

# Marking the Body, Marking the Text

David Greetham's "Archive Fever"

*Katherine D. Harris*

## ABSTRACT

*In honor of David Greetham's retirement as a Distinguished Professor from The Graduate Center, I was pleased to offer a few remarks about his influence on my work and a few anecdotes about the highlights of working with him while completing my doctorate in the English Department at The Graduate Center, CUNY. For the ceremony itself in March 2014, I was excited to receive an invitation to revisit my alma mater, the place where I discovered how glorious it is to do research down the street in either direction with the main research library of the New York Public Library and the Morgan Library flanking either side of The Graduate Center.*

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## Why I Do What I Do or, David Made Me Do It

I showed up at the Graduate Center fifteen years ago intent on studying with Speed Hill only to receive the news from Scott Westrem that Speed was retiring. After having spent two years at another New York graduate program, I was crestfallen that the primary bibliography and textual studies scholar who wrote exciting things about the history of the book was no longer available. Scott walked me into the office adjacent to his, and in his generous way, announced my intentions to study history of the book to the office's occupant, David Greetham, the other textuist in the department. I thought, "Ok, I'll study with him, but I should probably read his publications first". After a few months of absorbing *all* of his work, I knew that I had selected the right program. David proved, however, to be much more than an intellectual match for my studies; he inspired an independence that had been suppressed by requirements during my early graduate school days. He began his mentoring of my career by introducing me to other faculty at our weekly Friday Forum gatherings where everyone in the

program would show up for the post-speaker wine and charcuterie, where the lights were dimmed and the conversation among 80–100 attendees was boisterous and exciting. There was one catch: He would escort me over to a few faculty in the middle of this crowded room, enter the conversation, introduce me, and then *walk away*. As a painfully-shy graduate student, I couldn't tell if these were faculty or other students and consequently stumbled in terms of the rules for addressing them since David had introduced them by their first names. As I watch my students struggle to address me and to discern the rules of engagement, David's actions are funny, but only now. He wasn't afraid to push me, and in fact has expressed that this was part of the socialization for The DCG Club, a training that would include an invite to watch the yearly rounds of friendly pugilism among bibliographers, textuists, and historians.

During January, David usually taught the intersession version of the department's only required course, an introduction to methodologies, which skewed heavily towards his strengths in textual studies. At the start of each session, David would arrive with a very tall stack of books that contained either readings for the day or further references for those interested in pursuing a particular line of thought further. We were lucky with this intersession course because it intersected with the annual Bibliography Week in New York. Though this gathering doesn't mirror the Modern Language Association Convention, the passion and zeal of each participant and presenter mimics that of Comi-Con. Libraries throw open their doors to archivists, bibliographers, textual scholars to show off their best archival holdings, and a select few new scholars are invited to take the stage in an auditorium full of eager and engaged listeners. Don Reiman, Jerry McGann, Don McKenzie, and many other scholars of bibliography and textual studies visited our seminar to discuss their latest projects and theories of the text. During the year that I attended the seminar, each scholar was invited serially to our meeting. In subsequent years, David would invite a panel, including myself, with the particular knowledge that the panelists would inherently disagree with each other and offer quite the robust performance for the attending students.

During my year, though, it was apparent that David was inspired to instigate all on his own. On the given day of one of these senior scholar's visits, David would place a book purposefully on the top of the stack. At first, I thought he was humoring the visitor by placing his or her scholarly work on the very tip-top of the mountainous volumes. It turns out that he would instead delicately move the opposing scholarly work to the top. Intentional or not, David didn't shy away from engaging debates—his

entire career, I think, focused on allowing his students room for that debate and boisterous disagreement.

