

ILLUSTRATED POCKET DIARIES AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE

The eighteenth-century illustrated pocket diary-cum-almanac is a largely neglected ephemeral genre, partly because it has, in Margaret J. M. Ezell's term, remained "invisible."¹ Even though annual publications such as Thomas Baker's *Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas* and William Peacock's *Polite Repository* were once widely known and familiar to those who could afford them, their absence from historical narratives of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century print culture, the history of the book, and publishing represents a significant gap in accounts of the consumption of printed ephemera.² Too often, copies of these pocket books have been preserved largely because of who their owners were or because of the socio-cultural records they contain on day-to-day life in the period. In that regard, they have not been considered as important interventions in a sizable market for illustrated pocket books the study of

The research for this article was made possible through the award of funded fellowships at the Lilly Library, University of Indiana, Bloomington; and the Princeton University Library. I am grateful to the Bibliographical Society of Britain for a Major Grant enabling me to visit British repositories holding copies of illustrated pocket diaries and to the FWO (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen), Belgium, for funding an overseas stay in the USA, enabling me to consult a range of copies of these publications held at a variety of libraries.

While I am grateful to the archivists and special collections librarians who have facilitated visits to their repositories, special thanks are due to Mark Purcell, the Library Curator of the National Trust, who made available the otherwise inaccessible copy of *Le Souvenir* held at Dorneywood.

¹ Margaret J. M. Ezell, "Invisible Books," *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800*, ed. Laura Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 53–54.

² One of the principal reasons for the neglect of this genre relates to the different ways in which it has been catalogued in research collections. It is neither included in accounts of the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century almanac, nor have appropriate criteria for its classification as "diary-cum-almanac" been devised. Cathy Lynn Preston and Michael J. Preston, eds., *The Other Print Tradition: Essays on Chapbooks, Broadsides, and Related Ephemera* (New York: Garland, 1995), offer a useful guide to the range of printed ephemeral material, and their collection is a good starting point for popular ephemera for the masse; they do not engage with the kind of middle- to upper-class consumption that drove the production of different diaries-cum-almanac in the late and early nineteenth century.

which will contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of processes of commodification, marketing, branding, and cultural production. Only very few of the small number of surviving copies have been made available via digitization databases such as ECCO and frequently the image quality of illustrative material is too poor to facilitate extensive studies of designs; similarly, the digitised image does not allow scholars an examination of the books' materiality, their often ornate bindings, palimpsests, and extra-illustration. To make matters worse, compilers have often done these publications a disservice by categorising them as almanacs, without specifying that these ephemeral pocket diaries are really a group of their own which, as Martin Andrews has argued generally about ephemera, represent "a rich and important source of information" on "readership, and the act of reading itself; the buying, selling, and distribution of books," and the alternative genres of print culture.³ Illustrated diaries-cum-almanac do, of course, have almanac features but their paratextual apparatus, especially the great range of engraved plates and vignettes they feature, relate them to a middle- to upper-class type of consumption that is distinct from that of the unillustrated eighteenth-century almanac (with an astrological or agricultural focus) for the lower classes. While illustrated pocket diaries were objects for a clearly defined group of consumers, their functions ranged from serving as status symbols, records of the institutions of society, and the events which punctuated the lives of those able to afford these pocket diaries. More importantly, they signalled fashions in the commodification and marketing in a competitive economic environment of day-to-day objects, indicated, for instance, by specially cast miniature type fonts and complexly engraved high-cultural title pages.

³ Martin Andrews, "The Importance of Ephemera," *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 434.

Above all, they contributed to advancing a narrative of cultural education and sophistication that deployed the engraved plate design as a medium to familiarise the reading public with moments of cultural progress, at the same time demonstrating the “entanglement of high culture with commerce.”⁴ Illustrations of literary classics, scenes from history, or architectural monuments of national importance facilitated readers’ exploratory engagement with the past, cultural progress, and instances of taste canonised in visual format by means of illustration.

