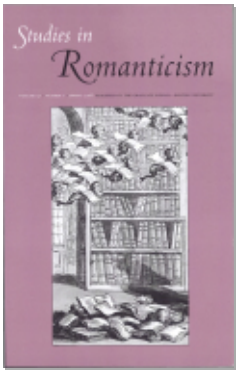
Paper Slips: Album, Archiving, Accident

Deidre Lynch



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> . . . a quilt of patchwork consists of various miscellaneous pieces of different hues and qualities, but jointly combining to make a pleasing and useful whole . . . in the formation of the Album there is much wider scope for the Mind—a more intellectual occupation; whilst it keeps up a constant and rational excitement during its progress, it becomes a repository for the most endearing sentiments of friendship and affection.
>
> —John Britton, "An Album," prose paragraph written into the Mrs. Anna Birkbeck Album, ca. 1841

> A sort of drive compels us to take the Book apart, to make it into a piece of lace.
>
> —Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*

THE MOMENT THE EPONYMOUS NARRATOR OF "THE ADVENTURES OF AN Album" launches its first-person memoir it is already on the defensive. Appearing in 1831 in the annual *The Comic Offering; or Ladies' Mélange of Literary Mirth*, this tale has lines from Lord Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* for its epigraph: "'Tis pleasant sure to see oneself in print, / A book's a book although there's nothing in't." The first words this narrator addresses to its readers involve this "impertinent" couplet: "half a hundred persons of my acquaintance" will doubtless recall it, the narrator predicts, when they learn that a "poor Album (with no ideas of my own, and depending for existence on the genius of others)" intends to write its own memoirs: "But this threadbare quotation is totally inapplicable to *me*: for although I am a Book, yet it is unjust to say 'there's nothing in it', when so many of my pages are filled with charming poetry and unrivalled paintings."[1]

1. "The Adventures of an Album," in *The Comic Offering; or Ladies' Melange of Literary Mirth for 1831*, ed. Louisa Henrietta Sheridan (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1831), 249. I owe knowledge of this text to James A. Secord, "Scrapbook Science: Composite Caricatures in Late Georgian England," in *Figuring It Out: Science, Gender, and Visual Culture*, ed. Ann B. Shteir and Bernard Lightman (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006), 164–91.

In fact, the storyline that follows, in which this voluble book recounts its passage from human hand to human hand and tracks how those once-blank pages got filled, confirms there might be reasons for the derision the Album expects. Doubts about the Album's claims to "charm" or "genius" set in just after the adventures begin, when the Album, passing from its mistress' hands, ends up being passed to a certain *bel esprit* in her circle. This second woman pretends to supply an original poem to fill up the Album's opening page but instead plagiarizes from, of all people, Lord Byron. (The knowing album detects the deception, but its mistress, busy exulting over the fact that she has succeeded in documenting her social connection to the Byron-copyist, does not.) Circulating once again after this page has been filled, the Album arrives in the household of a certain Miss Susan Slattern. There its silk bindings are spotted with grease, and the pages between the covers fare no better, though two obtain a clever picture and a poem. Our adventuresome but accident-prone protagonist wends its way next to the home of a married couple who are thought to be very much in love, and there the Album acquires from the husband "an allegorical design of two doves, and two hearts, and two cupids, and two altars, and two torches, and Hymen and Time, and all the other paraphernalia of valentine notoriety," while the wife contributes a similarly uxorious poem.[2] During this same phase of its life, however, the Album is also susceptible to being used as a missile and hurled across the room during one of the quarrels that occur behind the public façade of marital bliss. Additional episodes of disillusionment follow as the book-protagonist's once-pristine pages are incrementally filled in.

By now many real equivalents of this fictional album have found their way from nineteenth-century drawing rooms to their final resting place in archives and special collection libraries. Between about 1790 and 1850, and before they were superseded by related book forms like the photograph album and (in America) the high school year book, these volumes were assembled in great numbers and in multiple locations, from South Carolina to Quebec City to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to Carbonear, Newfoundland, to Glasgow to Manchester. Some snippet of Byronic poetry, the sample I have explored indicates, gets inscribed onto the leaves of about every sixth book. "Fare Thee Well," the poem the *bel esprit* in "The Adventures of an Album" passes off as her own, is a favorite selection. In this respect and others, the talking album is an accurate—if cynical—account of the process through which many such manuscript books were assembled.

Shorn of that cynicism, the process is set out succinctly on a page donated to one such homemade book, a volume titled *Memorials of Friendship* put together in 1795 (by Felicia Hemans, among others) and currently

2. "Adventures of an Album," 271, 278.

housed in the Carl Pforzheimer Collection of the New York Public Library. Here a certain Elizabeth Wagner has transcribed (and slightly misquoted) the ninth stanza of Thomas Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" about how "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, / And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, / Await alike the inevitable hour: / The paths of glory lead but to the grave." Addressing Anne Wagner, the book's owner, she has added, blithely requisitioning canonical poetry for use as social currency, "When exploring the latent excellencies of this stanza, may memory remind you of your eternal friend, & deeply affectionate sister, Elizabeth." Acts of remediation that turn verse in print back into verse in manuscript are basic to these books since, as Karen Sánchez-Eppler observes, by "copying poems in their own hands friends turn generic sentiments into acts of relation and remembrance."[3] This is the program described in lines that in 1835 were deposited in an album thought to have belonged to the naturalist Philip Henry Gosse: "Albums are coffers where light thought / Is treasured and amassed / Records of moments else forgot / Embalmments of the past."[4]

In its later sections, this essay will focus on the peculiar way in which both the creators of and commentators on these manuscript books—not least by interlacing their origin story of compiling, arranging, pasting, inscribing, and making with the story of *other* books' scissoring up, unbinding, and unmaking—troubled some well entrenched commonplaces about Romantic-period print culture's preservation and stabilization of the past and about the memory work that books perform for their possessors. Among album makers, the project of recollection highlighted in Gosse's friend's definition of the *album* can be pursued with considerable self-reflexivity and sophistication. This essay explores accordingly how this book type functioned both as a site for hoarding up memories and as a site for letting them go. Founded on clipping, both literally and figuratively, albums are books that come together only as other books come apart.

The mnemonic functions that Elizabeth Wagner and Gosse's friend each foreground in their inscriptions center this essay: this understanding of the album page as a depository of, and portal to, a past moment, and of the poem as the link connecting the *now* to the bygone time of a past reading, thereby connecting readers to lost, absent, or dead friends. Concurring with scholars like Ellen Gruber Garvey who explore the more recent phases of this book type's history, I understand the blank book that has

3. Sánchez-Eppler, "Copying and Conversion: An 1824 Friendship Album 'from a Chinese Youth,'" *American Quarterly* 59 (2007): 318.

4. British Library shelf number Add Ms. 89020/12. Google Books reveals that this album verse had earlier appeared in print as "Lines written in a Lady's Album," *The Pocket Magazine*, vol. 1 (Jan. 1829): 183.

been destined for use as an album or scrapbook as soliciting "a performance of archivalness"—a repertoire of "acts and gestures of preservation."[5] This particular book form brings to the fore the dimension of books in general that Jacques Derrida underscored when he observed that the motif of *gathering together* has long been crucial to the question of the book. "Already in Greek, *bibliotheke* means the slot for a book, books' place of *deposit* . . . ; a *bibliophylakion* is the deposit or warehouse, the *entrepôt* for books, writings, nonbook archives in general"—an observation that shows Derrida resuming his earlier meditations on the archive in a new bookish frame.[6] The album-keeper *performs archivalness* in indulging, through her book, her impulse to treasure, amass, embalm. And yet in this context her impulse often appears to have come uncoupled from the mechanisms of retrieval and information extraction that many commentators deem essential to the idea of the archive. These, it must be confessed, are archives lacking finding aids: to study Romantic album keeping is to confront the distinction between archiving as a process and the archive as a product.