What I didn't realize in that seminar, during an intersession that would precede my Ph.D. qualifying exams, was that David was rigorously testing my ability to absorb the entire field of textual studies. For these exams, the candidate forms three lists of readings in consultation with faculty, each of whom will appropriately grill the candidate during a two-hour oral exam. For a semester or two, David and I would engage in thoughtful conversations about the readings for his list—as my chair, he was responsible for moving me forward in the process, and as a reward for being the qualifying exam chair, he was allowed the final question during those two hours. Thinking that he had been tossing soft-ball questions for the entire two hours, I really expected him to offer up the hardest concluding question of all time. Instead, he opened the *New York Times*, pointed to some advertisement which parodied the Mona Lisa and asked “what is this?” My response was only “Um, Benjamin's representation of ‘aura’? and the defining . . .”, at which point he interrupted, smiled, folded the newspaper, and asked me to step outside. “That was it?” I thought. Really? During our preliminary meetings (debates, really), he had already decided that I had passed the qualifying exams; this meant that during the exam while the other two faculty were pushing me to think about nineteenth-century literature, David was enjoying the conversation as if we were in his office.

When I started work on my dissertation, David and I continued our one-hour meetings in which I felt like I was in a wind tunnel of knowledge. Then I would go away and read for a long time to catch up to the massive knowledge bank that was required to keep up with his rapid-fire recommendations. I thought surely that these meetings were laborious for him. But, at a Society for Textual Studies conference over dinner, a group of his former dissertation advisees asked why he had picked us to work with: “Because you came in with ideas and were excited. There was no hand-holding involved. I would say ‘great idea’ and you would go away to think, execute, and write”. David encouraged me to master the topics, create archives, and never stop exploring and engaging my curiosity. That governs my career now and certainly steered my doctoral work under his tutelage.

David's influence—letting me explore and screw around—has become a big portion of my pedagogy, especially where it concerns Digital Humanities. With David many of us were doing Digital Humanities before it was ever popularized as a field. Before that moment, though, David taught me about scholarly editing and archival work, both areas that I continue to be passionate about today. In fact, the topic of my dissertation involved

studying a set of nineteenth-century volumes that weren't collected in any U. S. library with any substantial care, with the exception of the University of South Carolina. I began amassing my own collection in order to write my dissertation. But the engravings and format and visual apparatus of each volume, swelling to 300 in my personal collection by this time, were very difficult to assess due to their duodecimo size. With this dilemma, David encouraged me to create a digital archive of the important parts of each volume. That project, in turn, became a public digital project, *The Forget Me Not Archive*, one of the first digital archives attempting to demonstrate the importance and far-reaching influence of literary annuals on British and American authors. Scholars typically couldn't examine the originals because, well, they just weren't available or were scattered across several libraries. *The Forget Me Not Archive* became a rogue project between authoritative and not quite "print" and only a *single* chapter in my 10-chapter dissertation.

With that digital archive, I was at once literary historian of the genre and imposing archivist on their continuing history. David reminded me continuously of Jacque Derrida's *Archive Fever*:

The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future. (1996, 68)

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It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. No desire, no passion, no drive, no compulsion, indeed no repetition compulsion, no "*mal-de*" can arise for a person who is not already, in one way or another, *en mal d'archive*. (1996, 91)

"Keep going", he said, "keep going".

## The DCG Club

Writing a literary history of any genre or collection implies that the author has mastery of the topic or, more importantly, has combed through every

last piece of archival witnesses. Even with access to the New York Public Library and scatterings of collections in other local libraries, my literary history desperately needed more work, more archival research, more information, and, in the end, more data. In 2005, I had to stop working on it, though, because an Assistant Professor position was calling me to San Jose, California. Another eight years of visits to the British Library and several American and European libraries and archives, and I was finally able to submit the manuscript as artificially complete, but only because publishing the history will allow others to answer questions I could only pose. After fifteen years, the literary history of the early literary annuals offers a definition of the genre with reference to its materiality as well as its contents: those bibliographic and linguistic codes we debated so hotly in the methodologies seminar.

## Introducing the Literary Annuals<sup>1</sup>

I've been working on an archival project that historicizes the first decade of an early nineteenth-century literary genre.

