

FORGET ME NOT!
The Popular Phenomenon of Literary Annuals

by Katherine D. Harris

DESCRIPTION OF MANUSCRIPT

MS Length: 125,000

Literary annuals were a “fad” of early nineteenth-century England – or so many critics would like us to believe: “‘The Annuals,’ wrote [Robert] 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 much to the dismay of critics like Jane Wilde who declared the genre an “epidemic.” Writing in 1855, and therefore, retrospectively, Wilde refers both to the early proliferation of titles and to the “sickness” that caused readers overwhelmingly to desire, own, read, and receive annuals. Though pummeled in the British critical press, the genre nevertheless served the 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 [who] appeared in the first instance in their pages,”² including contributors William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Richard Polwhele, Lord Byron (posthumously), Felicia Hemans, Mary R. Mitford, John Clare, Maria J. Jewsbury, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Lady Blessington, Mary Shelley, Lord Tennyson, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth and Robert Browning, and many more.

The genre, which began in 1822, was explicitly created for a middle-class audience due to its moderate retail cost of 12s. to £3. Initially published in duodecimo or octavo (3.5" x 5.5"), 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. They were published in November and sold for the following year, which made the genre an ideal

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

Christmas gift, lover's present, or token of friendship. From the first title in 1822, Ackermann's *Forget Me Not*, the genre experienced a wild, popular frenzy that drove authors, publishers, and editors alike. 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; not until 1840 did the number of annual titles fall below forty. Annuals enjoyed comparable popularity in the United States and Europe, until their demise in 1860 when ladies' magazines took over the work of defining domesticity, the feminine, and the Victorian woman.

This study assesses the phenomenal rise of this popular genre, its bibliographic genesis from other literary forms, its attempted social control of women, and its re-definition of "feminine." Within the first decade of the annual's success, male editors, authors, and publishers presented readers with an idealized femininity that approximated the propriety, education, and social instruction offered by earlier and more narrowly didactic conduct manuals. However, readers and consumers of the annual 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 therefore 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.

For this project, I have limited my review to successful and popular British literary annuals, including *Forget Me Not*, *Keepsake*, *Comic Annual*, *Friendship's Offering*, *Literary Souvenir*, and *The Gem*. Though Ackermann's *Forget Me Not* sparked the entire phenomenon, most scholars study Alaric Watts' *Literary Souvenir* for its genre-altering format or Charles Heath's *Keepsake* for its canonical authors/contributors. My research, however, begins with the first literary annual, the *Forget Me Not*, introduced by Rudolph Ackermann in November 1822, and defines the literary annual as a unique genre distinct from conduct manuals, albums, gift books, scrapbooks, pocket-books, anthologies, almanacs, emblems. By tracing the annual's evolution and metamorphosis, this study analyzes the production of "Englishness" as an enabling concept for Britain's colonial dominance in the nineteenth century.

In the past, annuals have typically been mentioned only in footnotes, studied as brief mentions in

well-known Victorian and American novels, including *Middlemarch* and *Huck Finn*, or mined for their canonical contributors. In the monumental *Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, William St. Clair dedicates only three pages (229-232) to annuals and a short mention in the appendix, contributing only what has routinely been circulated by literary annual historians Faxon and Boyle³ without correcting any misconceptions.

In the current literary climate, both British and American literary annuals are being mined once again for their poetry and their unique relationship to women readers. Scholarship in Romantic and Victorian women poets has yielded several anthologies of women poets, some of whom were extremely popular contributors to the annuals. Many of these anthologies, including Duncan Wu's third edition of *Women Romantic Poets: An Anthology*, have been well-received and are regularly adopted for Romantic and Victorian literature courses. Meanwhile, Susan J. Wolfson's definitive volume of Felicia Hemans' poetry included, for the first time, explicit annotations pointing to literary annuals as the source of much of Hemans' work. Even so, many scholars continue to analyze only a single literary document, canonical contributor, engraving, or literary annual volume without considering the genre's form and content shifts.