Media theorist Abigail de Kosnik recently coined the term "rogue archive" to designate the memory work that defines fandom in the current digital era, making the point that "the ties binding public memory to the state" have loosened now that individuals without training in library and information sciences have begun choosing for themselves the material worthy of uploading and preserving on digital networked sites.[7] De Kosnik's term is also suggestive for this Romantic-era media context, when the texts preserved in (transcribed or pasted into) blank books include not only pieces of Byron's, or Gray's, or Hemans's poetry but also anonymous newspaper poems, anecdotes, trivial jokes, and fashion plates memorializing styles that were already becoming outmoded at the moment of the books' assembly—motley papers that ordinarily would have been predestined for the culture's discard pile. In their mediation of the paper record of their times, participants in album culture often, even deliberately, play fast and loose with the prevailing public norms for sorting out the ephemeral from the enduring and trash from treasure. Most aptly for my purposes, *rogue archiving* also registers the unruly way in which, as we will see, archivalness is performed in blank books. Those who archive precious remembrances between album covers also tacitly propose a redefinition of *the book* in general

5. Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20; see also Bartholomew Brinkman, *Poetic Modernism in the Culture of Mass Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 1.

6. Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 6.

7. de Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 2016), 1.

as only a provisional, conditional sort of storage system. In their hands, as we shall see, *book* signifies a collection point for those slips and scraps, and a way-station that those paper-objects occupied previous to their further detachment and transportation elsewhere.

In one of the ironies that these albums often trade in, they themselves have had trouble getting remembered—their vexed relation to the category of book, their makers' simultaneous attraction to and impatience with the storage capacities of the codex form, contributing to the problem. While surviving examples of this book type have now come to rest in research libraries and archives, the volumes' meanderings across the boundaries of our scholarly categories appear endless. It remains a tricky thing within the history of the book to identify the proper place for handmade, customized volumes of this sort.[8]

Part of the problem is that these *are* books only conditionally. When the adventuring album appropriates Byron's line, "A book's a book although there's nothing in't," it reminds us, not necessarily to its advantage, of the reasons we might withhold the identifier *book* from a *blank book* and continue to do so until certain conditions are realized, until, for example, its pages or a portion thereof are filled in. This is one intellectually invigorating effect of studying books like these:[9] as "conditional documents," the outcome of "combinatoric circumstances and happenstances," they expose the limits of the usual object-centered materialism that defines the practice of book and textual history. They call instead for a "performative understanding of materiality in terms of . . . *how they work*, not just *what they are*."[10]

Other conceptual challenges are entangled with this one. Disrupting the homology between individual, proprietary author and discrete, bounded

8. As Margaret J. M. Ezell observes, in an essay engaging handwritten books from the seventeenth century devoted to "domestic" collections, scholars' expectations about how "a book, rather than a collection of unbound sheets," should "behave" and their identification of the codex form with stability and stasis have taken "some types of books out of our field of vision." See her "Invisible Books," in *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800*, ed. Laura L. Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 54. See also Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray's evocatively titled "Is it a Diary, Commonplace Book, Scrapbook or Whatchamacallit? Six Years of Exploration in New England's Manuscript Archives," *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 44, no. 1 (2009): 101–23.

9. It is worth remembering that blank books were then, as now, staple retail items for jobbing printers: see Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). I have also benefited from the ongoing work of Sandro Jung on the eighteenth-century pocket diary.

10. I receive guidance here from Johanna Drucker, "Distributed and Conditional Documents: Conceptualizing Bibliographical Alterities," *MatLit* 2, no. 1 (2014): 11–29.

volume that literary historians often take for granted, Romantic-era albums from one angle resemble magazines more than proper books. As the adventuring album noted when it confessed to its dependence on "the genius of others," the incremental assembly of these volumes appears frequently to have enrolled entire social circles, with several persons contributing "offerings"—sometimes individual pages to be pasted in—to a bookish space that was, however, often supervised and curated by one lady or pair of ladies in particular.[11] Venues in which loved literary works or copied- or scissored-out scraps of loved literary works were identified, shared with the like-minded, remembered and reworked (and so, to some extent, misremembered as well), venues that instantiate a "people's" canon of Romanticism,[12] these manuscript volumes certainly deserve greater prominence in Romanticists' literary histories: they form part of the media environment in which Romantic literature came to be. Yet despite the fact that many of their pages are evidently designed as testimonies of their makers' enduring devotion to particular works and authors, it would be misleading to identify these volumes too closely with anthologies—even if the pressed flowers pasted in alongside the verse do bring back to view old connections between the very term *anthology* and nosegays, garlands, and other floral gatherings. These books' remit, however, is not to project a literary field or transmit a literary tradition.

In their metadata, librarians cataloging volumes like these have sometimes grouped them with commonplace books, the book type that has long provided a repository for readers' personalized selections of edifying quotations and sententiae. Yet historians of the book have tended to ignore these materials precisely because they are *not* commonplace books—because serving as vehicles of social display and sentimental affiliation rather than of solitary study, their assembly of extracts conveys little to those scholars about the topic that most often concerns them, the history of information architecture.[13] (Although albums certainly invite future acts of retrospection, few books in this category include the indices that would facilitate

11. Hence the "Address" that opens the George Neilson Album (ca. 1824) in the National Library of Scotland: "Hither Knights and Ladies, gay / Each an off'ring bring I pray. / Picture right, or maxim wise / Tuneful lay, or painted flies / . . . None a token can refuse / Since it is a Lady sues."

12. See Corin Throsby, "Byron, Commonplacing and Early Fan Culture," in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750–1850*, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): "the commonplace books were a kind of people's anthology" (234).

13. Contemporary discussions of commonplacing take their cue from Ann Blair's *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). See, e.g., Garvey's *Writing With Scissors*, which, engaging later nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century scrapbookers' accumulation of newspaper clippings, assimilates their activities to the longer history of data management.

their navigation in those times to come—a practice that had, by contrast, long been commended to those who kept commonplace books to memorialize their reading lives.) With frustrating effects, other cataloguers relegate these volumes to the semi-oblivion of that inchoate category *family papers*, thereby displacing them from the sphere of the librarian to that of the archivist, the figure who as a rule deals with the unprinted, and in the main, unbound, papers that were never really destined to be funneled into printed books. Contemporary scholars interested in how these volumes memorialize social connections also remove them from the realm of book history, when they stress how albums served to define a "social network."[14] But to align these volumes with digital media sites like Pinterest or Facebook risks diminishing their makers' insistence that books are precisely what they are making—just the bibliographical preoccupations this article means to position front and center.

Through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the amateur makers of this book type in fact inscribed a bewilderingly motley set of names of their own coining on the mockups of title pages they designed as entryways into their volumes, pages on which they often expended much labor, in part, one conjectures, precisely because by mimicking the bibliographical codes of "real," published books they could ally themselves with the formality and professionalism of the print world. The aspirational first page of one such book—one in fact filled up only halfway, sometime around 1825—reads, in elegant calligraphy manipulated to resemble the shadowed typeface deployed by contemporary printers, "Original Compositions and Extracts, Prose and Verse" (fig. 1). Another book preserved in the Pforzheimer Collection boasts a title page identifying it as "The Leisure Hours Amusement of a Young Lady, presented by her, as a token of Grateful Remembrance to her Friend Mr. E.S.U." Midway, however, one encounters a second title page, reading "Part the Second, dedicated with affectionate esteem to B.P."; the fact that both the copied-out and original verse that follow this page is generally signed E.S.U. suggests that the latter individual eventually regifted the present that the leisured Young Lady had bestowed on him. In the National Library of Scotland one can find a "Cabinet of Music, Poetry, and Drawing" assembled by an A. Kippen around 1848. A family in 1850's Vermont titled the book serving as their repository for recipes, home remedies, poems, and drawings a "Chip Basket."[15] Commercial manufacturers of blank books, who, especially after the 1820s, did their utmost to promote such volumes to all those with preten-

14. See Katie Day Good, "From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives," *New Media and Society* 15, no. 4 (2012): 557–73.

