynolds, "Preface," in *The Keepsake for 1828* (London: Hurst, Chance and Company, 1828), v–viii.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Frederic Shoberl, "Preface," in *Forget Me Not; A Christmas and New Year's Present for MDCCCXXX* (London: R. Ackermann, 1830), iii–vi.

45. Frederic Shoberl, "Preface," in *Forget Me Not; A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1828* (London: R. Ackermann, 1828), iii–iv.

46. Genette, 197.

In addition, an editor guarantees in his preface that his volume will not only provide unbiased direction (for both reading and moral guidance) but also sustained presence in the reader's life. The presence is intellectual in the constantly recurring theme of moral guidance, and also physical: the book will sit conspicuously upon personal library shelves (or drawing-room tables). In essence, the editor guarantees that his volume is not ephemeral or transitory like so many other fashionable pasttimes. The preface assumes editorial control of reading practices at the same time that the volume establishes stability, a purpose partially borrowed from the conduct manuals.

In the "Preface" for the 1831 *Friendship's Offering*, editor Thomas Pringle suggests the suitability of his literary annual by declaring that it will permanently reside in the "repositories of family literature" and "may be rendered fit to impress the mind, and to assist in forming the taste, exercising the judgment, and improving the heart."⁴⁷ In this offering, Pringle entices the reader with promises of education, information, entertainment, and literary and moral value — all contained within the prose, poetry, and engravings of this year's volume. In addition, editors encouraged their readers to preserve each year's volume — a reassurance that the material stability of the volume paralleled its literary stability. In recent literary criticism, scholars note that because the annual was meant as a gift, it represents only a fleeting or ephemeral moment. In his dissertation, Matthew Kutcher argues that "gift books" (erroneously identifying the literary annual, see note 13 above) are "completely invested in their contemporary moment and...were not intended to live long."⁴⁸ Because annuals were made of sturdier materials than magazines, etc., their textuality actually signals their longevity. The annual could become a moral reference year after year and could physically survive because of its constructed (physical) superiority.

Flint has argued that male cultural critics' use of the figure of the woman reader "shows how notions about reading fed off attempts to define women's mental capacities and tendencies through their physical attributes, and, in turn, appeared to contribute to the validation of these

47. Thomas Pringle, "Preface," in *Friendship's Offering: A Literary Album and Christmas and New Year's Present for 1831* (London: Smith Elder and Company, 1831).

48. Matthew Kutcher, "Flowers of Friendship: Gift Books and Polite Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain" (Ph.D. diss., Univ of Michigan, 1999), 18.

very definitions."⁴⁹ A savvy entrepreneur, editor Alaric Watts (of the *Literary Souvenir*) marketed his annual as "polite literature," despite his publisher's belief that "[p]oetry is beyond many of the purchasers of this description of book."⁵⁰ This audience, women, girls and children, were expected to be uneducated, or at least unsophisticated, consumers. However, a majority of women readers themselves requested, read, and submitted poetry. Because so much poetry existed within the volumes, critics accused annual editors of flooding the market with what this audience wanted, sentimental (and unsophisticated) poetry.

This poetry, presented as appropriate material for the annual's audience, represents an idealized femininity, which I will call "patriarchal femininity," and is predicated on defining woman and feminine as passive, uneducated, domestic, impotent, or simple. Because the annuals were leisure materials, reading an annual supposedly did not require "severe application." Jacqueline Pearson states that "[g]enres which emphasised 'imagination' were gendered as feminine, those requiring 'severe application' as masculine. In effect this means gendering novels, romances, and some lyric poems as feminine, while men read 'better books,' epic, satire, classical literature, history and science."⁵¹ The annuals were filled with original poetry instead of the more authoritative and authentic classic literature. The genre typically included Romantic-era contemporaries instead of the long-gone (and proven) literature of the great authors. The few deceased literati included in an annual were typically P. B. Shelley and Byron, not Shakespeare, Milton, or Pope. And even Byron was not often cited because of copyright laws and exorbitant fees.⁵² The poetry submitted and published in annuals was classified as simple, unsophisticated, sentimental, and emotionally hysterical at times — supposedly resembling its readers.⁵³ Editors, then, were the gatekeepers of this patriarchal femininity, morality, and literary aesthetic in the annuals.

49. Flint, 11.

50. Ian Jack, *English Literature, 1815–1832* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 174.

51. Pearson, 19.

52. Most annuals included "found" letters or early juvenilia by Byron instead of his more popular works. The owners of these "found" items could grant copyrights more easily than a publisher would — for Byron, believing in the poet-statesman, gave publishers the copyrights to his works as they were produced.

53. Even the contributions of William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron were heavily criticized.

Editor Thomas Hood upholds this moral code (knowing his audience) when he dis-cludes Charles Lamb's poem, "The Gypsy's Malison," at the last minute from the 1829 *Gem* because "it would shock all mothers"⁵⁴:

THE GYPSY'S MALISON

Suck, baby, suck, mother's love grows by giving,
Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;
Black manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.
Kiss, baby, kiss, mother's lips shine by kisses,
Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;
Black manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
Tend thee the kiss that poisons 'mid caressings.
Hang, baby, hang, mother's love loves such forces,
Choke the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging;
Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging.
So sang a wither'd sibyl energetical,
And bann'd the ungiving door with lips prophetic.⁵⁵

The gypsy curses the uncharitable household without specifying who exactly rejected her begging requests for some sort of sustenance. As the speaker, the old woman almost barks her condemnation with the striking consonants that begin lines 1, 5 and 9: suck, kiss, hang. The repetition of "black manhood comes" (ll. 3, 7, 11) condemns the child to a guilty adulthood with his mother's life encouraging his eventual destruction. Considering that Hood compiled and organized *The Gem* to mimic the already successful *Forget Me Not*, *Friendship's Offering*, and *Keepsake* as dedications to femininity, this particular poem does not suit its purpose. For one, the maternal image is blackened by a suffocating mother; and the second image of a woman is a transient, evil beggar. Neither celebrates femininity, domesticity, or maternity. Nor do the images provide moral instructions, except perhaps to avoid opening the door to the extremely marginalized "other," the poor, dark woman.

Hood replaced Lamb's sonnet with prose, obligingly attributing it to Lamb's authorship in *The Gem's* table of contents. The resultant prose is

54. Charles Lamb, *The Letters of Charles Lamb* (Boston: Bibliophile Society, 1906), 5:158.

55. Lamb, 158-60.

a seemingly sympathetic dedication to widows and a call to eradicate the accompanying stigma:

Hath always been a mark for mockery: — a standing butt for wit to level at. Jest after jest hath been huddled upon her close cap, and stuck, like burrs, upon her weeds. Her sables are a perpetual “Black Joke.”

Satirists — prose and verse — have made merry with her bereavements. She is a stock character on the stage. Farce bottleth up her crocodile tears, or labelleth her empty lachrymatories. Comedy mocketh her precocious flirtations — Tragedy even girdeth at her frailty, and twitteth her with “the funeral baked meats coldly furnishing forth the marriage tables.”

I confess, when I called the other day on my kinswoman G.— then in the second week of her widowhood — and saw her sitting, her young boy by her side, in her recent sables, I felt unable to reconcile her estate with any risible associations. The Lady with a skeleton moiety — in the old print, in Bowles’s old shop window — seemed but a type of her condition. Her husband, — a while hemisphere in love’s world, — was deficient. *One complete side — her left — was death-stricken. It was a matrimonial paralysis*, unprovocative of laughter. I could as soon have tittered at one of those melancholy objects that drag their poor dead-alive bodies about our streets.

It seems difficult to account for the popular prejudice against lone women. There is a majority, I trust, of such honest, decorous mourners as my kinswoman: yet are Widows, like the Hebrew, a proverb and a byword amongst nations. From the first putting on of the sooty garments, they become a stock joke — chimney-sweep or blackamoor is not surer — by mere virtue of their nigritude.

Are the wanton amatory glances of a few pairs of graceless eyes, twinkling through their cunning waters, to reflect so evil a light on a whole community? Verily the sad benighted orbs of that noble relict — the Lady Rachel Russell — blinded through unserene drops for her dead Lord,— might atone for all such oglings!

Are the traditional freaks of a Dame of Ephesus, or a Wife of Bath, or a Queen of Denmark, to cast so broad a shadow over a whole sisterhood? There must be, methinks, some more general infirmity — common, probably, to all Eve-kind — to justify so sweeping a stigma.

Does the satiric spirit, perhaps, institute splenetic comparisons between the lofty poetical pretensions of posthumous tenderness and their fulfilment? The sentiments of Love, especially affect a high heroic pitch, of which the human performance can present, at best, but a burlesque parody. *A Widow, that hath lived only for her husband, should die with him. She is flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone*, and it is not seemly for a mere rib to be his survivor. The prose of her practice accords not with the poetry of her professions. She hath done with the

world, — and you meet her in Regent Street. Earth hath now nothing left for her — but she swears and administers. She cannot survive him — and invests in the Long Annuities.