My manuscript addresses editors, publishers, readers, and authors of the annuals in connection with the physical text itself by creating a history that accounts for the annual's origin, evolution, and success despite castigations such as Charles Lamb's declaration that annuals were part of an "unmasculine & unbawdy age." I focus on dispelling Faxon and Boyle's inaccuracies and offer a recuperated version of the material text's history and cultural importance. The literary annual survived, even thrived from the attention offered by nineteenth-century popular culture, despite – or, as I argue, because of – its "feminine" writing. Using close readings of poetry, prose, and engravings from the annuals, I explore the construction of a "subject" with an emphasis on women writers. The social construct of both gender and the "author" changed because of the production and popularity of these British literary annuals.

³Andrew Boyle, *An Index to the Annuals (1820-1850). Vol. 1: The Authors*, (Worcester: Andrew Boyle Ltd., 1967) and Frederick Faxon *Literary Annuals and Gift Books: A Bibliography, 1823-1903* (original printing 1912) (Surrey: The Gresham Press, 1973).

This literary history complements several other works that only peripherally deal with literary annuals, including Paul Douglass' *Lady Caroline Lamb* biography and *Selected Letters* (Palgrave 2004 & 2006), Terence Hoagwood and Kathryn Ledbetter's *Coloured Shadows* (Palgrave 2005), Eugenia Roldan Vera's *The British Book Trade and Spanish American Independence* (Ashgate 2003), Paula Feldman's facsimile edition of *Keepsake for 1829* (Broadview 2006), and Ledbetter and Hoagwood's digital critical edition of the *Keepsake for 1829* (*Romantic Circles* 2002). Other than the editions by Feldman, Ledbetter, and Hoagwood, the annuals have become a difficult, if not obscure, archival text. Drawing upon over 300 British, American, German and French annuals, plus precursors and twentieth-century imitators, my manuscript assesses the relationship among the literary annual's popularity, materiality, and canonical and non-canonical nineteenth-century British authors, including Wordsworth, Tennyson, Southey, Lamb, Coleridge, Dickens, Mary Shelley, Hemans, Landon, Clare, Shelley, Byron, Thackeray, the Brownings, and many others.

FORGET ME NOT!
The "Unmasculine & UnBawdy Age" of British Literary Annuals

by Katherine D. Harris

CONTEXT & INTRODUCTION⁴

“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.”⁵ Literary annuals were early nineteenth-century British texts published yearly in England from 1822 to 1860, intended primarily for a middle class audience and therefore moderately priced (12s.-£3). Initially published in duodecimo or octavo, 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 typically copied from various artworks, varied in theme, and verbally illustrated with a poem. Published in November and sold for the following year, the annual constituted an ideal Christmas gift, lover’s present or token of friendship. Produced as a small, portable volume with paper or leather boards and gilt edges, the annual was marketed both as an extravagant 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.

The literary annual made its British debut at a moment in print culture when innovative technological advances, expanding literacy, demand for reading materials and publishing/bookselling practices increased the production of printed materials. Competing serial publications at the annual’s advent were predominantly periodicals, journals, and cheap twopenny newspapers. Annuals were something new, different and substantial. Their contents and physical appearance communicated a

⁴Instead of providing the actual Introduction to this manuscript, I offer this Introduction, which historically and critically situates the literary annual and is essential to understanding the arguments on femininity and female readership. These pages are excerpted from the first, second, and third chapters.

⁵Anne 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.

different standard of propriety and morality than even the ubiquitous temperance pamphlets. Though the genre is also often shuffled into the category of periodicals or classed with 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,⁶ that was produced during the genre's lifetime. The annual's proper separation from other genres comes from its preparation, production, and packaging of the literary, artistic, and beautiful in such a way that it transported and translated its readers away from the daily life represented in the periodicals and newspapers of the day.