15. On Sarah Thankful Marrs's "Chip Basket," see Zboray and Zboray, "Is It a Diary . . . ?" 115. "Naming protocols for commonplace books . . . were delightfully inconsistent

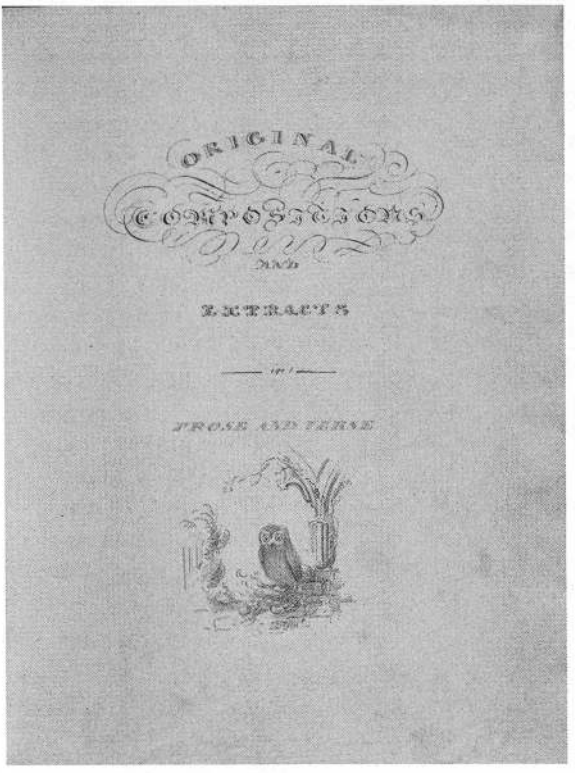

Figure 1: Title page of "Original Compositions and Extracts, In Prose and Verse." Anonymous album, circa 1817–1886. The Carl Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

sions to cultivation and sensitivity, favored a pair of labels of their own. Sometimes the term "album" (from *albus*, Latin for white), and sometimes the term "scrapbook," appear stamped on their products' front covers and spines. Those over time became the conventional identifiers, eclipsing the more playful terms.

Those manufacturers, like commentators on their wares, tended to treat the terms *album* and *scrapbook* synonymously, and this essay follows suit. There seems little reason to distinguish the terms if one acknowledges that *scrapbook* came only belatedly to take on its current meaning and to

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and not always particularly illuminating," states David Allan in *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29.

designate exclusively the kind of book whose contents have been extracted and pasted in from other sources. At the start of the nineteenth century, *scrapbook* was instead readily used to identify books that had never been in proximity with a paste pot and whose contents were mainly copied in by hand (or by many hands, belonging to those individuals willing to relieve the neediness of the book's owner and charitably donate their aesthetic surplus).[16] *Scrapbook* was regularly used, too, to designate a book that *mingled* its pasted-in preprinted clippings with handwritten transcriptions. When, in 1817, a certain Elizabeth Reynolds selected the word *Scrapbook* as her subtitle, eight years before the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first recorded use of *scrapbook* in print,[17] she applied that designation to a volume whose pages contain, variously, examples of somebody's skill in watercolor flower painting, pasted-in multicolored feathers, tributes in verse and image dedicated to Lord Wellington and to the poets William Cowper and Mary Robinson, and examples of découpage crafted from fashion illustrations and from other clippings scissored out from (other) books. Its handwritten, hand-drawn title page identifies this book (now in the Special Collections Library of Manchester Metropolitan University) as *A Medley, or, Scrapbook* and the character of the contents the book gathers is prefigured on this same page by Reynolds's trio of epigraphs: from Shakespeare, whose Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice* speaks of "an infinite deal of nothing," from Charles Churchill, who writes in "The Ghost" (1763) of "a slight shot silk for summer wear / Just as our modern pastimes are," and from the *Caractères* of La Bruyère, who protests against "tout chagrin." Near the bottom, this title page is supplied with its maker's simulation of a publisher's imprint ("Coppice House / Published by Elizabeth Reynolds / 1817"),

16. As the pictures and poems about beggar maids, gleaners, and street scavengers that so often get included in these books affirm, in this context the term *scrap* evoked scenarios centered on charitable giving just as readily as it evoked notions of fragmentary pieces detached from wholes. Recent critical work on nineteenth-century scrapbooking has uniformly overlooked this dimension of the books' assembly, but those who used their books to preserve poems from published authors or who hunted those authors down for autograph contributions appear frequently to have presented themselves, in a kind of cross-class masquerade, as poor petitioners. Scrapbooks per se came into existence as a consequence of such petitions: they were understood to have been assembled from the odds and ends that could be spared to the poor by those who had plenty. In a published poem that presents itself (as its title puts it) as "Lines written in the Album of Rotha Quillinan," Leigh Hunt defines the album as a "golden begging box, which pretty Miss / Goes round with." See *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt* (London: Moxon, 1844), 156.

17. *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. "scrapbook." The *Dictionary*'s citation from 1825 is in fact to the title of a printed miscellany published that year, *The Scrap Book or A Selection of Interesting and Authentic Anecdotes*. Samuel Johnson has no entry for *scrapbook* in his *Dictionary* of 1755 but does define *album*, as "a book in which foreigners have long been accustomed to insert the autographs of celebrated people."

supplied as though to contest the book market's monopoly on the look of printedness.

The scrappy engagement with a mix of media that characterizes Reynolds's book, and which is spotlighted through her choice of title, represents another way that Romantic-era albums diverge from both manuscript commonplace books and printed, published miscellanies. Though they often use them to record their reading lives for future recollection, participants in the making of these books also regularly depart from the medium that the authors they revere selected themselves. These volumes combine original poetry and prose with excerpts from published writings, the latter of which may either be transcribed by hand or clipped from other printed sources and pasted in, and either preserved verbatim or emended to suit their new context. Alongside these excerpts they generally include, as well, a potpourri of images—original or borrowed, penciled, painted, embroidered, or pasted in—depicting, variously, picturesque landscapes and/or flowers and/or insects and/or Lord Byron's handsome countenance and/or favorite characters from the works of Walter Scott, beings who gain visible bodies once transferred from the pages of *his* books onto those of the artist's. And beyond representations wrought by pen or paintbrush, the contents of these books also encompass *things*. It is not so unusual to encounter between the covers feathers (as in Elizabeth Reynolds's *A Medley*), seashells (as in Anne Wagner's *Memorials of Friendship*), braided wreaths of human hair, or desiccated ferns and forget-me-nots. Such objects at once add relief to scrapbook pages, strain the books' bindings, and bring the literary culture these volumes mediate into a disconcertingly intimate relation with the humbler world of household handicraft. In so doing, they also test the limits of the category *book*.

The larger project on which this essay draws proposes that one useful consequence of admitting the blank book to full membership within book history is that *the* book is thereby divested of its aura of self-evidence. (Is *a book a book* when there is *nothing in it*? What *is* a book anyhow?) Something revelatory happens to standard definitions of *book* once the codex form's storage capacities become as central to our understanding of books' cultural work as its communicative functions. (Is a book a book when it is mainly used, as an envelope, portfolio, or box might be, to store things?) One notices just how incomplete that account of books is that forgets that some kinds of books are pressed into service as reading matter only incidentally. Some books are mainly for giving and/or for passing on and/or for keeping, as keepsakes: a function that albums and scrapbooks perform by virtue of their users' agreement to treat them mainly as places of deposit, sets of surfaces on which to accumulate inscriptions. In the main, the manuscript

volumes I have pored over, despite being *used*, have never been *read* in the strict sense at all—or were not until I arrived in the libraries' reading rooms and in proper scholarly fashion ploddingly worked my way through them, page following page. The usages the blank book inspires also violate those familiar periodizations of book history organized around the premise that the advent of print in the West enforced a "strict limitation on the reader's ability to intervene in the book."[18] Though scholars of the so-called print revolution often maintain that "the print object imposed its form, structure, and spaces on the reader, and no material, physical participation on the reader's part was supposed,"[19] the users of the particular print object that is the blank book have long asserted just the agency that this account consigns to the preprint past. By so doing they have challenged such visions of books—and of texts—as stable, fixed objects.