The romantic fancy resents, and the satiric spirit records, these discrepancies. By the conjugal theory itself there ought to be no Widows; and, accordingly, a class, that by our milder manners is merely ridiculed, on the ruder banks of the Ganges is literally roasted.⁵⁶

Invoking the Sati (the practice of burning a Hindu wife alive with her husband's body), Hood suggests that wives lose (or forfeit) their identities when husbands die — or at least half of their physical selves. This limited view precludes a woman's individuality and life outside the home. The widow becomes vulnerable without her guiding masculine figure. Hood's commentary rests more upon the emotional state of widows rather than the social condition of a woman's role as a widow. However, his deliverance of "widow" from social mockery and dangerous amorous advances reflects a masculine attempt to rescue a fragile, vulnerable woman. He pleads to his audience for recognition. Though the piece seems geared towards altering the public's view of widowhood, in reality, it is addressed to the coterie of women readers and endeavors to provide an emotional solidarity and understanding of a woman's hardship. Hood's "The Widow" is definitely not a cry for autonomy on the widow's behalf.

Upon hearing of the rejection, Lamb writes, "I am born out of time. I have no conjecture about what the present world calls delicacy. . . . I have lived to grow into an indecent character. When my sonnet was rejected, I exclaimed, 'Damn the age; I will write for antiquity!'"⁵⁷ For Lamb, his poem represents a common motif of warning and charity. He plays upon the trope of the disenfranchised fortune teller who is both helpful and dangerous in her freedom. Even more than the pastoral cottage dweller, the gypsy represents Nature because she must live directly from the land and others' contributions. Hood's replacement contribution is much more mild. Instead of questioning the primary role for women within an idealized patriarchy (motherhood), he offers a celebration (of sorts) of woman's martyrdom while keeping her within the confines of patriarchal definitions.

Editor Frederic Shoberl, however, welcomed Richard Polwhele's

56. Thomas Hood, "The Widow," in *The Gem*, ed. Thomas Hood (London: W. Marshall, 1829), 24–7, emphasis added.

57. Lamb, 156.

contribution, "To a Young Lady Playing at Chess," for the 1834 *Forget Me Not*.⁵⁸ Polwhele, a well-known poet by this time, offers a well-constructed, brief poem that hints at the author's 1798 diatribe, *The Unsex'd Females*, against Mary Wollstonecraft. Polwhele's *Forget Me Not* poem is obviously meant to equate the strategies of an intellectual game with the strategies of becoming the proper married woman. In the title, the young lady does not even engage in chess but plays "at" it, as if it were a child's game. The final stanza declares:

And now, in stale-mate or in scholars,
Whether you play for love or dollars,
The game may terminate:
And, though your labour thus you lose,
You get your head from out the noose:
But marriage is — *check-mate!*⁵⁹

This last stanza punctuates the game of marriage, which rescues the young lady. Jacqueline Pearson, in reviewing the 1778 conduct manual *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, finds that marriage is necessary to control femininity: "femininity is 'natural' and innate, yet a constant struggle is needed to maintain it."⁶⁰ In the poem, Polwhele's lady completes the game, with some ambiguous entity declaring checkmate, rescuing the woman from her current state as if she is a helpless victim: whether she is a victim of her own femininity or the game itself is unclear. However, the young lady is not clearly the winner here: The act of marriage terminates the young lady's intellectual pursuit. This femininity presented by Polwhele attempts to harness and finalize the social role of women. His female player only mimics being intellectual, never quite fulfilling it. In this scenario, Polwhele presents a fantasy of social control and mimics Lamb's critique of women's "unmasculine" intellect (or complete lack thereof).

But not all critiques of femininity were as pejorative and protective: Felicia Hemans consistently contributed poetry to the annuals that challenged this patriarchal femininity. In the 1825 *Literary Souvenir*, Hemans

58. Richard Polwhele, "To a Young Lady Playing at Chess," in *Forget Me Not; A Christmas, New Year's and Birthday Present*, ed. Frederic Shoberl (London: Ackerman (sic) and Company, 1834), 325–6.

59. *Ibid.*, 326.

60. Pearson, 47.

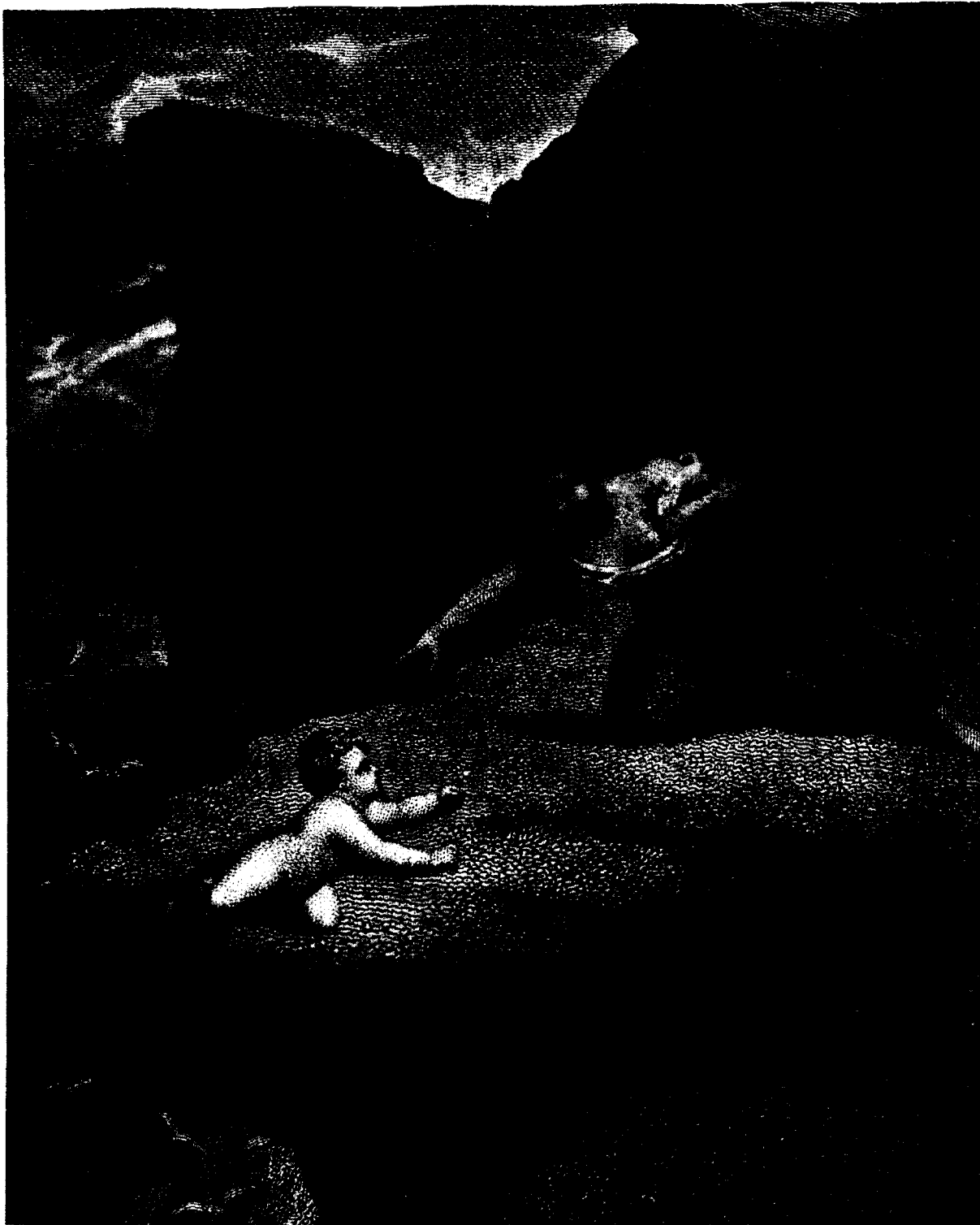
delivers a poetic representation of a mother's dedication to her child in "The Mother and Child":

Where art thou, Boy? — Heaven, heaven! the babe is playing
Even on the margin of the dizzy steep!
Haste — hush! a breath, my agony betraying,
And he is gone! — beneath him rolls the deep!
Could I but keep the bursting cry suppress'd,
And win him back in silence to my breast!