### Retail Prices of Reading Materials, 1814–1835<sup>2</sup>

Cheap Weekly Magazines	1.5d.-6d. ( <i>Mirror of Literature</i> , 1822)
Political tracts	2d.
Cheap Non-Fiction	6d. per part 4s.6d. per complete volume (1827)
Weekly Magazine	6d.-1s.
Daily Newspapers	7d.
Recycled	1d.-3d. Illegally hired/lent to multiple readers
Re-prints (Literature)	1s-12s.(Shakespeare's plays)
Critical Periodicals	2s. ( <i>Fraser's</i> )
Monthly Magazines	2s.6d.-4s.
Numbered Series (Fiction)	2s.-5s. per weekly installment <sup>3</sup>

1. Gleaned from my literary history, *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual 1823–1835*, Ohio University Press.
2. Amassed from Richard Altick's *The English Common Reader* (1956, 260–93; 318–47).
3. However, as Altick points out, the total cost by the conclusion of the numbered series was not as cheap as the consumer could have wished. For instance, a Bible issued in 173 numbers cost in total £5.15s.: "We can assume that few of the purchasers who endured to the end of a serial issue counted up what they had spent; or, if they did, they failed to reflect that by determinedly saving sixpence

Poetry Volume	5s.
Review Periodicals	6s. ( <i>Quarterly Review, Edinburgh</i> )
Literary Annual	8s.-£3
3 Volume Novel	15–21s. (1814–1823)
Serialized Novel	20s. total for parts 21s. complete vol. ( <i>Pickwick Papers</i> , 1836)
Scott Novel	31s.6d. (1820)
Circulating Library	35s. (per year for unlimited access)

Inspired by intercontinental literary forms and created by a successful art publisher, Rudolph Ackermann, the literary annual first appeared in London in 1822 and was claimed by a myriad of publishers to represent the best of British ingenuity—even though the material form, the printing process and the editorial methods were really borrowed from French and German pocket-books, albums, and emblems. Originally, literary annuals were to replace the conduct books of the late eighteenth century, but the editors' and publishers' claims don't match that intention.

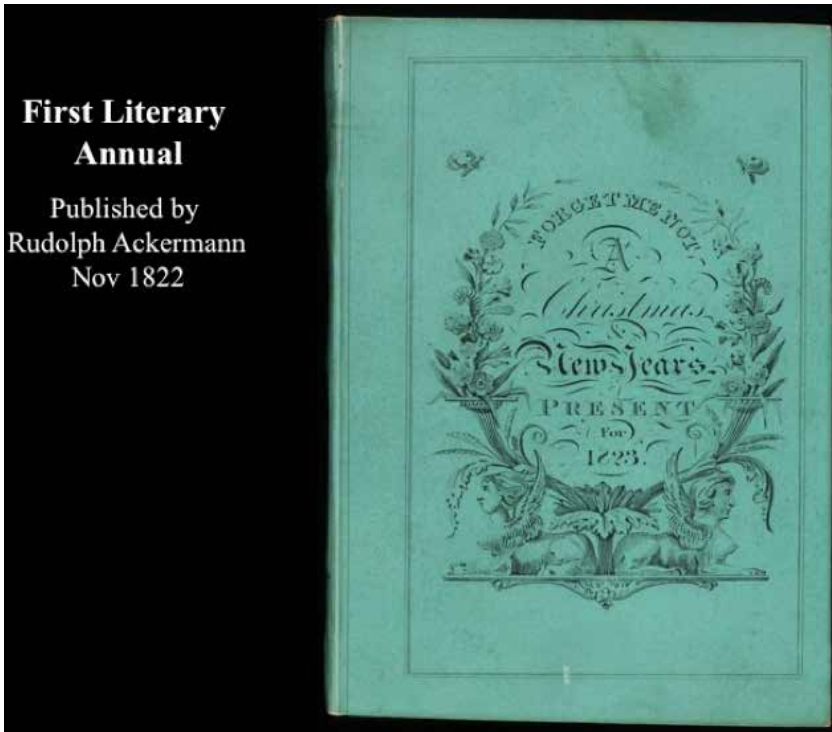
In my larger work, *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual 1823–1835*, I argue that the British nineteenth-century literary annual in its textual production is best seen as a female body, its male producers struggling to make it both proper and sexually alluring, its female authors and readers attempting to render it their own feminine ideal. At first, reviewers enjoyed the annuals, offering long excerpts and recommending particular annuals to their readers. Within five years, though, reviewers began to write with disgust about the genre—primarily with objections to the *poetess* aesthetic.