But beyond delivering a lesson in bibliodiversity indicating that, far from stabilizing once-malleable texts, print's arrival instead multiplied the possibilities for text assembly, it is salutary, as well, for our accounts of the Romantic period's "archival turn" to restore these rogue archives to their centrality in the media landscape of the time.[20] It challenges some well entrenched accounts of the efforts Romantic readers made to appropriate literary texts as commemorative objects.[21] It conveys the investments in unsettledness and provisionality that through the Romantic era shadow that "desire to halt" which is "the primordial archival desire" (to borrow

18. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, "Introduction," in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Cavallo and Chartier, trans. Lydia C. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 27.

19. Cavallo and Chartier, "Introduction," 27. Study of what people did with their blank books can also challenge a too-familiar scheme for differentiating the print past from our own digital moment, one laid out in William Paulson's statement that "electronically stored and retrieved text, in comparison with its printed predecessor, is almost infinitely malleable and labile, existing in a process of seamless modification and recontextualization quite unlike the stasis of cold print and the discreteness of bound volumes." See Paulson, "The Literary Canon in the Age of Its Technological Obsolescence," in *Reading Matters: Narrative in the New Media Ecology*, ed. Joseph Tabbi and Michael Wutz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 229.

20. Ina Ferris, *Book-Men, Book Clubs, and the Romantic Literary Sphere* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), 72: "The period witnessed its own 'archival turn,' as masses of historical material in post-Revolutionary Europe found their way out of private libraries and into publications or public collections." As Ferris notes, in this period for the first time, historians as a group took to rummaging around in those archives.

21. Judith Pascoe describes this appropriation of poem as souvenir—"commemorative object"—in her discussion of the Romantic period's gift books, the published keepsake volumes that appeared on the scene in Britain in the 1820's and that often modeled themselves on the handmade amateur albums and scrapbooks I treat here. See Pascoe, "Poetry as Souvenir: Mary Shelley in the Annuals," in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 175.

Eivind Røssaak's words).[22] Examining how paper slips and paper scraps are deployed and depicted in this media context, thinking too about how often the verse donated as the infill for people's blank books suggests a theory of Romantic poetry that pivots on the material platform—the paper—that is taken up in the act of writing, I use the rest of this essay to explore the peculiar and sometimes perverse way in which the album/scrapbook manifests the archiving impulse. The rogue archivists I treat here contrived to play at permanence without forsaking the pleasures that can come with considering the book, or the text, as a rather more fluid sort of assemblage comprising discrete, manipulable parts. Even while exploiting the authority of *the* book, as in those title pages I remarked on earlier, this group also committed deliberately to the unbinding and disaggregating of other books, both literally—frontispieces and plates are favorite spoils for bibliocast scrapbookers[23]—and figuratively—the conventions for verse-copying that governed their activities permitted them abundant scope for abridging and/or rewriting to refit poems for their new contexts.[24]

Romantic album-makers, I demonstrate, often took pains to underscore the difference between the blank manuscript book and the printed one. There appears to have been considerable investment in the idea that the blank book, so much more porous in its relationship to the world than the published, printed, properly paginated book can be, might serve as a scene on which to represent chance and contingency. To title one's manuscript volume a "Chip Basket" as in the mid-nineteenth-century New England example cited earlier is to connect one's repository of memoranda to something fragile and temporary that can only momentarily fulfill its functions as a bookish container; soon, something will break and that container will collapse back into the cheap wood scrap from which it was crafted. To select such a title is, by extension, to declare one's preference for what Alexandra Socarides (writing about the compositional and

22. Røssaak, "The Archive in Motion: An Introduction," in *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices*, ed. Eivind Røssaak (Oslo: National Library of Norway, 2011), 15.

23. The first-person narrator of another nineteenth-century it-narrative, "The Life and Adventures of a Number of Godey's Lady's Book" (1855) refers to "the great gap . . . on one of my pages occasioned by the scissors of a young lady, who clipped out a beautiful poem . . . for her scrapbook." Cited in Leah Price, "From *The History of a Book* to a 'History of the Book,'" *Representations* 108 (2009): 129–30.

24. "[T]ransfer rendered the poems the property of the compiler in a way that mere ownership of a printed book could never do." See Adam Smyth, *"Profit and Delight": Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640–1682* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 126. On nineteenth-century readers' transformations of the texts they transcribed, see also Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 122–32, and Michael C. Cohen, *The Social Lives of Poems in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 80–92.

book-making practices of another New Englander, the poet Emily Dickinson) dubs "minor accumulations," by contrast with "dominating and oppressive wholes."[25]

The evidence I amass in the remainder of this article suggests how self-conscious about their interventions into the codex form participants in Romanticism's album culture could be. Earlier commentators have tended, misleadingly, to identify nostalgia as the primary affective register of these volumes, as of the related print genre of the Romantic gift book. That scholarship has played up this group's conservative longing for permanence and stability and their sincere if sentimental determination to reaffirm, in the face of change and loss, the bonds connecting people both to poems and to other people through poems.[26] My emphasis is different. In what follows, I balance scrapbookers' interest in salvaging and preservation against their equally apparent appreciation of the forces of dispersal and division—a conjunction of impulses that marks them as rogue archivists.

Imagining in a 2010 essay a new methodology for historians of reading, Juliet Fleming comments that "not only are books things, rather than ideal identities," they are, as well, "one of the large class of things that must be viewed in time, as having duration, and a way of being that is revealed most fully in their dissolution. The book is a thing that differs from itself, at all the moments of its production and all the moments of its consumption."[27] In the essay I quoted earlier, Johanna Drucker takes Fleming's emphasis on the dynamism of books' existence further, rejecting the object-based analyses that have dominated book history and proposing in their place a notion of the "conditional document" whose identity is unstable and distributed across time.[28] The extent to which participants in Romantic album culture might have anticipated this redescription of the book is suggested by a number of the pages, inscribed with pencil and watercolor paint, found in the manuscript volume that a pair of individuals, known to posterity only as E. and T. Wilson, assembled in Manchester some time between 1800 and 1830. Leafing through the Wilsons' album (now part of the Page Collection at Manchester Metropolitan University's Special Collections Library), one discovers that on a number of occasions the surface

25. Socarides, *Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

26. See, e.g., Pascoe, "Poetry as Souvenir"; Mary Louise Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Sara Lodge, "Romantic Reliquaries: Memory and Irony in the Literary Annuals," *Romanticism* 10, no. 1 (2004): 23–40.

27. Fleming, "Afterword," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 552.

28. Drucker, "Distributed and Conditional Documents," 16.

of the page has artfully been endowed with an illusory third dimension. Without actually being a collage, the paper surface resembles one: a textual horn of plenty composed of overlaid paper scraps, seemingly scattered by chance across the page. These pages show us scrapbooking arrested in midflight. Inviting the beholder to believe that there might be still more layers of textual fragments for her to sift through, that she is only scraping the surface, the page in this style is in some measure a celebration of the miscellaneity—the promise of providing something for everyone—to which the scrapbook is committed. The page also seems to proclaim these amateurs' right, in a world of textual plenitude, to share in the surplus: to augment one's album's contents by gleaning unconsidered trifles (borrowing a tidbit here, a snippet there) from the rich literary harvests of others. Many albums from the period feature handpainted pages whose design resembles the Wilsons's pages, and which likewise appear to look backward to the medley prints of the eighteenth-century print market even as they look forward to modernist notions of collage.[29] Evidently to thematize in this style the scrappy nature of the scrapbook compiled by many hands was something such hands often elected to do.