Thou 'rt safe! — Thou com'st, with smiles my fond arms meeting
Blest, fearless child! — I, *I* have tasted death!
Nearer! that I may *feel* thy warm heart beating!
And see thy bright hair floating in my breath!
Nearer! to still my bosom's yearning pain, —
I clasp thee now, mine own! Thou 'rt here again!⁶¹

Keeping in mind that this poem was inspired by an engraving, "The Mother and Child" (see Illus. 3), as was the tradition with annuals, Hemans constructs a maternal ideal: The mother agonizes over her child's imminent death, but, at the same time, the language celebrates her maternal power as is evidenced with the child's trust and innocence. In seeing her child playing near the cliff, the mother experiences death before the child can even sense any danger. And, even when the child is safe back in her arms, the mother still feels a sense of loss, a "yearning pain" for the potential outcome. In the engraving, we see the mother's left breast exposed to the child, and also to readers as the voyeurs. The mother's face is partially hidden in the shadows of the darkened sky, drawing attention to her highlighted breast. The breast is not sexualized but is instead an enticement to the young, cherubic child. In fact, though the wind seems to propel all of the mother's clothing away from her body and towards safety, her left hand seems to be purposefully revealing her left breast instead of struggling to cover it against the wind's force. The mother understands that her breast holds more power than the outstretched arm. The boy's gaze and hand do not match the level of hers but are pointed towards her breast, his source of nurturing, comfort, and sustenance. The image invites the child, as well as the viewer, back into safety. The light falls onto the woman's chest and lurches

61. Felicia Hemans, "The Mother and Child," in *Literary Souvenir; or, Cabinet of Poetry and Romance*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Hurst, Robinson and Company, 1825), 64.



Illus. 3: "The Mother and Child" engraving, published in the 1825 *Literary Souvenir* (London, Hurst, Chance), sets the tone for Hemans's poetic representation of the maternal ideal. As was common practice, engravings were rendered first and then submitted to a writer for a poetic rendering. Eventually poets began to resent this practice, calling it poetry-for-hire by "poetasters." W. Brockedon, original painting; W. Humphrys, engraver.

through her arm to point the viewer to the light-encircled child. This use of light links the child and the breast in an unbroken moment of desire: desire for the breast (by the child) and desire to rescue (by the mother).

With Hemans's poem, and specifically in the accompanying engraving, the reader identifies with the child's persona because of the overwhelming projection of maternity, rescue, and safety. The waters below (always a baptismal trope) and the liminal space (represented by the dangerous cliff) are rejected as the mother entices child and reader into her arms and to her breast. In addition, the gaze of the reader is captured through the representative breast instead of being engaged through the mother's direct gaze.

The highlighted breast is merely a fragment of the female body. The reader, as voyeur, gazes on this fragmented female body, which offers salvation. The scene does not ask the reader to identify with this body but with the mother's frantic intellectual position, to join her in her attempt to control emotion and rational thought to resolve the dilemma. The reader experiences this intellectual problem (with the mother, he or she tries to determine the best way to save the child) instead of typical hysteria.⁶² Hemans's mother exhibits strength, reason, and duty in an alternative rendering of the feminine. The literary annual, too, entices the reader with representations of women's bodies (despite not being sexualized) and draws her (the reader) into its salvation. The question is, then, a salvation from what? Patriarchy, by providing an image of an autonomous woman? Femininity, by saving women from themselves?

62. During the nineteenth century, hysteria was thought typically to be caused by "reproductive disorders, menstrual irregularities and suppressed sexual desire" (Estelle B. Freedman, "Two Case Studies of Hysteria," in *Victorian Women: A Documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France and the United States* [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995], 110-11). However, two French case studies by Jean-Baptiste Louyer-Villermay note that the women suffered hysteria not from being coddled or from some sexual desire but from lack of sustenance and their "impressionable type of personality" (*Ibid.*, 110-13). See Elaine Showalter's discussion of British culture and female hysteria in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Penguin, 1987). See also extended discussions about the relationship between literature and madness in Shoshana Felman's *Writing and Madness*, trans. Martha Noel Evans and Brian Massumi (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987) and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984).

The poetic moments by Polwhele and Hemans offer varying degrees of conduct to each annual's readers. While Polwhele's poem declares marriage triumphant (and the woman defeated), Hemans's poem enacts an urgency in maternal instinct and autonomy. With her poem, the speaker (identified only as a mother) lacks the demarcating role of wife. No mention is made of husband, a physical home or an ideologic home. She is free from social constraints though burdened by her responsibility to her male child.⁶³ Polwhele's poem provides structure (through marriage) to the young lady who plays at intellectual games. Hemans's poem exposes maternal drives without judging them.⁶⁴ In the case of Hemans's poem, the feminine is recuperated and empowered. The mother rescues her child from immediate threat and in doing so recognizes her responsibility for further "mothering" not just in physical safety but also intellectually — teaching the child to avoid harm on his own. This contradictory image of femininity offered by the annuals allows its women readers an opportunity to develop an alternative feminine ideal from within the patriarchal restrictions and thus for subverting patriarchal definitions of femininity.

The gaze in the "Mother and Child" engraving engages directly only the two characters within the scene. The reader is left as a voyeur to watch the captured moment. Even when gazing beyond the boundaries of an annual's scene, the usually female subject depicted in annual engravings often averts her gaze towards an invisible point beyond the scene. When the gaze of the subject is directed outside of the scene and specifically positioned so that the reader can lock eyes directly with the subject, the scene opens outside of the work and enfolds the reader into the moment, almost as if the reader and subject become intertwined in a doubled gaze that looks both inside and outside of the scene. The reader is incorporated into the scenic moment at the same time that the subject leaves the scenic page to engage the reader. Whichever the two-way path runs, the reader becomes an agent in the engraving's moment.

In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne Mellor argues that the engravings in annuals (also erroneously calling them "gift books," see note 13) "promoted an image of the ideal woman as specular, as the object rather than

63. The child's pubis is directed toward the viewer but is not specific in its genitalia; Hemans supplies the child's biological gender.

64. After all, how did the child get that close to the edge in the first place? Is it a symptom of neglect?

the owner of the gaze.”⁶⁵ However, Mellor does not address the engraving subjects who *do* engage a viewer’s gaze — and there were more than a few. This engaged gaze appears only once in an annual engraving published prior to 1828,⁶⁶ “The Fortune Teller” in the 1825 *Friendship’s Offering*⁶⁷ (see Illus. 4). Essentially, the scene does not allow a reader to be a voyeur but incorporates her into the specular viewing. The viewer is invited into “The Fortune Teller” scene through the eyes of a smiling child who is getting her palm read by a standing woman, most likely a gypsy. The woman, on whose lap the child sits, holds the girl’s hand out to the fortune teller, but the child is not paying attention to the interaction. The fortune teller directs her predictions and readings towards the sitting woman while the child seems at play with the viewer. Because of this directed gaze from the child, the viewer, too, is having her fortune told. The light and unbroken movement from the child’s gaze through her arm and to the fortune teller makes the viewer implicit in the scene.

The scene is one that marks each individual with a class standing: the child is well-dressed and being handled (not roughly though); the sitting woman commands both the fortune teller and the child by extending the child’s right hand but without actually touching the fortune teller; the teller stands with a supplicating bend to her shoulders in deference to the woman, not the child. The single right-handed finger that the teller holds up can either scold the child or offer advice. In all of this, the child is completely disengaged from the scene; smiling and playful, she is most fascinated with the reader. Her slack body belies her inviting, complicit gaze. The girl, whose body almost completely covers the sitting woman, overwhelms the scene. Her gaze and body are both a conduit incorporating the reader and a shield protecting the sitting woman from the fortune teller. This child supplies a sense of communi-

65. Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 111.

66. This survey of engravings in annuals is limited to annuals that were successful and lived in long runs that could be collected (e.g., *Literary Souvenir*, *Forget Me Not*, *Friendship’s Offering*, and *Keepsake*). Other annuals, including the *Juvenile Forget Me Not* and *Amulet*, are not included because they represent different topics with variant audiences (children and religion). Hood’s short-lived *Gem* is included because Hood edited all four volumes (1829–32), which lends a consistency to the work; in addition, he continued his work as the sole contributor to the *Comic Annual*.

67. “The Fortune Teller,” in *Friendship’s Offering; or, the Annual Remembrancer: Christmas Present, or New Year’s Gift for 1825*, ed. Thomas K. Hervey (London: Lupton Relfe, 1825).



Illus. 4: In the “The Fortune Teller” engraving, the child directly gazes toward her viewer. From the 1825 *Friendship’s Offering* (London: Lupton Relfe). Courtesy of the Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

ty to the scene, drawing the reader into the captured moment with only a gaze.