Laura Mandell points out that “two myths pervade the study of this immensely important and influential body of writing. One is that canonical writers shunned this work, refusing to publish in well-paying annuals and choosing instead to create great, high art; the other is that poetess poetry is ‘bad’ writing” (2006). Both myths rely on the production of aesthetics, and it was the reviewers who produced this demarcation about literary annuals—at first praising as possessing “a tone of romance, which, set off as it has been by poetry of a very high order, can have no other possible tendency than to purify the imagination and the heart” (Nov. 1826 *Monthly Review* 274).

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or a shilling a week, rather than giving it to the canvasser, they might have had their completed book sooner and much more cheaply” (1956, 265).

## The Forget Me Not Literary History

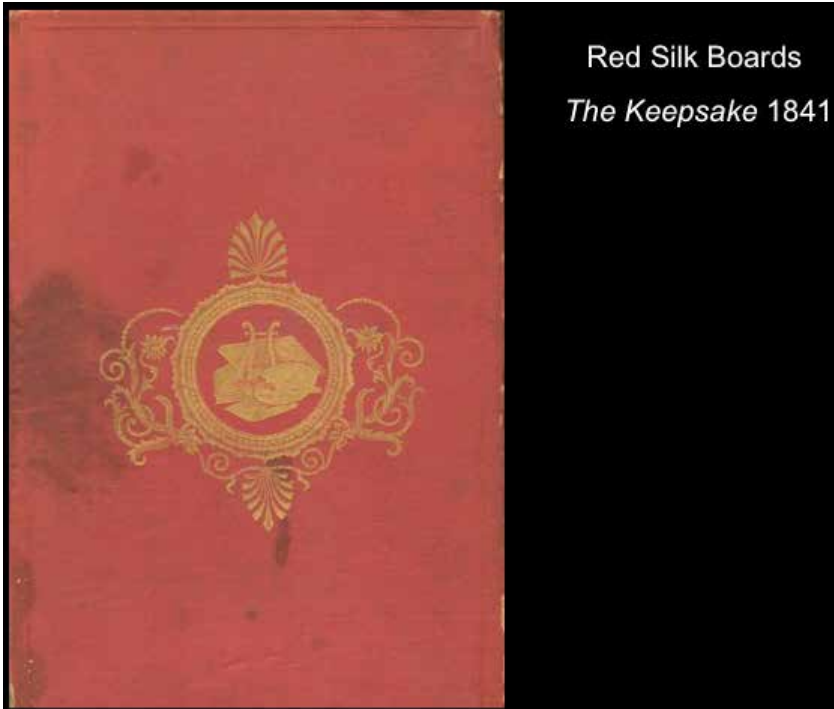


By wrapping beauty, literature, landscape art, and portraits into an alluring package, for 12 shillings editors and publishers filled the 1820s with this popular and best-selling genre. (Image 1: 1823 *Forget Me Not* paper-bound boards)<sup>4</sup>

4. All images are from the author's personal collection of literary annuals with the exception of the John Martin painting, which is in public domain.