Despite these differences, the genre capitalized on the popular, successful, and proven forms of media, subsuming the focus and purposes of emblems, almanacs, diaries and albums into itself. Similar to ladies' magazines, an annual typically includes plates of various scenes (pastoral, foreign, nautical, etc.), poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. However, the annual's ornate production marks its luxury, signals its material stability, and promises its morality and propriety – goals articulated by the annuals' early creators: Rudolph Ackermann, Alaric Watts, Frederic Shoberl, Frederic Mansel Reynolds, Charles Heath, and other male publishers, editors and authors.

The annual was introduced to the British public in November 1822 with the publication of Rudolph Ackermann's *Forget Me Not*. This popular and successful publisher's experiment in literary miscellany is what one contemporary reviewer described as an "epidemic" of literary annual titles. In 1828, 100,000 copies of fifteen separate annuals earned an aggregate retail value of over £70,000, the *Forget Me Not*, *Literary Souvenir*, *Friendship's Offering*, *Keepsake* and *Comic Annual* the leaders among them, both in technological innovations and literary quality. By November 1829, the number had climbed

⁶The "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 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. (I define the literary annual's form in Chapter One and place it in the context of eighteenth-century conduct manuals, almanacs, sixteenth-century emblem books and other early nineteenth-century forms.)

to forty-three separate 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*.

The criteria for defining a literary annual were established by Ackermann's first *Forget Me Not* volume, published November 1822. Most elements listed below became standards of the literary annual form but Ackermann has very seldom received credit for the specifics. Instead, Charles Heath and Alaric

A. Watts typically receive recognition for establishing the innovative form – erroneously, though:

- *Purpose*: Annuals are “expressly designed to serve as annual tokens of friendship or affection.”⁷ 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.”⁸ Critics adhered to this criteria and blast any publication that is published outside the holiday time frame (November through January) yet still claims to be of the literary annual family.
- *Continual Evolution*: “[T]he Publisher has no doubt that, in the prosecution of his plan, he shall be enabled, by experience, to introduce improvements into the succeeding volumes.”⁹ 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.”¹⁰ Ackermann establishes the literary annual as more than an anthology with this promise; the authors are generally contemporary figures instead of the classical 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.”¹¹ 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

⁷Advertisement, in *Forget Me Not, A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1823*, ed. Rudolph Ackermann (London: R. Ackermann, 1823), at conclusion of volume.

⁸Rudolph Ackermann, “Preface,” in *Forget Me Not, A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1823* (London: R. Ackermann, 1823), vii.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*.

embellishments, over every other existing publication of the kind.”¹² 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.”¹³ Ackermann attempts to establish the literary annual 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 around 1825 in favor of additional creative contributions.
- *Exterior Format*: “The Forget Me Not is done up in a case for the pocket, and its external decorations display corresponding elegance and taste with the general execution of the interior.”¹⁴ The diminutive size (3.5" x 5.5") represents a particular form of femininity that is portable in the pocket or the hand – specifically of a lady. Though the size eventually grew, the annual’s embellished boards mark the extravagance of the entire genre and were continued through its lifetime even in the rebindings.

Each of these elements is essential to the literary annual. Any deviation automatically disqualifies a volume from the genre’s family.

Generally, 80 to 100 entries of prose and poetry were compiled for each 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 Romantic and Victorian British literati were coaxed into contributing by lucrative financial remuneration, including William Wordsworth, Samuel T. Coleridge, Mary Shelley, Walter Scott, Robert Southey, Alfred Lord Tennyson, John Ruskin, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning and William Thackeray. Byron and P.B. Shelley’s writings were wildly successful in the annuals, though published posthumously. (See Index of Prominent Contributors). And Scott was paid £500 for two contributions to the 1829 *Keepsake*. More commonly, though, well-known authors were paid £50 for a forty-line poem. Popular women poets, including Felicia Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, were in demand for their domestic and sentimental contributions to annuals and were officially, yet begrudgingly, accepted into the professionalized world of authorship despite their “poetess” poetry.

¹²Ackermann, “Preface,” viii.

¹³Advertisement at conclusion of 1823 *Forget Me Not*.

¹⁴Ibid.