Here the page is something more than a surface on which to write out lines of verse, riddles, and blocks of prose; the Wilsons have also *painted* the slips of paper that their detached quotations from books and periodicals are *on*. They depict *papers on paper*, loose leaves getting dog-eared, papers strewn across the page with abandon, as if flocking together only to fly apart once more. (Notably, on all the pages in this style the Wilsons also insert into their mix a slip in a different, horticultural sense of the term: a cutting taken from a plant, likewise depicted in the *trompe l'oeil* style that makes the viewer hallucinate a third dimension to this paper-thin image.) The slips that appear on these pages look to be on the verge of slipping away altogether. The gathering and stockpiling that are supposed to define the book as mnemonic object seem here to be counterpointed by another logic, of dispersal and even deletion. On these pages the album presents itself as a momentary concatenation of transient objects—foretelling the possibility that over the years, some of this volume's pages might meet the fates other albums' pages most certainly did, that they might be cut out, while new materials come to be tipped or pasted in over the old (fig. 2).

One thing that albums flag and that historians of the Romantic media environment might do a better job of remembering is the tension between the claims to closure and coherence freighted in the book form and the reality of the page, the detachable leaf. As Peter Stoicheff and Andrew Taylor

29. On these pages' antecedents in the history of art see Mark Hallett, "The Medley Print in Early Eighteenth-Century London," *Art History* 20 (1997): 214–37.

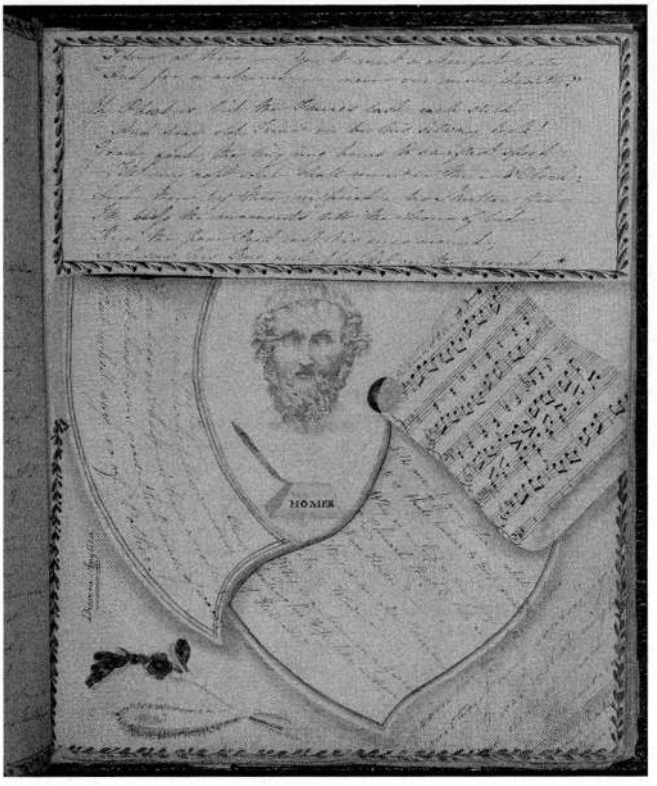

Figure 2: Page from the E. and T. Wilson Album, circa 1815. Image courtesy of Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections.

observe, books can appear to exist as books thanks to the "obedient collaboration of their pages." But pages are not only inked and numbered, and turned and read, in consecutive order, in that familiar process that supplies the reader with a way to mark her likewise numbered hours. Pages are also torn and clipped and punctured.[30] Pages can slip their moorings within the book and become so much loose leaf. Pages can camouflage the things that we by design or in absent-mindedness slip *into* books (the pressed flowers that are simulated in watercolor on the *trompe-l'oeil* pages of the Wilsons' album, for example; the actual locks of hair and dried flowers and

30. Stoicheff and Taylor, "Introduction: Architectures, Ideologies, and Materials of the Page," in *The Future of the Page*, ed. Stoicheff and Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 3.

fern fronds and tickets and letters that, as the researcher will often find, have slipped between the covers).

Once we consider it as scrap, slip, or loose leaf, the page represents something more complicated and rebellious than a synecdoche of the book; *the* book in turn seems a more provisional object than that definite article might lead us to expect, as though we should anticipate instead the undoing of the *gathering* and *binding* that undergird that ontological stability. (In our actual experience as readers, Stoicheff and Taylor remind us, the book *itself*—the *whole* book—is a mirage, "never fully encountered except as an expectation or recollection or closed volume.")[31] By around 1770, the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates, the expectation that under modernity's system of industrial production the *printed* book could be expected to come into the readers' hands with all the leaves present and in the correct and perfect order was sufficiently well entrenched as to have required the coining of the term *collator*, the moniker for the person whose office it is to examine the signatures on the sheets and ascertain that the printing house's several products each in their turn conformed perfectly to an ideal, originary order of assembly.[32] But album pages are generally left unnumbered—except when the volumes' travels take them to rare book libraries where curators decide to remedy this omission. And albums themselves often thwart the order of books and behave badly, in so far as they end up being written out in two directions, both from back to front and front to back, so that in reading one, you must at a certain point turn it upside down. By their nature books like these thwart the prescriptions of the collator.

In one of the 1980 lectures in which he treated *The Preparation of the Novel* Roland Barthes considered the album's contrapuntal relationship to the book. Barthes presented the two forms as options between which he was wavering as he readied himself to produce a novel. He used them as well to recall the visionary experiment with unbinding the book and putting it in motion that the poet Stéphane Mallarmé had staged a century earlier, in part in the pages of a blank book. ("Le Livre" was Mallarmé's dossier of notes and sketches setting out his plans for the material format of this future book and for the processes, the infinitely variable reading performances, that would also bring that book into existence as theater.) In remarks that suggest just how the Romantic-period album thwarts the order of books, Barthes contrasted the embrace of contingency that distinguishes the album, "'an anthology of chance inspirations'" as Mallarmé had earlier

31. Stoicheff and Taylor, "Introduction," 3.
32. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "collator."

put it, to the seeming order and finality of the Book.[33] A page of an album can be moved or inserted "at random," Barthes pointed out, but such a procedure is "absolutely contrary to the Book."[34] One might qualify this contrast, though, and suggest that the blank book highlights possibilities only latent in the print book. It is the nature of blank books to foster the rebelliousness of the page/loose leaf. At the same time, *as* books, they house and contain it.

Much of the poetical content inscribed into albums also underscores such doubleness. It prompts one to query the force of the preposition *in* that we deploy so casually when we equate the book with container and refer to pages and poems as being, alike, *in* books. Early nineteenth-century people appear to have liked writing out, in their own albums or in others' albums, poems whose lines address their own dislocation. With some frequency, poems selected for transcription into albums address, self-reflexively, the ways in which things that are put into books can also be taken out of them again. A reader in the Glasgow University Rare Books Library may, for example, anticipate meeting with "Lines to the memory of Miss R. Stevenson / Written in her Album after her death!" not on one of the pages that the unfortunate Miss Stevenson might once have anticipated reviewing in her golden years but in someone else's album altogether, the one kept between 1827 and 1831 by a certain Anna Matilda McNeill, who would live to a ripe old age and become known to posterity as Whistler's Mother. Inside that manuscript book identified as "The Leisure Hours Amusement of a Young Lady," one finds a poem entitled "Lines written in a young lady's copy of 'Thomson's seasons.' " The overall condition of porosity defining album culture is registered here in the assumption that it is perfectly appropriate that the contents of one young lady's volume—a volume that presumably had the authorial name James Thomson on the spine—should spill over into those of another young lady's volume—a volume without that name. Registered as well is album culture's surprising readiness to believe that verses that were an apt offering to one young lady would also be an apt offering to another.[35]

Romantic poetics were long associated with the idea of organic unity,

33. Letter to Paul Verlaine, November 16, 1885, cited in Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 182.

34. Barthes, *Preparation*, 186. Compare Jacques Scherer, "Livre et Album," in *Le 'Livre' de Mallarmé*, new ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 18–21; Barthes follows Scherer very closely.