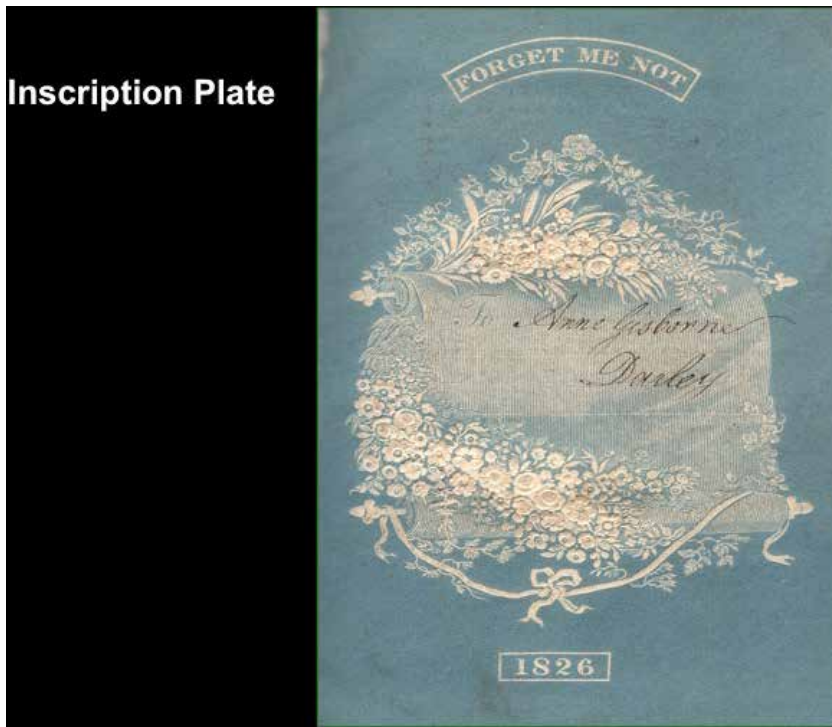
Originally published in paper boards, the annuals were usually re-bound in beautiful leather covers — at first by the booksellers then by the purchasers. (Image 2: 1827 *Forget Me Not* leather-bound boards)



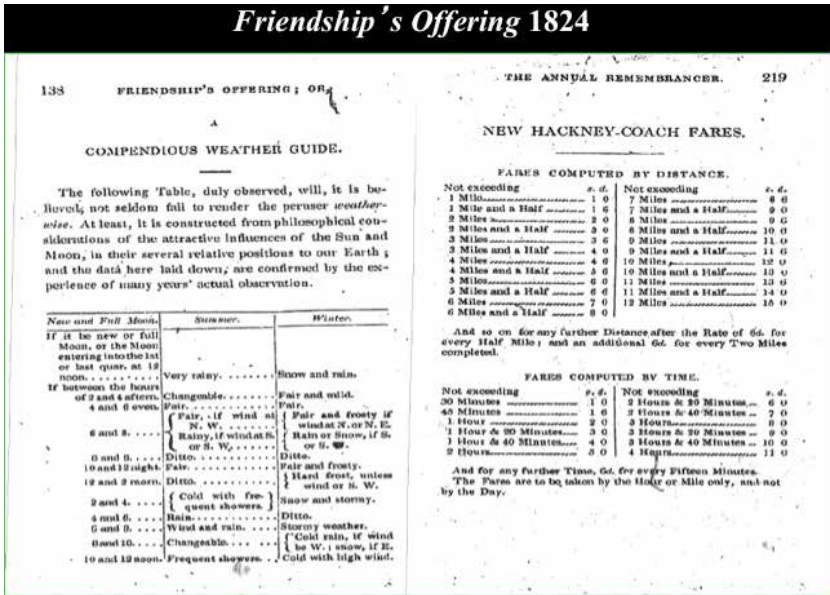
Red Silk Boards  
*The Keepsake* 1841

By 1828, publishers employed the latest innovations in binding and switched to silk to amplify the value of the material object. (Image 3: 1841 *The Keepsake* silk-covered boards)

## Inscription Plate



Each annual typically offered a confined space for dedication. (Image 4: Inscription plate from 1826 *Forget Me Not*)



Early annuals offered practical information similar to the Stationer's Company's almanac. But that would soon disappear in favor of more literary and visual content. (Image 5: Tables from 1824 *Friendship's Offering*)



Engravings were cast from popular paintings but rarely garnered fame for the engraver who was deemed a mere copyist and denied entrance into the Royal Academy. (Image 6: John Martin's painting "Seventh Plague of Egypt", 1823 compared to Henry Le Keux's engraving "Seventh Plague of Egypt", 1828 *Forget Me Not*)



Often engravings were commissioned, such as “Mother and Child” from the 1825 *Literary Souvenir*. (Image 7: “Mother and Child”. from the *Literary Souvenir*, 1825)

and then well-known poets were asked to render an accompanying poem, work for hire — eventually much to the poet’s dismay.