Because of this poetess tradition, critics compared annuals to dilettantes and debutantes to signal the genre's supposedly banal, unsophisticated and eternally "feminine" intentions. The annuals, according to many of their critics, paralleled that middle class bourgeois sex that was afflicted with too much leisure and a desire to appear fashionable, intellectual or sophisticated. The annuals represented materially a luxury and, ideologically, an idealized femininity. Young ladies entertained their guests with the literary annuals and gained a voice through this representation of femininity. However, the feminine voice within the annuals was only momentarily ideal. The annuals soon became a site of subversive femininity, where warfare and the masculine hero were not celebrated. The British annuals signaled a new class of readers who were empowered through both their own economic demand and an alternative view of femininity – not to mention the space afforded the female author's variant voice.

The literary annual format altered according to public demand, alterations which affected readers and authors alike. The first major shift occurred in 1825 with the publication of Alaric Watts's *Literary Souvenir*, a volume which excised the almanac-like informational pages, excluded the album-like blank pages and appended two facsimile pages of famous authors' autographs. With the debut of the 1828 *Keepsake*, Charles Heath and Frederic Mansel Reynolds provided a decadent annual in larger form with silk boards and exceedingly well-paid literary names.

The annuals became so numerous that reviewer Jane Wilde described the genre as an "epidemic." Writing in 1855, three decades after the first annual, Wilde refers both to the early proliferation of titles and the "sickness" that drove readers to desire, own, read, and receive annuals.¹⁵ Though pummeled in the British critical press to the point that a "modern literary lady's maid [would] . . . sneer at the Annuals," the genre nevertheless served the 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 [which] appeared in the first instance in their pages," as is noted in the 1858 *Bookseller* article, "The Annual of Former Days."¹⁶ Even Thackeray's maid, Fifine, in *Vanity Fair* (1847) recognizes their value as she

15Jane F. Wilde, "The Countess of Blessington," *Dublin University Magazine* 45 (1855).

16"The Annuals of Former Days," *The Bookseller* 1 (29 November 1858): 494.

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).¹⁷ Here, the annual’s value ironically equals that of gold candlesticks or ornate pill boxes.

By 1830, regardless of the hostile criticism, annuals flourished into sub-genres, including Thomas Hood’s parodic *Comic Annual*, which ushered in many other humorous volumes. In addition, these symbols of the feminine 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”¹⁸ – a patronizing comment that implies the indigenous inhabitants of India were not capable of the ingenuity and creativity offered by the British homeland.¹⁹

By 1831, even men had become targets with the publication of *A Father’s Present to His Son* and later the *Young Gentleman’s Annual*. Literary annuals fed a popular frenzy that drove authors, publishers and editors alike. Not until 1840 did the number of titles fall below forty, lingering in derivative forms until the early twentieth century in both the United States and Europe.²⁰ Indeed, annuals were not forgotten; they appear in both British and American nineteenth-century novels, among them George Eliot’s 1872 *Middlemarch* (set in 1820s England), Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (set in

¹⁷William 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).

¹⁸Review of 1825 *Literary Souvenir*, *The Monthly Review*, October 1825, 279.

¹⁹In the Preface, an editor often represented the annual as a marker of British superiority by using images of warfare and defeat (especially against the French and Germans). This move conflicts with representations of femininity to which the genre’s initial creators aspired – and it is only one of many such gendered differences.

²⁰In fact, in 1929, 1930 and 1931 Cobden-Sanderson published three annuals which imitate the form, contents and purpose of the original *Forget Me Not*. Each title represents a compilation of the originals: *The Annual, Being a Selection from the Forget-Me-Nots, Keepsakes and Other Annuals of the Nineteenth Century* edited by Dorothy Wellesley and introduced by Vita Sackville-West; *The New Forget-Me-Not, A Calendar* mimicking the *Forget Me Not*’s and *Friendship’s Offering*’s early form; and *The New Keepsake* presenting completely original contents but retaining the annual’s form. The continuation of the literary annual form and its multiple re-presentations are discussed in Chapter Eight.