Only a few engravings after 1828 directly engage the reader by offering a visual connection between reader and engraving scene. By 1830, women with this engaged gaze began appearing in many annuals' portraits. The years 1828 and 1830 also signal a shift in the literary annual's purpose: they become books of beauty in which women's portraits dominated the annual's engravings and celebrated representations of femininity. This proliferation of portraiture and engaging scenes invites the readers/viewers into the fantasy world of the engraving, offering a path into and out of the idealized feminine scenes. One feature of this feminine alternative to patriarchal femininity is its openness to readers in contrast to the annual's prescriptive content with its masculine bias.

PHYSICALLY CONSTRUCTING THE FEMININE

These feminine and masculine qualities, contradictory as they are, appeared not only in the ideology resident in the annuals, but also in the annual's physical construction.

Ackermann's original *Forget Me Not* stood at only 3" × 5", the traditional duodecimo size. Though not uncommon at this time, this size provides portability and freedom from domestic space. Another genre, the novel, was also constructed in duodecimo or octavo with its largest audience in mind: women readers. Richard Altick argues that these proportions were directly related to the size of ladies' skirt pockets to allow freedom and portability:

[O]ne of the reasons why the eighteenth-century novel was issued in handy 12mo size was that it was read by so many women. When reading ceased to be confined to its traditional indoor locale and was practiced outdoors and in public vehicles, pocket-sized volumes became more and more necessary.⁶⁸

However, as a reviewer in *The Mirror* noticed, the literary annual's initial size, rendering it perfectly portable, contradicted the feminine delicacy of the volume's paper and silk boards that was "scarcely safe out of the drawing room or boudoir."⁶⁹

68. Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 278.

69. *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* 10, no. 288 Supplementary Number (December 1827), Project Gutenberg, February 2004 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/11326>>.

The December 1827 *Mirror* review also notes that the 1828 *Friendship's Offering* presents a unique alternative to all of the fragile coverings: a materially stable volume bound in sturdy embossed leather bindings. An annual could always be rebound in a personal selection, but the original binding was meant to be enjoyed indoors instead of strolling through the park — another unconscious attempt to mitigate a woman's freedom outside the home. Portability became a moot point when the size of annual volumes stretched to accommodate the public's demand for larger engravings, issued in larger octavo and the more luxurious quarto format.

In another move to present a consumable (and controlled) femininity, Frederick Mansel Reynolds and Charles Heath allegedly stumbled onto a warehouse of red watered silk, bought four thousand yards at three shillings a yard⁷⁰ and covered the boards of the 1828 *Keepsake* with it — thereby producing a textual object constructed from material normally used for a woman's skirt.⁷¹ By 1829, *The Gem*, *The Bijou*, and the *Literary Souvenir* all came to the debutante ball clothed in similar crimson silk. By 1832, Ackermann had changed his paper pasteboards to the crimson silk in solidarity with the other "ladies." Citing Cynthia Lawford's findings, Patricia Pulham notes that the rubber used "in the new backing techniques in which binders had invested 'was also being used in women's corsets to tighten the stays.'"⁷² The binding created the restrictions on both of these feminine bodies; however, the binding glue was not used until 1830, a significant amount of time after the annuals had become popular.

Similar to the clothing that garbs Shoberl's 1834 *Forget Me Not* (quoted earlier), these crimson-covered annuals market a private female body: a skirt not only creates a boundary between a woman's body and the public, but it also shields them from the improper touch of a profligate public. And, a silk skirt indicates a certain amount of wealth and class

70. Alaric Alfred Watts, *Alaric Watts: A Narrative of His Life. By his Son, Alaric Alfred Watts* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1884), 1:269–70.

71. Silk is vastly different from the stiff cloth coverings typically used at this time. For a discussion of cloth coverings, see Philip Gaskell, "Book Production: The Machine-Press Period 1800–1950," in *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), 189–310.

72. Patricia Pulham, "Jewels-Delights-Perfect Loves': Victorian Women Poets and the Annuals," *Victorian Women Poets: Essays and Studies* (Woodbridge, England: Brewer, 2003), 14.

standing. The long skirt, made of heavy silk and rustling about her legs, restricts her physically and reminds a woman of the moral boundaries of proper behavior (for lifting up her skirt is not only an act of defiance but also one of revelation to those around her). Access to a woman's skirt is similar to access to her dressing room, a view that Jonathan Swift inventories in filthy reality in "The Lady's Dressing Room," published 1732. The space, both under her skirt and within her room, even in the early nineteenth century, are still confidential and private. The silk material used by Heath invokes that private space but titillates at the same time because a reader may open the skirted volume and venture inside.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in American slang "pocket-book" — a form on which the literary annual was modeled — also refers to "the female pudenda,"⁷³ a euphemism that (albeit) anachronistically sexualizes the literary annual's textual body. Admittedly, even a crimson-covered annual does not specifically suggest female genitalia (unless we infer that the color of the material refers to menstruation). However, fragmented forms of a woman's body and mind are incorporated into the ideology and physical aspects of literary annuals. In the following cases, an actual element from the female body is combined with memories and the textual object to create a rendering of passive femininity.

Both Leigh Hunt and John Wilson use a woman's hair to assuage the heartache associated with distance and yearning. Hunt, writing for the inaugural 1828 *Keepsake*, pragmatically suggests using hair as a bookmark: "After all, it is easy to combine with a literary keepsake the most precious of all the keepsakes — hair. A braid of it may be used instead of ribbon to mark the page, and attached to the book in the usual way of a register."⁷⁴ In place of a ribbon, the lock of hair suggests a connection to both the full body and to memories within the literary annual. Both are memorialized with the act of joining them together. The lock of hair becomes a fetishized piece of woman incorporated into the textual body itself and a fragmented representation of relationship. By mere fetishizing of the hair, Hunt creates a sexual ambiguity about the fragmented female body: the proximity of hair to a body that supposedly remains untouched represents touching what cannot normally and properly be

73. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed. 1989, s.v. "pocket-book."

74. Leigh Hunt, "Pocket-Books and Keepsakes," in *The Keepsake for 1828*, ed. Frederic Mansel Reynolds (London: Hurst, Chance and Company, 1828), 18.

handled (at least without a marriage proposal). By giving a lock of hair, the woman gives a piece of herself that is otherwise taboo and sequestered. She offers, essentially, a fantasy or phantasm of herself — a poignant offer when she cannot properly make a gift of any other part of her body, particularly in any sexualized way. The lock of hair metonymically represents but also constrains the feminine sexuality offered by the annual.

In John Wilson's 1829 "Monologue, or Soliloquy on the Annuals,"⁷⁵ the critic meditates on the current state and purpose of literary annuals, reserving high praise for Ackermann's *Forget Me Not*. Within the article, gender is demarcated with objects and acts of remembrance. The author writes of a scenario that differentiates a man's memory (turning to fantasy) from a woman's memories.

In the scenario, a woman's memory is stirred by images of a setting sun, but her fantasy is of "the friend of our youth...at our side, unchanged his voice and his smile; dearer to our eyes than ever, because of some slight, faint, and affecting change wrought on face and figure by climate and by years!"⁷⁶ Instead of a lover, the woman's vision indicates a relationship filled with tenderness, friendship, and innocence. The male figure is represented to her in writing: "Let it be but his name written with his own hand, on the title-page of a book; or a few syllables on the margin of a favourite passage which long ago we may have read together, 'when life itself was new,' and poetry overflowed the whole world!"⁷⁷ Traditionally, individuals represented in writing are preserved in a historical moment; this particular moment inscribes the male figure with agency — his writing represents his intellectual and educated self. He has written himself into perpetual existence.

The female figure in Wilson's soliloquy, however, becomes the subject of desire and is represented through a lock of her hair:

Or a lock of her hair in whose eyes we first knew the meaning of the word 'depth' applied to the human soul, or the celestial sky! But oh! if death hath stretched out and out into the dim arms of eternity the distance — and removed away into that bourne from which no traveller returns the absence — of her on whose

75. John Wilson, "Monologue, or Soliloquy on the Annuals," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 26 (December 1829): 948–76, in *The Poetess Archive*, ed. Laura Mandell, Paula Feldman, Katherine D. Harris, and Eliza Richards <http://www.orgs.muohio.edu/womenpoets/poetess/> (accessed June 2005).