Mother and Child  
by Felicia Hemans

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

Thou 'rt safe! — Thou com'st, with smiles my fond arms meeting  
 Blest, fearless child! — I, I have tasted death!  
 Nearer! that I may *feel* thy warm heart beating!  
 And see thy bright hair floating in my breath!  
 Nearer! to still my bosom's yearning pain, —  
 I clasp thee now, mine own! thou 'rt here again! (*Literary Souvenir* 64)

*Let me stress this:* EVERYONE contributed to the annuals, even if they despised the genre.

With a large audience almost immediately clamoring for more literary annuals, Rudolph Ackermann and his editor, Frederic Shoberl, created a second *Forget Me Not* for 1824 and found themselves competing with *Friendship's Offering* and *The Graces*.

### **Retail Success of the British Literary Annual**

- 1828:** 100,000 copies of 15 titles = aggregate retail value £70,000+  
**1829:** Britain: 43 titles  
           America: 60+ titles  
           European colonies: 15 titles  
**1840:** Britain: ~40 titles  
**1860:** The annual and its poetess tradition had been subsumed into women's magazines and the periodical press only to be resurrected briefly in 1929 by Modernist author, Vita Sackville West, in homage to the popular form, the Romantic-era poetess and the annual's creator, Rudolph Ackermann.

By 1828, 15 English literary annual titles had joined the market only to vie for an audience against 30 more titles by 1830. The trade in annuals had become so popular that various titles emerged with hopes and promises of continuing a yearly publication. But with titles like *Olive Branch* and *Zoölogical Keepsake* appearing and vanishing in a single year, more often than not, that promise was broken. Many factors led to the success or demise of a particular title—external appearance, engraving quality, literary contents, popular authors, editorial arrangement, marketing, and reviews. This last element provided an introduction and public face to each annual by recommending, denouncing or simply excerpting its contents.

Even with all of this popular success, the critical condescension surrounding the literary annual would haunt the genre well into the nineteenth century:

The Annuals created a craze, the craze denoted some insanity in the public mind of the period; and much of this insanity is apparent within the curious circle of prolific writers, from which the general contributions were obtained. . . . This Annual was ephemeral not because it was effeminate; but because it was unequal, with a bias towards the trivial. It was one of the “cakes” of literature, not the bread. And even cakes become distasteful, when they provide only two or three currants each, notwithstanding that the surface is liberally endowed with sugar. (TALLENT-BATEMAN 1902; 90, 97; emphasis added)

After finally sputtering out in England in 1857, the literary annual reappeared as an homage to Rudolph Ackermann during the 1930s—even after Charles Tallent-Batement condescendingly recommends annuals and poetess poetry as the cakes of literature. It was Ackermann, though, who originally defined the genre according to his various advertisements and declarations:

- *Purpose*: Annuals are “expressly designed to serve as annual tokens of friendship or affection” (ADVERT 1823).
- *Publication Time Frame*: “It is intended that the Forget-Me-Not shall be ready for delivery every year, early in November” (SHOBERL 1823 vii).
- *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” (SHOBERL 1823 vii).
- *Authorship*: “[H]e shall neglect no means to secure the contributions of the most eminent writers, both at home and abroad” (SHOBERL 1823 vii).
- *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” (ADVERT 1823).
- *Engravings*: “[W]hile his long and extensive connexion with the Arts, and the credit with which he has acquitted himself in his various undertakings in that line, will, he trusts, be a satisfactory pledge that his best exertions shall not be wanting to give to this Work in a decided superiority in regard to its embellishments, over every other existing publication of the kind” (SHOBERL 1823 viii).

- *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” (ADVERT 1823).
- *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” (ADVERT 1823).