1830s America), and William Thackeray's 1847 *Vanity Fair*. The male editors' attempt to commodify in the annuals a particular form of femininity was finally subverted as the annual's audience gained strength and pulled its production in new directions.

Despite their phenomenal popularity, literary annuals have enjoyed little critical acclaim until very recently. Literary scholars have begun to reassess the annuals, their literature, authors and textual form in terms of a literary aesthetic that considers the annuals as an alternative representation of nineteenth-century culture. The annuals have been called "toy-books" by Andrew Boyle, often-cited historian and indexer of British annual contributors,²¹ and the literature they contains has been dismissed as the "left-handed work of great authors"²² and "the sweepings of their desks – the worst poems of the best authors."²³ In the last ten years, however, scholars including Jerome McGann, Paula Feldman, Judith Thompson, Susan Wolfson, Morton Paley, Anne Mellor, Sonia Hofkosh, Judith Pascoe, Margaret Linley, Bill Bell, Kathryn Ledbetter, Harriet Jump Devine, Laura Mandell and Ann Hawkins, have ignored this narrow view and have published more than seventy articles and book chapters that discuss the role of literary annuals in nineteenth-century literature and culture.

Continuing in this positive trend, Stephen Colclough proposed that John Clare used the annuals to create an authorial existence during a time which "without access to these texts his work would not have been available to a national audience."²⁴ So too, Lord Tennyson's contributions to the annuals "provided much needed exposure to a burgeoning new middle-class readership which included a growing number of female readers."²⁵ Even James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, acquired a devoted audience that gave him "the opportunity of extending his periodical range while taking his literary reputation to a wider

²¹Andrew Boyle, *An Index to the Annuals (1820-1850). Vol. 1: The Authors* (Worcester: Andrew Boyle Ltd., 1967) iv.

²²Erickson, 31.

²³Boyle, iv.

²⁴Stephen Colclough, "Clare and the Annuals: A Previously Unpublished Letter from John Clare to L.T. Ventouillac, Editor of *The Iris*," *Notes and Queries* 244:4 (Dec. 1999): 468.

²⁵Kathryn Ledbetter, "'BeGemmed and beAmuletted': Tennyson and Those 'Vapid' Gift Books," *Victorian Poetry* 34:2 (Summer 1996): 236.

audience.”²⁶ The Brontës, according to Christine Alexander, had access to the 1829 *Friendship’s Offering*, 1830 *The Literary Souvenir* and 1831 *Forget Me Not*, as is evidenced by their “painstakingly executed copies of eight engravings . . . made by Charlotte, Branwell and Emily . . . from these three volumes.”²⁷ Indeed, Christine Alexander finds indisputable similarities between the children’s juvenilia and writings published in these annuals, especially with Scott’s Gothic writings. References and engravings that imitate these annuals’ contents pop up in Charlotte Brontë’s later novel, *Jane Eyre*.²⁸ Nevertheless, none of these studies address the sociology, textuality and literary history of the genre as a whole.

My study of literary annuals assumes the particular form of textuality advocated by textual theorists D.F. McKenzie, Jerome McGann and David Greetham. This particular textuality, the sociology of the text, assumes that any text or “work”²⁹ is a living material record of human interaction that evolves with each encounter. It gains meaning not just from its reader but also from the multiple levels of meaning involved in every mode of physical and creative production, and then again from each consumer or reader’s individual engagement with the work and its collective memory.

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

26Janette Currie, “Two Early Versions of Tales from Literary Annuals,” *Studies in Hogg and His World* 11 (2000): 87-121.

27Christine Alexander, “‘That Kingdom of Gloom’: Charlotte Brontë, the Annuals, and the Gothic,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 47:4 (March 1993): 414.

28Alexander, 421.

29The 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 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, i.e., beyond the traditional or ideal Romantic-era author’s creative genius. 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. I enter into debates about textual theory briefly in the Introduction.

annual as a particular form of transmissive interaction and not merely a channel of transmission.³⁰ In other words, even after printing and binding, each volume acquires meaning with each reader, reading, literary movement, critical reception or resurrection. In each literary annual's preface, the editors themselves desired this type of longevity and encouraged constantly shifting meanings.