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

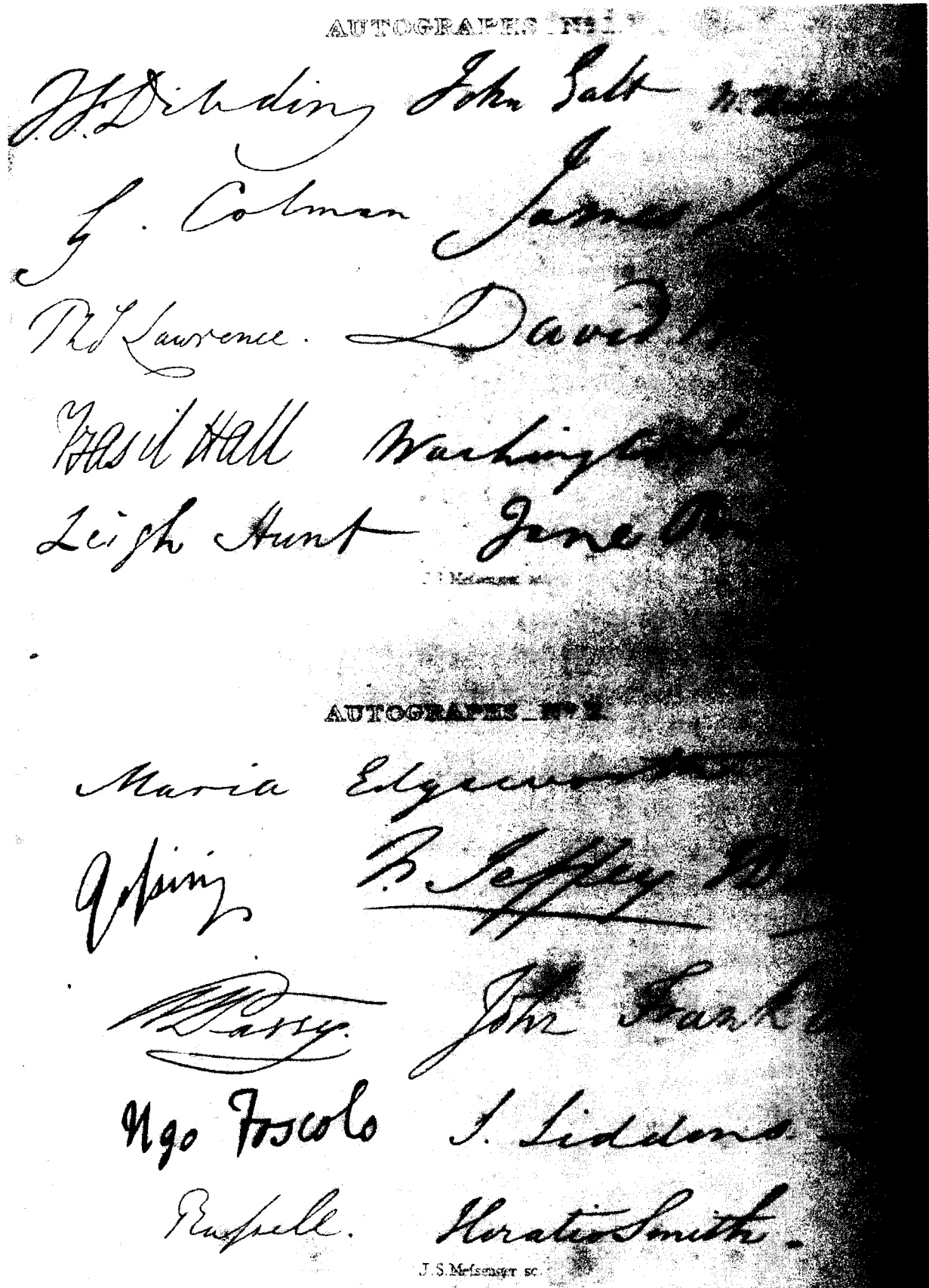
forehead once hung the relic we adore in our despair — what heart may abide the beauty of the ghost that, as at the touch of a talisman, doth sometimes at midnight appear before our sleepless bed, and with pale uplifted arms waft over us — so momentary is the vision — at once a blessing and a farewell!⁷⁸

The fantasized female figure has absolutely no language, no written text from which to infer her meaning. She is a ghost figure that does not even have a corporeal existence. The hair becomes the singular representation of her self, and the male figure interpolates that self into a body that has no agency, constricted by its ephemeral and incorporeal state. The male figure in the woman's memory at least has a face and eyes, but the female here only has a forehead and a relic of her own sexuality in that lock of hair. Unsupervised and mute, she appears to him in the most sexualized place, his bedroom. And his vision (a fantasy really) passes over him in an orgasmic moment.

Moving from representations of the physical body to the physical text, when the annuals first appeared on the market, publishers and editors borrowed particular elements from other successful genres, including the album and the almanac. Much like an album, the 1824 *Friendship's Offering* includes blank diary pages that invite the reader or consumer to mark and incorporate herself into the textuality of the annual. Through writing, this person becomes an agent in the physical production of the work — very similar to that agency offered by an album's blank pages. During 1824, Alaric Watts produced his 1825 *Literary Souvenir*, purposefully excluding blank pages and information. Interestingly, the *Forget Me Not* never includes blank diary pages for its consumer. Instead, it includes several tables of information, including hackney coach fares and popular statistics. Ackermann always excluded the reader from the physical production of his annual; however, the *Forget Me Not* evolved to allow the reader to assert her own ideology, especially with the inclusion of poems by Landon or Hemans.

Instead of blank pages, Watts capitalized on literary fame and included facsimiles of several famous authors' signatures in the 1826 *Literary Souvenir* (see Illus. 5). During this year and the following, *Friendship's Offering* altered its format, completely excising the almanac- and album-like qualities to create a more marketable and completely prefabricated book of printed memories. After Watts's changes, the only remaining blankness appears on the inscription page (see Illus. 6), an area

78. Ibid.



Illus. 5: Pre-Fabricated signatures: "Autographs No. 1" and "Autographs No. 2" in the 1825 *Literary Souvenir* (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co.). These signatures represent the most popular authors of that year.

embellished and partially controlled by someone other than the final recipient.

Unlike the dedication page, which is pre-produced and printed simultaneously on all copies, the inscription page gestures to a unique relationship between presenter and recipient. The dedication page, though, signals a larger, more public homage to one particular individual — almost as if the printed dedication page provides an example for an inscriber's inscription. The 1825 *Friendship's Offering* and 1826 *Literary Souvenir* are the first to offer dedications to various entities, usually inscribed to the current monarch or some patron. Interestingly, the *Forget Me Not* never engages in the practice of dedication pages. Both *Friendship's Offering* and the *Literary Souvenir* include a dedication page with every volume except their first (1824 and 1825, respectively). Commanding attention on a full page immediately following the verso of the title-page, the dedication in the 1826 *Literary Souvenir* begs:

TO
HER GRACE THE
DUCHESS OF BEDFORD
THIS VOLUME
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY HER GRACE'S
OBLIGED AND VERY OBEDIENT SERVANT
THE EDITOR.⁷⁹

When present, the dedication page replicates supplications reminiscent of the patronage system. The page itself was protected from possible excision during the rebinding process because of its protected positioning behind the title-page. However, because the inscription page precedes both the title-page and frontispiece, it may fall victim to a binder's cut during rebinding. This makes the inscription page dispensable regardless of its ability to engender a unique textuality for each volume.

Gerard Genette categorizes both of these types of pages as "paratexts": extraneous "liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book that form the complex mediation between book, author, publisher and reader."⁸⁰ Paratexts are not generally the linguistic

79. *Literary Souvenir*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Hurst Robinson and Company, 1826).

80. Genette, [i].

codes embedded within a work but constitute title-pages, dedications, inscriptions, adverts, forewords, etc., that implicate “a book’s private and public history.”⁸¹ According to Genette, an inscription “enhances the work’s material value by making this book different.”⁸² With a signature and/or a date inscribed on the opening pages of an annual, the inscriber authorizes him/herself into the life of the work as well as the life of the recipient. A relationship is actuated, and the inscriber grants himself/herself agency through the authority of a handwritten annotation. The inscriber writes the relationship into existence on this page.

Alternatively, the inscriber is, according to Genette, “always a potential reader at the same time that he is a real person, and one of the presuppositions of the inscription is that the author expects, in exchange for the gratification, a reading.”⁸³ Though marked upon the page and now part of the archive that is a literary annual, the inscription necessitates another agent, the recipient (the inscriber). The inscriber will then become the possessive and meaningful reader who will interact with the work in all of its bibliographic, linguistic, and paratextual modes.