### **Textual Theory Based on The DCG Club**

The material object is traditionally defined as closed once it is produced. But, it is my contention—aligned with Derrida—that the textual object, the physical book is also an archive of creation, memories, moments—especially the literary annual which was intended to represent memories. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida suggests that the moments of archivization are infinite throughout the life of the artifact: “The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (1996, 17). Archiving occurs at the moment that the previous representation is overwritten by a new “saved” document. Traces of the old document exist, but cannot be differentiated from the new. At the moment an archivist sits down to actively preserve and store and catalogue the objects, the archiving is once again contaminated with a process. This, according to Derrida, “produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future” (1996, 68). Literary works become archives not only in their bibliographic and linguistic codes, but also in their social interactions yet to occur. It is the re-engagement with the work that adds to an archive and that continues the archiving itself beyond the physical object.

Textuality is a holistic study of the codex, book, text and work, which is not limited by bifurcating form from content, bibliographic code from linguistic code. The text/work is a body that is not exclusively bibliographic or linguistic, much like the physical, emotional and mental form of a human being, and textuality is the social condition of various times, places and persons. The entire “work” (i.e., each literary annual) functions like a human body: each part contributes to the survival of the individual. If extremities are lost, the body, the person is altered. *The book itself is like this body*. For instance, the cover contributes to the socio-cultural meaning

of the content, in a similar fashion as the publisher or author. Without the cover, the initial presentation of the work is altered, hence its meaning is re-constructed. And, with the annuals, each volume is unique, much like a body, with each variant binding or owner's inscriptions.

Each "body" is influenced by several "literary institutions", roles that contribute to the production of texts/works: author, editor, illustrator, publisher, printer and distributor. Each contributes to the meaning: "[L]iterary works are only material things to a degree that they are social projects which seek to adapt and modify themselves circumstantially; [i]n cultural products like literary works the location of authority necessarily becomes dispersed beyond the author" (McGann *Critique* 102 & 84). And, each institution is influenced by its socio-cultural surroundings—a process that allows a book to be a constantly evolving "work".

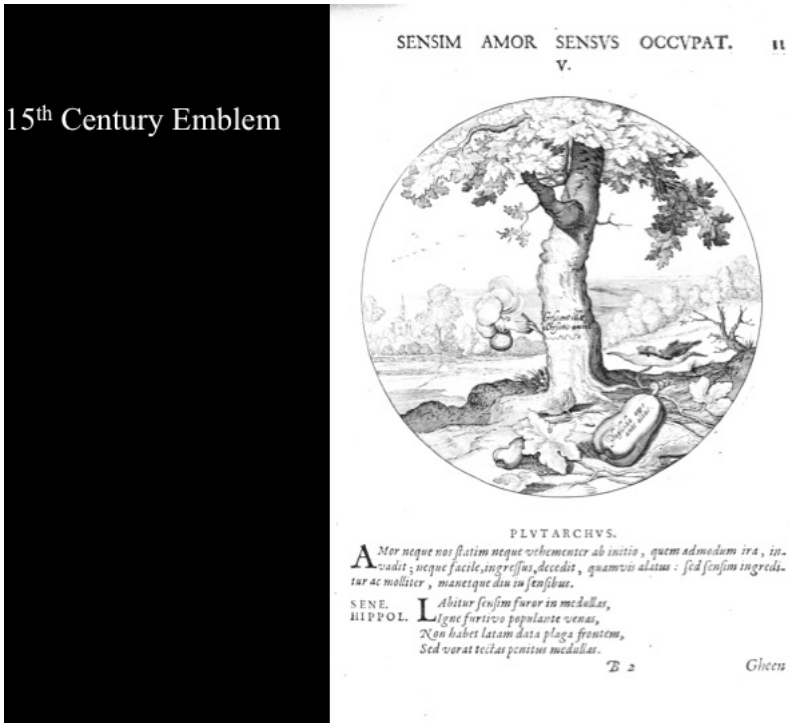
Editors and publishers of literary annuals consciously marketed their works as completed memories and thereby imbued the physical object with a humanity or intellect. With this in mind, we can see the literary annual as a particular form of transmissive interaction and not merely a channel of transmission. 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 the context of this study, the literary annual is not merely an object or an artifact. Instead, I move beyond the linguistic and bibliographic codes of annuals to consider the entire production of meaning caused by each literary annual, each interaction with a reader, each translation, each subsequent re-interpretation. As is be discussed across the chapters in my latest work, annuals were re-interpreted, translated, and revised so many times that they gathered meaning beyond what Ackermann intended in the original 1823 volume. For these reasons, it is inappropriate to venture into the debate surrounding form and genre. The literary annual borrowed a certain physical format from European and historical influences, but the combination of the contents and the physicality qualify the literary annual as a genre. To equate the annual with a form is to ignore the richness of these volumes and their impact on literary history.