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, 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.³¹

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. For both the giver and the receiver of an annual, that guidance existed beyond the immediate fashionable experience of receiving a volume. A reader, drawing some new morsel of meaning with every reading, was expected to re-engage with the work throughout her *and the annual's* lifetime.

The initial editors and publishers of the annuals often competed to present the most beatific

30McGann, 3, 16.

31Frederic 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.

representation of family, woman, and domesticity in their annuals. The Prefaces proclaimed editorial intentions and marked the literature and the textual object alike as a delicate object of beauty. Alaric Watts contends that poetry in particular 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."³² Since both the short story and the serialized novel had begun to co-opt much of the space in magazines and periodicals, Watts's defense not only protects annuals and encourages readers to buy them for the economy of reading, but also promotes the sale of any poetry volume. Poetry, defined by Watts as a "branch of Fine Arts," further invites an annual's owner to re-engage the material in multiple moments of reading. This engagement adds to the literary annual's meaning, producing a continuous archiving of intellect and memories.

With this historical and theoretical framework explained and elaborated as necessary, the following chapters assess the literary, social, economic, and cultural history of literary annuals by suggesting how and why annuals are empowering both feminine and textual forms.

³²Alaric Watts, "Preface," in *Literary Souvenir and Cabinet of Modern Art*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Whittaker and Company, 1835), vi-vii.

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Introduction

The historical, social and cultural impact of the literary annual is briefly introduced in this chapter, as well as a description of the genre and its far-reaching influence. Readers are given a concise overview of the genre's importance to nineteenth-century studies, transatlantic literature and European literature. Since a history of literary annuals must include the bibliographic (physical description of the book), cultural (economic and social influences), and literary (poetry, prose and engravings) to understand the success of the "popular" genre, this Introduction includes a discussion surrounding "textuality" and relates it to literary annuals. By summarizing the current debates surrounding textual theory and sociology of the text, this chapter allows readers to understand textual theory and sociology of the text without prior knowledge of its primary theorists, D.F. McKenzie, Jerome McGann, and David Greetham. The Introduction also includes a review of nineteenth- and twentieth- century critical traditions surrounding literary annuals, a necessary link in the success and failure of the British annual and its subsequent maligned reputation. Because this study is a complete literary history of the annual, false misconceptions of prior criticism are an important foundation from which to re-evaluate this genre.

Chapter One: "Borrowing," Altering and Perfecting the Literary Annual Form or, What It Is Not

Because the literary annual combined elements of various genres, it is often mis-identified. In this chapter, the literary annual is finally defined with explicit textual evidence from its first publisher, rudolph Ackermann (1823). By defining the annual, I also define what it is not: emblem, almanac, pocket-book, anthology, album, scrap book, commonplace book and gift book. Using examples of these other genres, this chapter creates a bibliographical genealogy of the annual by pinpointing the elements that Ackermann borrowed from other successful forms. ([A version of this chapter published in *Poetess Archive Journal* 1:1 \[2007\].](#))

Chapter Two: First-Generation Annuals, The *Forget Me Not* as Leader

The first generation of annuals enjoyed a resounding embrace from reviewers, consumers and readers. Not until the 1828 publication of Charles Heath's *Keepsake* does this original reception turn sour. By tracing both physical and literary modifications in the *Forget Me Not* and its competitors published 1823-1828, this chapter analyzes the production and commodification of "Englishness" as a precursor to Britain's colonial dominance in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Three: Second-Generation Annuals, Beauty and Comedy

With the development of the *Literary Souvenir* and other less popular annuals, Ackermann's vision of function and utility disappears and is replaced by the cult of "beauty" annuals, an incredibly competitive market from 1828 through the 1840s. This chapter assesses the alterations imposed by Heath's *Keepsake* as well as Thomas Hood's parodic, and sometimes highly political, *Comic Annual*.