35. The album thus models the problems of address that for Andrew Piper shape the Romantic book generally: "the world of the romantic book was intimately concerned with the shifting alignment of the broadcast and the interpersonal." See *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 238.

but, as H. J. Jackson remarks, scrutiny of how Romantic-era people actually used books—their enthusiasm for the taking of extracts, for instance—evidences the contrasting "assumption that books do not grow, but are made; that they are constructed from separate parts that can be dismantled and used again somewhere else."[36] Charles Lamb's contribution to the album that his Edmonton friend Mrs. Daniel Creswell kept between 1831 and 1843 exemplifies this notion of the book as a contingent assemblage of moveable pieces in an especially interesting way, since Lamb's topics, a leaf and flower, might well have led him to just the organicist reconciliations of part and whole, form and matter of the sort deployed by his contemporaries. At the top of the page he claims in Mrs. Creswell's album, Lamb records an anecdote from his adventures as collector in the antiquarian book market:

> In a leaf of an old Quarto, the 'Lives of the Saints written in Spanish by the learned and reverend father Alfonso Villegas, Divine, of the Order of St. Dominik, set forth in English by John Heigham, Anno 1630,' bought at a Catholic Book Shop in Duke Street, Lincolns Inn Fields, I found, carefully inserted, a painted Flower, seemingly co-eval with the Book itself; and did not for some time discover that it opened in the middle, and was the cover to a very humble Draught of a St. Anne, with the Virgin and child, doubtless the performance of some poor, but pious, Catholic, whose meditations it assisted.

Lamb's signature follows the anecdote. Down the page is a lyric poem of twelve lines in which he speculates about the long-ago devotional practice that his lucky find has restored to memory. And positioned between those two specimens of Lamb's (hand)writing, pasted onto the page, is the very bit of cardboard, less than one inch square, on which the flower was painted. (With this addition, Lamb's offering to Mrs. Creswell's volume ends up juxtaposing contrasting uses of the book in a manner often characteristic of album pages. Lamb thus reminds the beholder that the album can function both as a book, a platform for written representation, and as a container or depository, for the very thing being written about.)[37] Lamb

36. Jackson, *Romantic Readers: The Evidence of Marginalia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 252. Leaning on Mallarmé, describing the dialectical relation between the book (which can be quarried for materials for a future album) and the album (which can represent a collection of notes toward a future book), Barthes makes a similar point: "the Book is destined to become debris . . . What remains of the Book is the *quotation* (in the very broad sense): the fragment, the remainder that is *transported* elsewhere" (*Preparation*, 191).

37. Since it opens in the middle, as Lamb says, since, that is, it has been folded so that another layer of content (the "humble Draught of a St. Anne, with a Virgin and child") lies sequestered behind a cover, this piece of paper itself bears some resemblance to a book. The Mrs. Daniel Creswell Album, dated 1831–43, is now in the New York Public Library.

has relocated the scrap lodged by chance between the leaves of one book, his second-hand quarto *Lives of the Saints*, onto the leaf of another, Mrs. Creswell's. His follow-up to his anecdote about his book collecting confirms Jackson's account of the book as a concatenation of moving parts.

Album verse of the Romantic period was often identified with its amenability to the sort of dislocation to which Lamb's/Creswell's transplanted flower was subjected. By extension, it was also identified with the portability and pliability of the paper medium on which it depended; which is to say that to engage album verse one needs a theory of poetry in which the material taken up in the act of composition is treated as integral rather than accidental. A specific poem one can encounter under two different titles in three different manuscript books may illustrate this point. Transcripts of its eight lines may be found in three locations (at least): inside a commonplace book now at the Houghton Library at Harvard, a volume said to have belonged to the master of the ship in which Lord Byron embarked for Greece; in an anonymous album preserved at the Glasgow University Special Collections Library, where the lines are written out in a handwriting made to mimic print; and in the album, now in the British Library, that the future natural historian Philip Henry Gosse assembled in Newfoundland in 1833 and which he brought back to England with him later in that decade. The verses that are in these books, written *about* a book, read as follows:

> Within this awful volume lies
> The mystery of mysteries!
> Happiest they of human race,
> To whom God has granted grace
> To read, to fear, to hope, to pray!
> To lift the latch, and force the way;
> And better had they ne'er been born,
> Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.

Gosse identifies the lines he writes into his book with the simple title "The Bible," but in *their* choice of title the individuals who compiled the other two books make it seem as though their transcription was of a poetic scrap that had somehow slipped out of place. They entitled it "Lines found in Lord Byron's Bible"—a title whose preposition *in* evokes a story of a Bible being used to house the paper scrap recording a lyric effusion. That *in* also insinuatingly reassigns the verses' authorship. For the poem in fact originates in Sir Walter Scott's 1820 *The Monastery*, his historical novel chronicling the Protestant Reformation in the Borders and its effect on a fatherless family. In the novel these lines on the Bible are spoken by the spectral White Lady of Avenel, a spirit who appears before the fiction's young hero

and leads him to that book of books (a vernacular translation of the scriptures that needs repeatedly to be hidden or rescued from the monks who fear that Bible-reading leads to heresy).[38] Scott's fiction contained them initially, but once transcribed, recirculated, and reattributed, those eight lines began to serve as evidence, apparently in a more satisfying way, of the spiritual state of a real historical person, Byron himself. (They also evidence, of course, the mobility of printed text in just the era we associate with print's attainment of fixity.)[39] The more circumstantial title was the one that caught on. The poem appeared as "Lines found in Lord Byron's Bible" in the 1826 Galignani edition of Byron's works and was reprinted again in William Pickering's *The Carcanet: A Literary Album, Containing Select Passages from the Most Distinguished English Writers*, which Pickering published in 1828, and which gave the poem the title "Lines said to have been written by Lord Byron in his Bible." This turn of events is unfair to Walter Scott, of course, but looking beyond the injustice, to the new way in which the poem signifies once so titled and retitled, we might consider how the vagrancy that has apparently been the lot of these lines that have been dropped into a book or even written inside in the book where they do not belong contrasts with the fixity and the monumentality of the awe-inspiring volume that the lines reference. It is worth noticing how the self-containment and singularity of *that* book, housing *the* Divine Word, is implicitly contrasted with the scrapbook's irrefragable plurality.

Put into circulation, paper slips, compromising Scott's authorship in the process. Loose leaf flies away, drops out of one book, and into another. Because of the acts of transport that the blank book encouraged, because of the expanded field of citationality and literary iterability these acts created, poems and books in the Romantic period came unbound even as they came together. As Meredith McGill observes, commonplacers' and scrapbookers' productions are therefore "difficult if not impossible objects" for twenty-first-century literary scholars, whose historicist training conditions them to think that they should restore the snippets of poetry in their pages to their original authored monographs or that, casting the net more widely, they ought to read those verses *in* their historical context. An anti-

38. Scott, *The Monastery*, ed. Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 115.

39. Ellen Gruber Garvey tells a similar story of how an 1863 poem, published anonymously by the New York state-based poet Mary Woolsey Howland and originally titled "Mortally Wounded," was "propelled through the circuit of reprinting and scrapbook saving" and reattributed and retitled as it traveled (*Writing with Scissors*, 42). Presented as words found upon a stray piece of paper (newspapers reprinting the poem often added the heading: "The following lines were found under the pillow of a soldier who was lying dead in a hospital near Port Royal, South Carolina"), "Mortally Wounded" came to be read as a real soldier's dying testament.

thetical point is being made, however, via the cut-out images of gleaners that pop up throughout the pages of Reynolds's "Medley, or, Scrapbook": when Reynolds assembles a page dedicated to love by clipping a stanza from one poet who writes on love and combining it with another stanza clipped from another poet who writes on love, and adorns these with a scissored-out picture of a cupid, this reader as gleaner is making something new and personal to herself. Drawing, as McGill says, their "creative charge from decontextualization," such uses of the blank book engender "pleasures of discontinuity and anachrony" for which historicist scholarship is quite unable to account. This is another way the album-maker's handiwork delivers a contrarian commentary on the practices of commemoration and historicist inquiry embraced in other quarters of Romantic-period culture.[40]

The talking album who launched this essay derives from a now much-discussed sub-genre of published fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[41] In this "it-narrative" tradition, in which the story the print-object conveys is the story of how the print-object is conveyed, readers are made hyper-aware of the material platforms of the texts they are reading. What is usually back story, an account of how the volume peregrinates through the marketplace to reach the hands of the reader, comes to the foreground in works like "The Adventures of an Album," "The Adventures of a Quire of Paper" (published in 1779 in the *London Magazine*), or "The History of an Old Pocket Bible" (1812). Christina Lupton proposes that we see in the medium-consciousness on display in fictions of this sort (and emulated, as well, in canonical novels like Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* or Austen's *Northanger Abbey*) signs of authors' desire to compensate for how the textual contents that the material book houses can feel, perhaps irksomely, like something pre-given and imperturbable. This medium-consciousness, and the highlighting, in particular, of the vagaries of paper's circulation, function within the culture of the eighteenth-century novel, Lupton suggests, as the preserve of an openness to chance that contrasts with what novel-readers already know about the already-thereness of the finished text, that already scripted and hermetically foreclosed sequence bound up between books' covers.