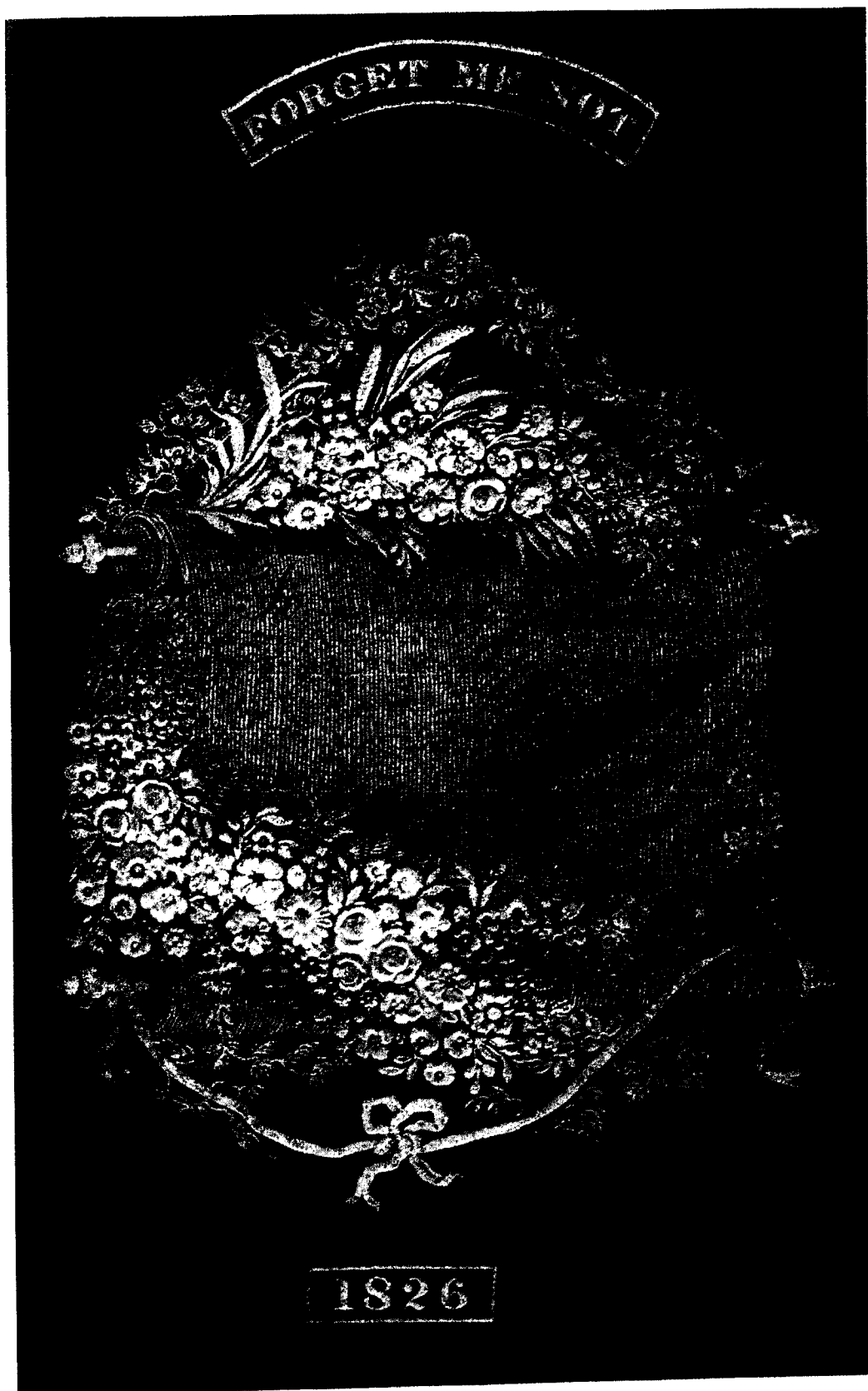
In this scenario between inscriber and inscriber, gender inherently dominates the exchange. Regardless of the actual biological sex of the two, the recipient accepts the inscription without alteration (ideally) — a relationship that mirrors the masculine and feminine roles inscribed into the literary annual itself. However, even these gendered actions are interrupted by an editor’s instructions. In the 1829 *Anniversary*, editor Allan Cunningham includes instructions for constructing the best inscription, complete with a sample of script:

The Vignette on the opposite page is intended to suit the presentation of the Volume with the recurrence of any particular day in the Year. It will be observed that the ancient “Anniversaire” has been taken to adapt it to the purpose.... It will be better to use the pencil, rather than the pen, for the purpose of inserting the names of the parties required. [¶] As the first inspection of a design, of the conundrum class, sometimes occasions a momentary misconception or perplexity, it may be as well to remark that the wording, *when found out and filled up*, will resolve itself into something similar to the following:

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid., 142.

83. Ibid., 141.



Illus. 6: Embossed inscription plate from 1826 *Forget Me Not* (London, Ackermann). The blue background and embossed details lent to the gift's importance by authorizing a specific space for inscription. Annuals used various methods to attract their buyers, e.g., the 1825 *Friendship's Offering* (London, Lupton Relfe) had the only illuminated title-page ever published in an annual.

TO LADY TEAZLE, *on the ANNIVERSARIE of HER WEDDING day, from SIR PETER.*⁸⁴

Sir Peter Teazle was a cuckold of Richard Sheridan's 1777 farce, "A School for Scandal." Married to a country squire's young daughter, Teazle becomes the victim of deceit, affairs, and gossip among the city's fashionable crowd. This inscription, though genuine in its instruction, invokes Sheridan's facetious (and revolving) relationships.

By using a pencil, the inscriber does not commit to a permanent mark (in reference to the numerous trysts portrayed in Sheridan's play) — even if using the apparatus to avoid mistakes. Pencil markings will temporarily identify the writer but are in danger of fading or being replaced. Using pencil also creates a volume which is eternally transferable through a chain of recipients and presenters. And on this page, a physical palimpsest of erased names records the provenance of the volume. By encouraging readers to write inscriptions in pencil, Cunningham encourages the infidelity of the female recipient who will pass it on to others rather than keeping it forever. However, the erasability of the inscription sets up the durability of the volume as it is passed from hand to hand. Despite being represented in the pejorative, then, this feminine object has longevity and historical presence, attributes rarely afforded to "feminine" forms.

THAT SUBVERSIVE FEMININE VOICE

Around 1830, the annuals became so popular that not even the press's vitriolic diatribes could dissuade consumers and readers from participating in the craze. The frenzy occurs at the same instant that women began to take control of the annual's contents (as both editors and contributors).⁸⁵ In discussing the *Lady's Magazine*, Jacqueline Pearson as-

84. Allan Cunningham, *Inscription Instructions*, in *The Anniversary or Poetry and Prose for MDCCCXXIX* (London: John Sharpe, 1829).

85. Men, or male names, dominated as contributors and editors until 1830 when, according to Harry Hootman's index of popular annual titles, the number of female names listed in the tables of contents out-numbered those of male names. (I specifically refer to male and female names because women authors sometimes shielded themselves behind masculine pseudonyms or simple initials. For more on anonymity and authorship, see essays in Robert J. Griffin's *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003].) Despite this differential, women authors consistently appeared in the annuals, beginning with the 1824 *Friendship's Offering* where Mrs. Opie's name was one of the few authors to be identified in the

serts "that women 'liked to read what women had written'"⁸⁶ because the readers contributed all of the magazine's contents until 1820. Regarding Victorian publications, Margaret Beetham argues that periodicals offer readers a mirror for their own identity, a theory that allows elasticity in a reader's identity:

Maintaining a regular readership means offering readers a recognizable position in successive numbers, that is creating a consistent 'reader' within the text. The reader is addressed as an individual but is positioned as a member of certain overlapping sets of social groups, class, gender, region, age, political persuasion or religious denomination.⁸⁷

Both Beetham and Pearson point to the reader as a consumer and patron of particular forms of media. With the annuals, women were certainly its consumers and audience. In their "imagined community"⁸⁸ of readers, the women saw images of themselves.

Felicia Hemans's poem "A Brigand Leader and His Wife" and its accompanying engraving, both published in the 1827 *Friendship's Offering*, offer a portrait of a seemingly poetically constructed conservative woman. This poem exemplifies the tension between the constructed social or public role of women and domesticity's suffocating role in a heroic world of male chivalry:

volume. In the 1824 *Forget Me Not* and 1825 *Friendship's Offering*, Letitia Landon is the only identifiable and recognizable woman's name, but in retrospect only: Her identity was temporarily shielded by her anonymous initials, "L.E.L.," an anonymity that would soon be pierced by her vast popularity among annuals' readers.

86. Pearson, 97.

87. Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own: Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 121.

88. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. ed., New York: Verso, 1991), Benedict Anderson argues that very large communities are formed simply by the act of reading similar materials: "[The community] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.... it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (6-7). Though discussing the nation state and national consciousness, the communion perceived among a particular group establishes a comradeship.

There's one, that pale beside thee stands,
 More than all thy mountain bands!
 She will not shrink in doubt and dread,
 When the balls whistle round thy head;
 Nor leave thee, though thy closing eye,
 No longer may to her's reply.