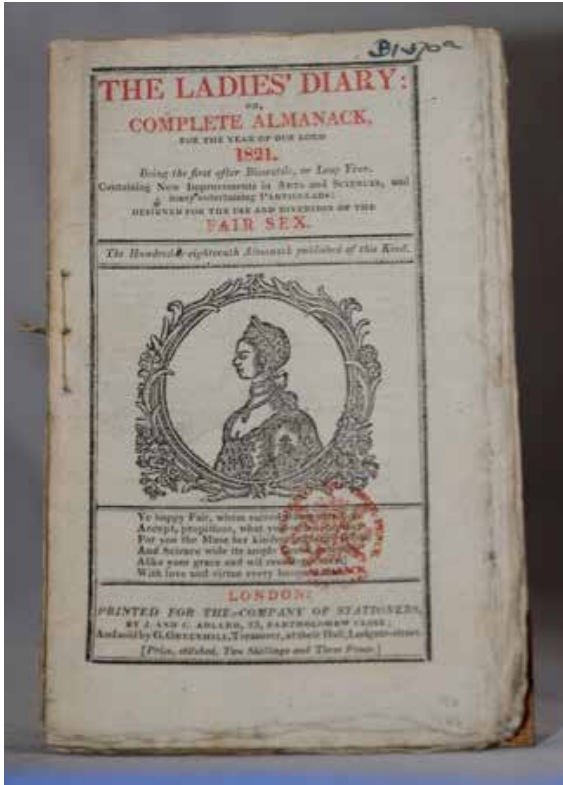
## **Archive Fever for the Annuals' History & Recuperation**

Over the last fifteen years, I've amassed a large collection of annuals, their precursors, and their afterings. The project inspired several trips to Lon-

don, the Netherlands, even a few American Libraries in search of every last letter, memo, business check, bookseller listing, contract, legal document—and the elusive journal of Rudolph Ackermann. I felt like Indiana Jones, but without the death defying acts and the whip. Early on, each time I discovered something, I would excitedly email David and ask about the connections.



(Image 8: Sensim Amor Emblem, Plutarchus emblem, *Proteus* 1618)



My perambulations lead me to write about fifteenth-century emblems, eighteenth-century conduct manuals, and eighteenth-century almanacs (the last one being perhaps the most fun to own and peruse at my leisure). (Image 9: 1821 *The Ladies' Diary*)

David encouraged a sense of discovery—to the point that I held onto this manuscript for well past the deadlines, much to the annoyance of my editors. Even when I submitted the dang thing this past February, I suffered a bit of anxiety about what I had missed. And each time I give a talk, I cringe just a little bit when someone brings up a great point that should have gone into this project. That was David—he taught me to be exhaustive. And he introduced me to what would eventually become my foundation in Digital Humanities and pedagogy: exploration, collaboration, *screwing around*.

When the manuscript was sent in, I had run out of time. Matt Kirschenbaum once told me that if the book was running long, footnote everything

and indeed I did. I saved writing the acknowledgements until the very last moment and then wrote a ten-page draft thanking everyone for the last fifteen years of support. Somewhat anxious that I'd left out some grant sponsor or another archive, I erased the entire thing and declined to include an acknowledgement. There's only one person to thank for that long overdue, but incredibly satisfying submission:

Thank you, David.

*San Jose State University*

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