



Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual, 1823-1835 (Series in Victorian Studies)

Katherine D. Harris

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By November 1822, the British reading public had already voraciously consumed both Walter Scott's expensive novels and Rudolf Ackermann's exquisite lithographs. The next decade, referred to by some scholars as dormant and unproductive, is in fact bursting with *Forget Me Nots*, *Friendship's Offerings*, *Keepsakes*, and *Literary Souvenirs*. By wrapping literature, poetry, and art into an alluring package, editors and publishers saturated the market with a new, popular, and best-selling genre, the literary annual. In *Forget Me Not*, Katherine D. Harris assesses the phenomenal rise of the annual and its origins in other English, German, and French literary forms as well as its social influence on women, its redefinition of the feminine, and its effects on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century print culture. Harris adopts an interdisciplinary approach that uses textual and social contexts to explore a forum of subversive femininity, where warfare and the masculine hero were not celebrated.

Initially published in diminutive, decoratively bound volumes filled with engravings of popularly recognized artwork and "sentimental" poetry and prose, the annuals attracted a primarily middle-class female readership. The annuals were released each November, making them an ideal Christmas gift, lover's present, or token of friendship. Selling more than 100,000 copies during each holiday season, the annuals were accused of causing an epidemic and inspiring an "unmasculine and unbawdy age" that lasted through 1860 and lingered in derivative forms until the early twentieth century in both the United States and Europe. The annual thrived in the 1820s and after despite?—or perhaps because of?—its "feminine" writing and beautiful form.

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