And, oh! not wholly lost the heart,
 Where that undying love hath part;
 Not worthless all, though far and long
 From home estranged, and guided wrong:
 Yet, may its depths by Heaven be stirr'd,
 Its prayer for thee, be pur'd and heard!⁸⁹ (st. 3 and 6)

A woman follows her husband to the far reaches of war only to be left alone upon his death. The speaker describes a "home estranged" and a woman "guided wrong," a woman who attempted to maintain domesticity by following the ultimate figure in her life, her husband. The home a woman so carefully cares for is "an ideal that is yearned for," as is argued by Angela Leighton.⁹⁰ In a foreign land, Leighton continues, where "home is unhomey, the woman's place [has] shut her out."⁹¹ The poem's little "flower" stands alone, "A friendless thing, whose lot is cast, | Of lovely ones to be the last." Yet she still maintains her place as dutiful wife, even in the absence of her husband's ruling authority: "Sad, but unchanged through good and ill, | Thine is her lone devotion still" (st. 5). Hemans describes this woman in all of her domestic piety, inherently naive and constructively limited. In both stanzas, the wife is "pale" and fragile like a "flower," though stalwart in her devotion as she "stands" beside her husband while "balls whistle round" her head. Hemans duplicitously combines national pride in the British fighting force with absurd heroics on the wife's part. The wife endangers her own life, literally standing behind her husband as he fights for his life and fails. The violent danger whizzing by her should signal the wife to fight for her own life, but there is no indication that she can or will. She simply passively stands beside his cold body, remaining pious.

89. Felicia Hemans, "The Brigand Leader and His Wife," in *Friendship's Offering, A Literary Album*, ed. B.E.P. (London: Lupton Relfe, 1827), 36.

90. Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), xxxvi.

91. *Ibid.*

In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne Mellor points out that “the thematic content of Hemans’s poetry pits a masculine public code of heroic chivalry against a feminine private code of domesticity, only to reveal the inadequacy of each.”⁹² The accompanying engraving, “The Brigand,” shows the wife peeking over her gun-bearing husband with one hand draped on his shoulder and the other covering her breast in a pose which suggests her feminine inability to protect herself. The complication is that this woman stands only partially concealed by her husband in the middle of a battlefield. She has removed herself from the enclosed safety of home and exposed herself to the open field of violence. The partial enclosure cannot protect her or her husband from the flying bullets that threaten their existence. The make-shift “home,” easily ruptured by these penetrating bullets, will soon fall apart when the Brigand Leader himself receives a fatal wound. The wife stares in disbelief at her husband’s lifeless body. The “home” does not protect him because it is a false structure. The woman, who represents the “home,” cannot provide structural safety for her husband; she cannot protect him from death. Instead, she witnesses his death in frozen despair.

This witnessing is the important moment in the poem, however. The Brigand Leader’s wife is the source of history inside the patriarchal system. She is left standing, not her husband. She does not fade away, as Hood suggests in his 1829 “The Widow” piece (discussed earlier). In this patriarchal world, if men are the source of history, then who authorized this account? The most obvious answer is the narrative source — the wife. The Brigand Leader is objectified by the historical account. In contrast, the wife witnesses, remembers and recounts the narrative of the history and becomes, more importantly, the reproductive agent, history’s subject. However, the wife epistemologically reproduces instead of biologically. She will now live forever both within the poem and outside of it. Her life continues after the poem ends because the reader never receives any information about her other than her survival. On the other hand, the Brigand Leader’s life ends with the poem’s conclusion. Felicia Hemans uses war, a masculine poetic trope, to free a woman from the bondage of marriage and leaves her to survive and transmit her stories of a feminized war experience. In essence, the public history becomes her private, domestic experience, i.e., her experience is conflated with the external “masculine” society but feminized and internalized by her

92. Mellor, 10.

participation. History is borne by the “mother,” this feminine figure, and is re-created despite her “other” present in the poem. The Brigand Leader’s wife is disempowered in the sense of warfare, but she gains power by transmitting a historical narrative. The “Brigand Leader” provides an example of woman’s subversion of the patriarchal system through the trope of English warfare. The engraving itself is titled only “The Brigand”; it is Hemans who identifies and defines the role of the woman in the image.⁹³

The Brigand Leader’s wife witnesses and historicizes as an omniscient speaker, but in Maria Jane Jewsbury’s lamentations in “A Tale of a Mother’s Grave,” published in the 1831 *Friendship’s Offering*,⁹⁴ an androgynous voyeur witnesses a son’s grief for his stalwart mother and the mother’s blind devotion to his masculinity. The speaker witnesses the carriage approaching a graveyard and remarks that a sexton exited along with a middle-aged man who was “like a child | That fears to walk alone” (st. 6). The sexton blesses the grave, unaware of the son’s relationship:

“God rest thy soul, poor Ellen!”
 And with a faltering hand
 The old man plucked a weed that grew
 From out the osier-band;
 And he who in the chariot came
 Fell on his knees and did the same.

“Poor Ellen!” said the sexton,
 “The parish laid her here,
 We little thought that one like you
 Would give her grave a tear,
 It may be that some time or other
 She was your servant?” — “No — my mother!”

93. Toward the end of her life (d.1835), Hemans began to critique an idealized feminine ideology that could no longer sustain the “cult of domesticity” or the Romantic ideal of beauty. The disintegration of this domestic ideal is apparent in her poem, “Casabianca,” published in 1826. She moves to female heroines with her work, *Records of Woman*, which resituates history through the perspective of female heroes, including “The Indian Woman’s Death Song” and “Madeline: A Domestic Tale.” In these poems, Hemans reverses gender roles and as a result, finds a very receptive audience for both her annual contributions and her volumes of poetry — perhaps in spite of the British nineteenth-century’s construction of gender.

94. Maria Jane Jewsbury, “A Tale of a Mother’s Grave,” in *Friendship’s Offering: A Literary Album and Christmas and New Year’s Present for 1831*, ed. Thomas Pringle (London: Smith Elder and Company, 1831), 126.

“Would thou wert back, My Mother!
For I never knew thy worth,
Till I had wandered far and long
Upon this weary earth—
Till I had lived full half my span,
And grown a melancholy man!

This son has wandered with no central location to call home. But he forsook his earlier home by not cherishing its presence:

“I thought thee harsh and wayward,
Too often when a boy;
Alas, I never knew how small
Thy share of earthly joy!
The pangs and fears that wrung thy breast,
When I was safely laid to rest.

“Our fare was hard and scanty,
And I with murmurs ate,
Whilst thou, though born to riches vast,
In hunger silent sate; —
It was thy hand that earned our crust,
And now — that blessed hand is dust!

“I am grown rich, my Mother,
I have done deeds of fame,
And thought to make thee now forget
My boyhood’s blight and shame:
I come — and spoils of land and sea
Can only deck a GRAVE for thee!⁹⁵

Jewsbury highlights this absence of the home while emphasizing the de-centering of the self, effected because of the absent mother. Even while covertly questioning the institutions of home and maternity, Jewsbury incorporates a narrative that again treats the absent woman as object. She is the unsung hero and the future recipient of his spoils. But he did not appreciate her presence and cannot now reward her because she is absent. In place of her presence, the son wants to erect a tomb elegant enough to represent his mother’s silence:

“Yes — I will build with marble,
And gild with gold thy tomb;

95. *Ibid.*

But wert thou in that lowly cot
 Amongst the wall-flowers' bloom, —
 The very cot I once disdained —
 How much of heaven on earth were gained!⁹⁶

Apparent are feminine tropes of flowers, silence, death, responsibility for grief (this falling on the only masculine representation). In the relationship between woman poet and woman reader, the reader can derive from this poem a sense of disruption in angelic domesticity. The son left due to his dissatisfaction with his mother's abilities and stern qualities, thereby questioning her authority and asserting his own masculine will. In the end, he worships her but only because she is physically absent. This poem boldly pays homage to a mother's role and her authority in relation to masculine ideology. But it also enacts the existing figure of woman as muse. The mother inspires her child with her death, not her life.

The witness to the son's anguish sneaks off after viewing the outpouring of grief, resentment, and retribution. The son's dialogue is cast in quotation marks to give a sense of reporting instead of poetic interpretation. The reader's source leaves the scene, almost as if the scene is never resolved. In fact, Jewsbury concludes the poem with a stanza admonishing readers to appreciate their mothers — a somewhat didactic turn to the poem. Regardless, without the benefit of an "I," the female reader has no sense of changing ideologies of femininity. However, in Letitia Landon's 1827 *Friendship's Offering* poem, "Song," the author displays a sophisticated understanding of the feminine realm while discretely subverting its codes (much in the same way Hemans quietly proclaims in "The Brigand Leader and His Wife"). Published simply under the initials, L.E.L., the poem captures a transcendent poetic experience:

I *wrote* my name upon the sand;
 I thought I *wrote* it on thine heart.
 I had no touch of fear, that *words*,
 Such *words*, so graven, could depart.
 The sands, thy heart, alike have lost
 The name I trusted to their care;
 And passing waves, and worldly thoughts,
 Effaced what once was *written* there.
 Woe, for the false sands! and worse woe,
 That thou art falsest of the twain!