The aim of this essay is to provide a detailed account of the ephemeral genre of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century illustrated pocket diary. I will introduce and discuss a selection of some of the most popular late eighteenth-century illustrated pocket diaries, offer case studies dealing with their historical development, and consider the paratextual apparatuses, especially the engraved plates, and the ways in which they promote a cultural matrix aimed at the middle and upper classes. Amplifying the limited existing scholarship on the subject,⁵ I intend to investigate the largest corpus of pocket diaries to date and explore booksellers’ adaptation to changing print cultural markets and the use of novel printing technologies, as well as the ramifications of the transition from copper- and steel-engraving to wood-engraving. A contribution to the history of the ephemeral book, the essay will contextualise material ranging from advertisements,

⁴ Ann Bermingham, “The Consumption of Culture: image, object, text,” *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1995), 5. See also, the author’s “Print Culture, High-Cultural Consumption, and Thomson’s *The Seasons*,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44, no. 4 (2011, forthcoming).

⁵ See Nigel Temple, “Humphry Repton, Illustrator, and William Peacock’s *Polite Repository, 1790–1811*,” *Garden History*, 16, no. 2 (1988): 161–73; Jennie Batchelor, “Fashion and Frugality: Eighteenth-Century Pocket Books for Women,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 32 (2003): 1–18, and the author’s “Thomas Stothard’s Illustrations for *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas, 1779–1826*,” *The Library*, 12, no. 1 (2011, in press).

competing marketing strategies, and interpretations of culture in tune with a new culture of consumption of luxury print material that developed from the early 1780s.

While the Stationers' Company had monopolised the publishing of almanacs from 1603 and issued a large range of almanacs, including, among dozens of others, *Goldsmith's Pocket Almanac*, *Vox Stellarum*, and *Poor Robin*, right into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these almanacs were unillustrated and featured astrological material and prophecies for which the genre is principally known. In the 1770s, the Company's monopoly was challenged. The Scottish bookseller John Donaldson had produced a (pirated) edition of James Thomson's popular poem, *The Seasons*, for which he was sued by Thomas Becket who had purchased the copyright from Thomson's bookseller, Andrew Millar. Becket claimed that he possessed the perpetual and exclusive copyright for printing *The Seasons*, but in 1775 it was ruled that no such notion of perpetual copyright existed, thereby facilitating the unregulated publication and dissemination of literary classics the printing of which had previously been controlled by individual booksellers.⁶ While some booksellers, including Robert Dodsley and John Newberry had issued almanacs from the 1740s and 1750s, a boom in the publishing of almanacs other than those of the Stationers' Company occurred in the late 1770s. Robin Myers notes that "In their attempt to evade the Company's monopoly, both men produced the memorandum books interleaved with blank pages to serve as diaries."⁷ This format

⁶ See Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book: Scottish Authors & their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland & America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 288–89; William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 107–114, and Sandro Jung, "Visual Interpretations, Print, and Illustrations of Thomson's *The Seasons*, 1730–1797," *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 34, no. 2 (2010): 23–64.

⁷ Robin Myers, "The Stationers' Company and the almanack trade," *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1695-1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 733. Robert Dodsley's commenced publication of *The New Memorandum Book* in 1748 and of *The Ladies Complete Pocket Book* one year later.

was adopted by those booksellers who wanted to engage lucratively in a more exclusive branch of publishing that was no longer preoccupied with the astrological contents of the earlier tradition but sought to offer educational and practical information. Among these early responses to the lapse of perpetual copyright were the short-lived *Harris's British Ladies Complete Pocket Memorandum Book* and *Lane's Ladies Museum, or Complete Pocket Memorandum*, both of which featured folding frontispiece plates.⁸ However, many more, non-illustrated pocket diaries competing with the Stationers' Company's almanacs were published in the period.⁹

The essay will concern itself with some of the most successful pocket books published at the end of the century. One of these, *The Polite Repository, or, Pocket Companion*, had an extended life and was published from 1781 to 1873. Out of the 92 numbers of the publication, I have – through searches of the ESTC, COPAC, WorldCat, and the catalogues of the National Archives of Britain – been able to trace 85 individual copies, two of which are available in digitised form via ECCO.¹⁰ The largest number of mid-nineteenth-century copies not recorded in COPAC and WorldCat are held by the Grolier Club Library, New York. The *Polite Repository* represents a unique opportunity

⁸ These pocket memorandum books are very rare today. In Britain, I have traced and examined three copies of Harris's publication (1780 [National Library of Scotland]; 1782 [National Library of Wales], and 1791 [BL]) and three copies of Lane's pocket diary (1780 [East Yorkshire Record Office]; 1791 [BL]; and 1794 [National Library of Wales]).