Chapter Four: The Artistic Influence of the Annual's Engraving "Copyists"

This chapter discusses the engraving process, its importance to the success of annuals and its impact on the authors who created word images. By comparing original paintings to the well-copied, but much denigrated, engravings, this chapter explores art history's role in both the annual's popularity and the landscape painting's eventual dominance. The relationship between engraving, poetry and woman author is more fully dealt with in the chapters on female readership and women authors.

Chapter Five: Printers', Booksellers' and Publishers' Profits

It is a common misconception that editors and publishers of annuals earned a large profit from these sales. However, as I discuss in this chapter, editors often supplied initial funds, treating the annual publication as a business venture and further incorporating the genre into specious economic and social hegemonies. Using circulation and sales figures, this chapter chronicles the profits, losses and book-selling adventures of various editors, publishers, and literary annual titles. This discussion presents new evidence about the relationship between the annual's popularity, its supposed economic success and its "feminine" status.

Chapter Six: Influencing Public Response with Reviews and "Puffery"

To gain publicity, many publishers planted puff pieces (or gossip) about authors and editors. The annual's publishers were no different except that they puffed the literary annual itself with positive reviews. These reviews often provided an introduction and public face to each annual by recommending, denouncing or simply excerpting its contents. In this chapter, I reveal the varied and complicated relationships among reviewers and literary annuals with the reviewers often situating themselves as gatekeepers of literary morality. This protectiveness occurs more prominently in the discussion surrounding female readers.

Chapter Seven: Gothic in the Annuals

With everything within popular culture, the literary annual evolved to include the latest literary trends, much to the disdain of some authors, readers and critics. With use of the Gothic tradition in its short stories, the literary annual becomes a carrier of the Gothicism that so infected the sensational literature of the 1790s, including Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). But, those condemnations of Gothic literature did not halt its production; the genre merely evolved – that evolution carried into literary annuals. This chapter focuses on the "new gothic" that was established with Mary Shelley's first edition *Frankenstein* and solidified with the 1831 version. By surveying short stories published in the most popular annuals 1823-1831, this chapter provides evidence that the Gothic tradition evolves as a result of the annuals. ([A version of this chapter is the Introduction to my edited collection, *Gothic Short Stories in the Annuals*.](#))

Chapter Eight: Modernist Revisions

In the 1930, publisher Cobden-Sanderson pays homage to Rudolph Ackermann with a new series of *Forget-Me-Nots* that “pay a tribute to the swarm of nineteenth-century Annuals which so prettily pleased our ancestors, and tells for our benefit the polite history of our times” (Advert). Though this is a marketing ploy, “what’s old is new again,” it bridges the public’s memory between 1823 and 1930. Ackermann’s was polite literature, and this volume represents “the polite history of *our* time,” a collapse of Romantic and Modernist aesthetics. This chapter evaluates the resuscitation of the original literary form and its interaction with the Modernist crowd. [Working on this description]

Chapter Nine: Female Readers Consuming the Literary Annual

In this chapter, the literary history becomes an evaluative study of the literary annual’s impact on its readers: Here, I show that readers and consumers of the annuals privileged its feminine aspects – not those promoted 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 readers attempting to render it their own feminine ideal. This chapter relies upon a historical contextualization of female education, from Wollstonecraft’s revolutionary *Vindications* to conduct manuals as a form of patriarchal control. ([A version of this chapter published in *PBSA* 99:4 \[2005\]:573-622.](#))

Chapter Ten: Subversive Feminine Voice & Authorial Identity

Annuals, while preserving patriarchal femininity, also preserve an alternative femininity which incorporates women’s images and voices. Using close reading of poetry, excerpts from journals and letters from canonical authors, I re-situate the voice of women poets not as conforming to patriarchal ideals but as subversive representatives of powerful femininity couched in a “poetess” poetry. This chapter examines the role of women as authors, editors and contributors to literary annuals and the subsequent re-definition of femininity in the early 1830s.

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