Through that medium-consciousness the eighteenth-century author can

40. McGill, "Common places: Poetry, Illocality, and Temporal Dislocation in Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (2007): 357, 367.

41. See, for example, Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 107–35; and Deidre Lynch, "Personal Effects and Sentimental Fictions," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12 (2000): 345–68.

simulate an abdication of control and so hold "the story ajar to the realm of the contingent."[42] This is because, in the world the physical book inhabits, the adventures that *inside* the book look to be completed (as the telltale compression of the pages has long since suggested, for example, to savvy readers of the marriage plot of *Northanger Abbey*) may continue. In the random movement in which, as Lupton puts it, "all texts participate by virtue of their physical dependence on the paper medium," this book's pages might happen to get greasy, for example, as the "Adventures of an Album" reminded us when its narrator recounted its sojourn with Miss Susan Slattern. Alternately, those pages might get torn, become dog-eared, or be used to light a (non-)reader's pipe. It is a tricky enterprise to make uncertainty part of a written environment, thoroughly choreographed prior to readers' arrival. But as Lupton puts it, drawing on Bruno Latour, when they emphasize that paper might be understood as "an actant, a hybrid of human and nonhuman forces that has some kind of agency, eighteenth-century authors experiment with linking their texts to the contingency of the material world."[43]

Lupton's description of how these medium-conscious fictions comply with readers' desire to watch "words circulate as objects unmoored from human command" sheds additional light on the equivocal way in which Romantic-era albums and scrapbooks enact the archival impulses of their moment.[44] Sometimes these books' makers seem to be taking pains to locate their handiwork within the volatile, contingent world, rather than presenting the work of accumulating and aggregating memories that their books facilitate as creating a stable counterweight to such mutability and misadventure. They often look to be highlighting, not downplaying, the chanciness that inflected the various acts of receiving, collecting up, transcribing, and warehousing that brought these volumes into existence and identity. As the example of the E. and T. Wilson album suggested earlier, the mise-en-page favored by some contributors to these volumes can look like a rebuke to the rectilinearity of the printed book in which, ordinarily, line follows line in lockstep. As we saw, the paper slips depicted on their pages' surfaces are made to appear as though they somehow just dropped into the book, by happenstance, and then stuck—for the moment at least—until the glue failed or until those scraps were required for another volume. That visual idiom invites the beholder of the album to construe what was presumably an intentional act of inclusion as though it were accidental: we are asked to suppose that the blank page just happened to have

42. Lupton, "Contingency, Codex, the Eighteenth-Century Novel," *ELH* 81, no. 4 (2014): 1177.

43. Lupton, "Contingency," 1178.

44. Lupton, "Contingency," 1178.

been filled in. In the very scrappiness of their layout, that is, albums engage with the account of book-space implicit in the title of a published poem by James Montgomery that was a popular selection for their pages: "Epitaph on a Gnat, found crushed on the leaf of a Lady's Album."[45] It is common for the contents of the album to be presented as though they had in some measure come into being as a function of accident.

Consider, too, as an example of this readiness to conceive the book as a provisional document, an anonymous poem from 1835 titled "Lines written in an Album, on pages between which several leaves had been cut out." The poem's speaker begins—in a manner at once elegiac and waggish—with a series of questions about those absent pages (presumably pages once inscribed by persons who were subsequently, as in the age of Facebook we might say, unfriended):

> What leaves were these so rudely torn away?
> Whose immortality thus roughly foiled?
> What aphoristic dogs have had their day,
> And of their hopes been suddenly despoiled?

And it continues in this vein:

> A score of petty minstrels might have lain,
> And, like the Abbey Sleepers, found good lying
> In this brief space—but none, alas! remain,
> Thou'st sent their ashes to the four winds flying.[46]

Embracing a strange, negative form of intertextuality, the lines of these "Lines" refer to lines no longer available for the reading. The author of this paper-conscious variation on that classic Romantic genre, the fragment poem, asks readers to imagine that this poem literally has an absence, one several pages long, at its center. This poem reinforces the message that, as Mallarmé and Barthes observed, the album binds up together insertions *and* deletions, collection and deaccessioning. The convictions about the *malleability* of printed text that participants in album culture acted upon when they reordered the syntax or altered the pronouns of the published writ-

45. Montgomery's sonnet opens with the speaker's address to the unlucky insect: "Lie there, embalmed from age to age!" It concludes with a turn to the reader and a pious reminder of the holiness of life: "Stop—lest it vanish at thy breath / This speck had life, and suffer'd death." Dated 1827 by the author, it was published in the annual *Forget Me Not; A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1829*, ed. Frederic Shobel (London: Ackermann, 1828), 67; I first encountered it in the album of Caroline Oates, assembled circa 1834 (my own collection).

46. "Lines," *The Southern Literary Messenger* 1 (1834–35): 467–68. The poem was reprinted in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1845.

ings they transposed onto an album's pages appear here in a new guise: in the scenario this poem envisages, these convictions encompass the very book, the codex form, that is the album-maker's platform. As this author indicates, people who helped assemble albums and scrapbooks were not always loathe to imagine the imminent unbinding and dissevering of those assemblages. Some appear ready to think of scissors as lying not only at the origin of their handiwork but also in its future.

Like a document deposited in an archive, the inscription on an album's page is set down in anticipation of its reception "in after years," when (as the many album verses that envision this future moment of reading suggest) this very page might chance to meet once again the eye of the book's owner and perhaps obtain the tribute of a sigh. Album verse often meditates on that future scene of reading in which, as another anonymous poet puts it, the book's owner may "Recur unto the treasured page / And find our young hearts pictured there."[47] It is, however, notable how often questions about the future of the material volume also end up encompassed within these meditations on the preservation of memories.

Much of the time, that medium-consciousness simply represents another means to pursue the sentimental ends dear to many participants in album culture. With their references, for instance, to the book's "virgin-white" leaves, album verses, reflecting directly on their own physical setting, often draw analogies between the blankness of the as yet uninscribed album and the innocence of the book's (generally female) owner.[48] As this conceit proposes, experience will change the individual to whom the verses are addressed, and the changes will be registered by the progressive sullying of the once pristine pages. Of course, poems in this vein cannot help but cast these volume's incremental filling up as a more linear process than it actually appears to have been, given the seemingly random placement of those insertions and deletions that make the album so provisional a book, and given how, as noted earlier, these volumes were often written out in two directions. And although their pages often are marked with the dates that correlate the individual act of inscription upon the page with a particular chronological location in the lives of the transcriber and of the album's owner, those same dates also call attention to how far from being of a piece

47. Verses in an anonymous album, Glasgow University Library Special Collections, Ms. Ewing 47.

48. I quote again from Glasgow's Ms. Ewing 47. Cf. Thomas Moore's poem in *Irish Melodies* "Take Back that Virgin Page" and Lord Byron's 1809 "Verses, written in compliance with a Lady's request to contribute to her Album." On such tropes see Samantha Matthews, "'O all pervading Album!': Place and Displacement in Romantic Albums and Romantic Poetry," in *Romantic Localities: Europe Writes Place*, ed. Christoph Bode and Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), 100.