⁹ Some of these include: *The Ladies Compleat Pocket-Book* (London: J. Newberry); *The Ladies' Complete Pocket-Book* (Newcastle: T. Saint); *The Gentleman's New Memorandum Book Improv'd* (London: R. and J. Dodsley); *The Yorkshire Memorandum Book*; *The Ladies New and Polite Pocket Memorandum Book* (London: J. Johnson); *The New Memorandum Book Improv'd* (London: R. Dodsley), and *A Perpetual Memorandum, and Universal Pocket-Book, for Ladies, Gentlemen, and Men of Business*.

¹⁰ 1785 (BL); 1786 (BL); 1789 (Utah); 1790 (Cambridge); 1791 (Wiltshire and Swindon Archives; National Trust; Bod.); 1792 (BL, Bod.); 1793 (BL; Pierpont); 1794 (National Library of Wales; Dumbarton Oaks); 1795 (BL); 1796 (BL); 1797 (Rosenbach Museum and Library); 1799 (BL); 1800 (BL; Dumbarton Oaks); 1801 (Dumbarton Oaks); 1803 (Dumbarton Oaks; BL); 1803–66 (Grolier Club); 1804 (BL); 1805 (BL); 1806 (Edward Hall Collection, Wigan and Leigh Archives; Cambridge); 1807 (Bod.); 1812 (BL); 1815 (Cornwall Record Office); 1819 (in my possession); 1821 (BL); 1822 (BL); 1824 (BL); 1825 (BL; New York); 1836 (BL); 1838 (BL); 1841 (BL); 1843–52 (BL); 1850–53 (Norfolk Record Office); 1855 (Dumbarton Oaks); 1859–64 (BL); 1866 (BL); 1867 (BL); 1869–73 (BL).

for the historian of the book to examine the life of a publication that spanned a period of great social and mentality-historical change and saw the introduction of significant technological innovations to the printing trade. In November 1781, the *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle* announced the publication of the second annual volume of William Peacock's up-market, illustrated diary-cum-almanac, *The Polite Repository, or, Pocket Companion*. It was published, on 21–22 November, by “the Company of Stationers' Almanacks” and “Printed [by T. Rickaby] for, and sold wholesale by William Peacock.”¹¹ The first, unillustrated number had been advertised in November 1780 and contained the engraved, ruled memorandum pages, cash account pages, important dates of the year, as well as lists of the members of the Royal Family and the members of the “House of Peers” and the House of Commons.¹² From the second number, advertisements noted that the publication would be “Embellished with elegant engravings for each month.”¹³ Following what must have been encouraging sales figures of the inaugural number, Peacock (d. 1816),¹⁴ a prominent pocket book maker, stationer, and bookbinder revised and expanded the text of his advertisement, stressing the improved paratextual makeup of the publication and detailing the subjects of the engraved plates included: the volume was “Ornamented with Elegant Historical Engravings to each month, and a View of Gibraltar, with the burning the Spanish floating batteries, at their grand attack, September 13, 1782.”¹⁵ These and all subsequent vignette illustrations measured 5.7cm x 2.9cm. The early numbers of the repository published in the 1780s highlight the volumes'

¹¹ *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 13 November 1780. *London Chronicle*, 22 November 1781.

¹² *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 16 November 1780.

¹³ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 19 November 1781.

¹⁴ *European Magazine*, 70 (1819): 279.