96. Ibid.

I, yet, may *write* upon the sands,
But never on thine heart, again.⁹⁷

Love is the most apparent subject matter. However, the speaker presents love not only from herself as subject, but also as the recipient of the grief; she is both subject and object of the poem, predominated with “I” and personal pain. Kathleen Hickock argues that, typically, poetry of the nineteenth century was about love “connect[ed] with some kind of sorrow.”⁹⁸ However, the result of this love gives agency to the woman, exemplifying that “[w]omen were frequently reminded that the burden of sacrifice and self-effacement in love was theirs.”⁹⁹ L.E.L.’s effacement in the name of love is reminiscent of Hemans’s later devotional love at the Brigand Leader’s wife’s own personal expense. Landon’s poem also reminds readers of the classic Romantic hero, interpreting everything through the poetic “I.”¹⁰⁰

The woman in the poem surpasses mere chagrin at being the jilted lover; she grants herself existence outside of the lover’s embrace by promises of the future and loving again (“I, yet, may write upon the sands, | But never on thine heart, again). Her sense of self is not constituted

97. L.E.L. [Letitia Elizabeth Landon], “Song,” in *Friendship’s Offering, A Literary Album*, ed. B.E.P. (London: Lupton Relfe, 1827), 180 — emphasis added.

98. Kathleen Hickock, *Representations of Women: Nineteenth-Century British Women’s Poetry* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 20.

99. *Ibid.*, 20–1.

100. For further discussion of Landon’s Romantic identity, see Daniel Riess, “Laetitia Landon and the Dawn of English Post-Romanticism,” *Studies in English Literature* 36, no. 4 (1996): 807–27; Virginia Blain, “Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Eliza Mary Hamilton, and the Genealogy of the Victorian Poetess,” *Victorian Poetry* 33, no. 1 (1995): 31–52; Derek Furr, “Sentimental Confrontations: Hemans, Landon, and Elizabeth Barrett,” *English Language Notes* 40, no. 2 (2002): 29–47; Harriet Linkin’s “Romantic Aesthetics in Mary Tighe and Letitia Landon: How Women Poets Recuperate the Gaze,” *European Romantic Review* 7, no. 2 (1997): 159–88; Margaret Linley, “Saphho’s Conversations in Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and Christina Rossetti,” *Prism(s): Essays in Romanticism* 4 (1996): 15–42; Tricia Lootens, “Receiving the Legend, Rethinking the Writer: Letitia Landon and the Poetess Tradition,” in *Romanticism and Women Poets: Opening the Doors of Reception*, ed. Harriet Kramer Linkin and Stephen C. Behrendt (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1999), 242–59. Also see Anne Mellor, Susan Wolfson, and Jerome McGann’s works on the female poet — especially McGann’s *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) and *Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983); and Anne K. Mellor’s *Romanticism and Gender*.

merely by love. But love is not the only transitional element: “home” (or a sense of the domestic) seems inconsistent and transitory in alignment with the sand, which is constantly being wiped clean.

Like Hemans, “Rosa,” a partially anonymous author, contributes a poem to the 1827 *Friendship’s Offering*, “Hope and Memory,” which uses the popular trope of war. But the woman does not participate in war. The sounds of an approaching war rupture her blissful peace as she sleeps in a pastoral setting. Noticeably missing from this scene are the boundaries of the enclosing domesticity of Hemans’s “A Brigand Leader.”

“Oh! Why?” I exclaim’d, “do these sounds intrude,
 “My blissful visions breaking?
 “For, never, in this sweet solitude
 “Should thoughts of war be waking.” (st. 6)

But, it pass’d; — and, again, the soften’d tones
 From the distance came so sweetly,
 That I griev’d, when I heard the latest ones,
 To think, they had gone so fleetly. (st. 8)¹⁰¹

The woman revels in her “sweet solitude” in “a lonely, but lovely spot” where she “stray’d” (st. 1). She escapes a “home” to wander unfettered “[t]he world, and its cares, forgetting” (st. 1) voluntarily, unlike Hemans’s wife of the brigand officer “From home estranged.” This woman roams freely, liberated by her own truth; Hemans’s wife silently proclaims “Thine is her lone devotion still.” Through Hemans’s narrative, the wife does not speak, though the poem comes from her point of view. In Rosa’s narrative, the wandering girl briefly has a voice, expressing her dissatisfaction with being disturbed and the violent nature of the sounds (impending war). Infused between these seemingly benign descriptions of the “sounds” of war is a poetics of resistance to violence. Instead of being captivated with the possession and interpretation of the events, the women within these two poems try to situate themselves among the violence or to ignore it wholly, as in the case of “Hope.” In “Women Reading, Reading Women,” Jacqueline Pearson suggests that women assume both subject and object position in writing this poetry:

Yet reading might equally allow the woman access to a dangerously public domain of discourse. As the “meeting place of discourses of subjectivity and socialization,” the issue of reading disturbed commentators who found threatening

101. Rosa, “Hope and Memory,” in *Friendship’s Offering, A Literary Album*, ed. B.E.P. (London: Lupton Relfe, 1827), 68.

both women's command of their subjectivity and their access to extra-domestic world.¹⁰²

L.E.L. exemplifies Pearson's epistemological theories of shifting readership in "Song" by representing "I" as both lover and loved, as well as griever and recipient of grief while the lover wanders away: "The sands, thy heart, alike have lost | The name I trusted to their care" (l. 4). Woman achieves agency through her relationship with the poet instead of assuming objectivity: "If women were not encouraged to be active readers or writers, they were urged instead to be muses and inspire male poets, or were defined as passive texts to be read."¹⁰³ In direct reaction to the insurgence of published poetry by women, Frederic Rowton compiled *The Female Poets of Great Britain*, published in 1848. However, in the introduction, Rowton unapologetically reviews some of the feminine poetry (compiled from the literary annuals) and proclaims that women's poetry merely reinforces a gendered hierarchy where masculinity dominates:

They will show, if I mistake not, that while Man's intellect is meant to make the world stronger and wiser, Woman's is intended to make it purer and better.... It is for man to ameliorate our condition; it is for woman to amend our character.... They aim, not at separating the two half minds of the world, but at making them act in concert and unison.¹⁰⁴

L.E.L.'s "Song" dashes Rowton's ideology in the first line by granting agency to a feminized speaker. This woman writes (and thereby claims) her own name: "I wrote my name upon the sand; I thought I wrote it on thine heart." She inscribes and memorializes her name upon the emotional seat of a body. She privileges her own name over that of a man's because she does not write the man's name over her own heart. By inscribing her name on his body, she declares ownership of him. She realizes the misplaced inscription too late to retract it, discovering that she has inscribed herself onto a transmutable surface. The sand washes away her pen; but she reinforces the inscription by writing and narrating the act.

Despite the mistake, the narrative "I" willfully chooses the surface

102. Jacqueline Pearson, "Women Reading, Reading Women," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 80.

103. *Ibid.*, 84.

104. Frederic Rowton, "Preface," *The Female Poets of Great Britain* (1853; reprint Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1981), xxxix.

and acknowledges that she will re-inscribe her name, but on another surface: "I, yet, may write upon the sands, | But never on thine heart, again." The misdirected pen will not wither and die due to this washing of the ink; the pen will move again and make a mistake again. But it will not ever stop its writing: The pen empowers the subject of the poem. By allowing the "I" to wander and rule her own feelings, L.E.L. disavows the "muse" cycle which entraps women in a passive position.

CONCLUSION

Annuals' authors, editors, publishers, and artists all present some form of the feminine in each volume. The feminized textual body became a quiet and subversive battleground that mirrored the cultural shifts apparent in the early nineteenth century. But the struggle extended beyond the institutions that produced the volumes; it also included the genre's consumers and readers (and rereaders). As a caveat, though, when I refer to the "feminization" of literary annuals, I do not refer to the "feminist-ization" of these works. The feminist quality of the literary annuals is an anachronistic and limited view of the annuals' contemporary and continued (including its critical history into the twenty-first century) sociology. The work was produced as the ideal feminine representation — beauty, flowers, sentimental poetry. And though women began producing the contents and editing the entire product, it was not the type of overt feminist movement that Mary Wollstonecraft instigated (or hoped to) with the *Vindications of the Rights of Woman*. These works were imagined to be similar to a female body: delicate, temperamental, mysterious, and taboo. However, under female authorship and editorial intervention, this feminine body exuded other virtues abnormal to the patriarchal feminine: strength, labor, life-giving, complicated. The annual is a feminized object that is not a victim in need of rescue by a hero, not even a feminist one. The genre survived because of its capacity to represent a new type of feminine strength.