this sort of handmade book actually is. (Many of the manuscript volumes considered in this article appear in fact to have been desultory decades in the making: the Wilsons's album, as catalogued at Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Library is dated 1800–1830. And of course the handwriting that transforms the blank surfaces of the album page itself takes time, in contrast to the printed page that is printed off at once.)[49] The narratologist Mark Currie proposes that the codex form serves its users as a metaphor for unrepeatable, irreversible time—with the pile of pages on our left hand side representing the past, the pile of pages on our right hand side representing the future[50]—but these wayward books disable that metaphor. This sort of book is marked instead by an achronology that is at odds with the punctuality encoded in the printed book, "where the first and last pages are close chronological neighbors," and whose title page legitimately attaches it to a single year (an attachment foundational for the historicist reading practices literary scholars are used to training on books).[51]

To comment on the achronology that is built into this kind of handwritten volume is not to deny its maker's fervent concerns with time's passage and the power that the memory work she is performing has to offset the losses time brings. Many album and scrapbook pages are filled up with sketches of authors' tombs (Jean-Jacques Rousseau's or Walter Scott's), transcripts of notable epitaphs, and pasted-in funerary cards. Jillian Hess has described, for instance, the "cenotaphic page" that in her scrapbook Georgianna Keats created for her brother-in-law by combining newspaper clippings announcing his death with a scrap of manuscript in the poet's hand that preserved the trace of his body.[52] And those who contributed poetry of their own to albums give every evidence of being exercised by transitoriness, mortality, and absence, by how flowers fade and mayflies live just for a day, and by how the years' passage tests whether love and friendship can surmount change. Sara Lodge has thus beautifully described the Romantic-period devotees of handmade albums and of commercial gift-books as votaries and builders of memory's shrine, creators of "romantic reliquaries," who "pil[e] up a cairn of poems, prose, pieces, and illustrations."[53]

And yet while engaged in that enterprise the creators of these books can

49. I am indebted here to Michelle Levy's "Loving manuscripts: The Notebook and the Autograph," paper presented at Edinburgh University, July 10, 2015.

50. Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

51. I quote Lothar Müller's contrast between the discontinuously produced manuscript and the punctually produced printed book. See *White Magic: The Age of Paper*, trans. Jessica Spengler (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 88.

52. Hess, "'This Living Hand': Commonplacing Keats," *Keats-Shelley Review* 24 (2010): 19.

53. Lodge, "Romantic Reliquaries," 28.

appear very conscious of the difference between a stone cairn and a paper one. Such accounts of nostalgia as the mood governing the album do tend, that is, to bracket their makers' evident readiness to think about time's impact not only on love or identity or human bodies, but also on the bookhood of books—and their awareness of the book as a conditional document. For the texts deposited on album pages counterbalance their devotion to recollection with an emphatically hardheaded, *un*sentimental strain of what Leah Price calls bibliographical materialism.[54] It is consistent with their creators' roguish conceptions of books' archiving functions that their account of the future so often engages the strange demediating moment when paper switches from being a carrier of meaning to being waste matter. Thus, a favorite selection for the album is some variation or another of a poem titled variously "A Book's Prayer" or "This Album's Petition," in which yet another talking volume calls on its future readers not to scrap it, say, by looting it of its plates and bindings. It anticipates other indignities too: "Oh! make me then the object of your care, / Tear not my leaves to ornament your hair, / If married, save me from your Children's gripe / Nor let my pages light your Husband's pipe."[55]

True, another favorite album selection in a similarly materialist vein is rather more upbeat: Benjamin Franklin's witty epitaph for B. Franklin, Printer, whose body is likened to "the cover of an old Book, / Its contents torn out, and stripped of its lettering and guilding," but who nonetheless confidently awaits his appearance "in a new and more elegant edition."[56] Monuments to the vanity of such human wishes, many of the scrapbooks in archives, especially those books left incomplete, seem rather to have been jettisoned from the category of book altogether. "I am condemned to remain all the rest of my days, that pitiable and miserable object, a neglected, dusty, unfinished album," is how the fictional speaking album with whom this essay began ends its tale.[57] The future awaiting the real counterparts to this it-narrator sometimes saw the volumes deployed as recycled paper. They were transferred within the nineteenth-century household from the parlor to the nursery, furnishing there the surfaces on which small children might practice their penmanship.

Albums and scrapbooks left in this "pitiable and miserable," scribbled-

54. Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian England*, 110.

55. One version, "This album's petition," is in M. McLaren's album, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Library; Allan mentions still another in *Commonplace Books and Reading*, 132.

56. Franklin's epitaph is copied out in "The Pot Pourri: or, a Collection of Good, Bad, and Indifferent," dated 1791 (Houghton Library); in "The Leisure Hours Amusement of a Young Lady" (Pforzheimer Collection, New York Public Library); and in the album of Marianne Spencer Stanhope, begun 1812 (British Library).

57. "Adventures of an Album," 285.

over state are generally the ones demoted from the category of books to the category of "family papers." Albums and scrapbooks frequently suffer a similar sort of demotion from their bookhood when, lodged in twenty-first-century archives or museums' departments of prints and drawings, the images on their pages are catalogued individually. This article began by noting how much trouble these books have had getting themselves remembered, at least as books, and a look at the electronic archives formed by these institutions confirms that point. Thanks to the latter's new digitization projects, it now takes only a single keystroke to disbind a book so that the individual leaves appear in serried ranks of thumbnails on one's computer screen.

Given this article's emphasis on how often blank books operate as engines for decontextualization, it may be illogical to regret the dismantling that, as perpetrated, for instance, by the web catalogue of the Victoria and Albert Museum, reduces the scrapbooks and albums that this institution means to keep to so many loose leaves. For a practice of clipping that at once preserves and destroys was the foundation of these volumes to begin with. Put otherwise, these books do not boost our faith in the possibilities of a historical recovery that would be a total recall, but instead propose a media theory that insistently twins cultural preservation with cultural risk. These books *keep* (as the poem cited above put it) "pages between which several leaves had been cut out." Through their recurrent engagements with a notion of the book that is positioned in time rather than standing beyond it, they keep loss visible *as* loss. They do not consistently let us believe that books—or the past generally—may be remembered whole and complete.

And this might be why these volumes' remediation of the public, printed world of the Romantic century helpfully illuminates our current projects of remediating that world in digital archives. That preservationist enterprise evokes mixed feelings, representing for some scholars another indication that as Garrett Stewart puts it, "we might already have turned some final page on the reign of the codex," thereby providing just another prompt for melancholy.[58] (How not to regret our waning opportunities to perceive the thickness of the volumes or the crinkliness of the pages?) By contrast, and as de Kosnik notes, current discussions of digital memory sometimes appear invested in the myth that the Internet combined with networked computers forms a recurrently regenerated "automated archive." Ignoring our daily frustrations with broken links and disappearing content, those who point to the infinite storage space associated with digital culture sometimes

58. Stewart, *Bookwork: Medium to Object to Concept to Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 35.

sound as though they anticipate a new archival dawn in which, dematerialized, record-keeping will no longer be dogged by gaps or absences.[59] As we have seen, however, albums and scrapbooks are archives of another sort. Their makers remember more readily that paper slips.[60]

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59. de Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 42; cf. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future is a Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2008): 148–71.

60. Earlier versions of this essay were given at the 2014 meeting of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism, the 2015 CUNY Annual Victorian Conference, Boston University, Edinburgh University, the University of Washington, Louisville University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I'm grateful to those audiences for their responses and suggestions and to Theresa Kelley and Craig Robertson for careful, challenging readings later in the revision process. Thanks as well to Elizabeth Denlinger, Curator of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and his Circle, New York Public Library, and Stephanie Boydell, Curator, Special Collections Library, Manchester Metropolitan University.

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