¹⁵ *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 18 November 1782.

three central marketing features: “the elegance and perfection of the work” in terms of printing and binding, the volume’s “general utility,” and its “ornament.”¹⁶ These concerns are also central to the advertising strategy adopted by the main rival of Peacock’s annual, the very popular and long-running *Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas* which, in 1779, had been launched by the Southampton-based printer and bookseller, Thomas Baker. Unlike the numbers of Baker’s *Pocket Atlas*, which each featured twenty-four vignette designs (initially in oval, but subsequently in rectangular and octagonal format) by Thomas Stothard (1755–1834) of fashionable literary texts such as John Milton’s “L’ Allegro,” James Thomson’s *The Seasons*, George Crabbe’s *The Village*, and Sir Walter Scott’s *Marmion*, Peacock’s repository did not illustrate literature nor use the small vignette format adopted by Baker.¹⁷ (Figures 1a, 1b, and 1c) Over the next twenty years, the text of Peacock’s advertisements, like his competitor’s, would undergo significant revision to demonstrate Peacock’s continued commitment to consolidate the success of his publications and improve each future number of the repository. In response to the growing demand for illustrated pocket diaries, Peacock’s venture became more ambitious. In 1795, he could proudly state that “the very flattering and extensive patronage with which this work has been honoured, for more than thirteen years, and the annually increasing demand for the POLITE REPOSITORY, are the most substantial proofs of general appropriation.”¹⁸ His success, like Baker’s, can partially be explained by the branding strategies adopted, which enabled them to develop a clearly recognisable

¹⁶ “Address,” *The Polite Repository or Pocket Companion* (London: printed for W. Peacock, 1789), 1.

¹⁷ On the head pieces of the memorandum pages for the 1779 and 1782 numbers of the *Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas*, see the author’s “Thomas Stothard’s Illustrations for *The Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas*, 1779–1826.” The 1782 number features the heads of the royal family and Baker, at this point, has not yet adopted the oval vignette format for literary illustrations that Stothard would use for his designs for the 1788 number, illustrating Milton’s “L’ Allegro.”

¹⁸ “Address,” *The Polite Repository or Pocket Companion* (London: printed for W. Peacock, 1795), 1.

layout for their publications. Each bookseller selected a distinctive format such as the annually changing Atlas figure carrying the globe that the *Pocket Atlas* featured from the second to the last number, either on the title page or as a frontispiece to the “Engagements” section. Peacock’s title-pages for the *Polite Repository* changed little over the course of its long existence. By contrast, Baker adopted a different title-page design each year; his elaborately engraved title-pages, featuring combinations of different designs of Atlas with a title (either on a pedestal or plaque) each year, which were less ostentatious (especially when compared to the length and detail of the repository’s title) than that of Peacock’s publication. (Figures 2a and 2b)

The first major change that Peacock introduced to the advertisements of his publication was the inclusion of specific information on the illustrated matter featured. He announced the repository, in December 1783, as “Printed on a beautiful new Letter, cast by Mr. [William] Caslon, on Purpose for the Work, ornamented with twelve elegant Views, of different Noblemen and Gentlemen’s Seats, engraved by Mr. [Isaac] Taylor, from original Drawings, by Mssrs. Hearne, Tomkins, Robertson, and Steuart, and with 38 ruled Pages for Memorandums.”¹⁹ Although these early numbers featured mythological plates designed by Stothard, one of the foremost book illustrators at the end of the century, Stothard is not mentioned by name, other than in the caption to these frontispiece plates. The 1789 copy of the *Polite Repository*, for instance, included a Stothard plate depicting “Time presenting the POLITE REPOSITORY to *FAME*.”²⁰ This allegorical plate, clearly embedded within a high-cultural matrix of personifications and mythological figures known from illustrated volumes of the classics, uses a secular event

¹⁹ *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 11 December 1783.

²⁰ “Explanation of the Frontispiece,” *The Polite Repository or Pocket Companion* (London: printed for W. Peacock, 1789), 1.

– the production of the *Polite Repository* – but assigns striking, mythical importance to it. While the mythologizing of Peacock’s pocket book in its early years may have been a direct advertising response to Baker’s Atlas figure, this kind of complex allegorical narrative was replaced, in later frontispieces (from 1791), by more realistic scenes of landscape gardening or architectural interest. (Figures 3a and 3b) From the second number of the *Pocket Atlas* to (at least) 1796, Stothard produced mythologizing frontispieces, ranging in subject from an Athena figure surrounded by cherubs to a more heraldically inflected plate depicting the royal lion and unicorn. Each plate usually features the patriotic motto “Vivant Rex et Regina.” By 1800, a shift to literary interpretation had occurred, and the frontispieces up until the last number of the publication captured moments from fashionable literary texts.

By 1785, Peacock had enlisted John Peltro (who, in the previous year, had still collaborated with Robert Pollard on the engravings for Baker’s *Pocket Atlas*²¹) as the principal engraver for his volume, even though Peltro (1760–1808) did not engrave Stothard’s designs; these were engraved by G. Noble; the “Historical Engravings” of the earlier numbers were replaced by “Twelve Views of the Seats of different Noblemen and Gentlemen ... from the original Designs by Mr. [John Peter] Laport.”²² In the following year, Laporte, a watercolour painter, was joined by two further artists, Walter Henry Watts and John Powell, responsible for the “original Drawings” the *Polite Repository* featured as finely copper-engraved plates.²³ In 1789, the landscape designer and architect, Humphry Repton (1752–1818), was commissioned to furnish the designs for the plates

²¹ *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 18 November 1784.

²² *General Evening Post*, 15 November 1785.

²³ *General Evening Post*, 14 November 1786.

for the annual volumes, contributing six designs for the 1790 number.²⁴ In the 1795 “Address” to the *Polite Repository*, Peacock reported that Repton had “voluntarily offered to supply this work with designs of those places where any alterations are made under his supervision.” The *Polite Repository* included one rectangular vignette at the head of the verso of the two monthly diary pages, as well as a frontispiece such as, in the 1795 number, a “View from a Quarry at Port Eliot, a Seat of Lord Eliot in Cornwall.”

(Image 4) When Repton ceased providing Peacock with designs in 1809, the publication had become the most distinguished annual record of trends in landscape gardening and has been recognised as an important resource in this field of study.²⁵ According to Repton, the annual print run of the *Polite Repository* while he was its illustrator was 7000 copies.²⁶ After Peltro’s death, Peacock, in 1813, enlisted the services of John Pye (1782–1872) who then became the principal engraver for the *Polite Repository*.²⁷

After Repton stopped supplying Peacock with designs for the *Polite Repository* a new trend in the patterning of the illustrations becomes apparent, as the focus shifts from the depiction of the homes of those families for whom Repton had carried out architectural work to national monuments such Lambeth Palace and gardens such as the Chinese Garden at Woburn. At the same time, the first and last vignettes in the *Polite Repository*, usually featuring depictions of the pastoral landscape with a garland bearing the publication’s title, encase the architectural vignettes. By popularising and (indirectly advertising) a range of gentlemanly properties, national monuments, and gardens,

²⁴ Temple, 163. See Hazel Fryer, “Humphry Repton’s Commissions in Herefordshire: Picturesque Landscape Aesthetics,” *Garden History*, 22, no. 2 (1994): 162-174.

²⁵ In 2006/2007 Dumbarton Oaks hosted a small exhibition on Peacock’s *Repository* and Repton’s illustrations.

²⁶ Humphry Repton, *An Inquiry into the Changes in Taste in Landscape Gardening* (London:, 1806), 121.

²⁷ See John Pye’s manuscript letter of 1 December 1863 to Robert Cromek, in the Robert and Hartley Cromek Papers, 1792-1872, Princeton University Library, Manuscript division.

Peacock contributed to the emerging tourist industry in Britain and fostered a vision of the nation and Britishness as engendered in its architecture and landscape. The illustrations of the *Polite Repository* offered a matrix of a culture of exploration, mental travel, and consumption that would be more explicitly expressed in the elaborately embellished guide books to country seats and places of interest issued at the time. The subtle changes in the choice of subjects to be illustrated were complemented of novel, cheaper engraving and printing technologies. Whereas Repton's 1808 and 1809 frontispieces were separated from the title-page by tissue guards, later frontispiece engravings are no longer treated in such a way and usually lack the artistic depth and complex tonality of Repton's designs and Peltro's masterful execution.²⁸ (Figures 5a and 5b)

Unlike Baker, whose advertisements of the *Pocket Atlas* were revised significantly in the first twenty years of the publication's life, Peacock also frequently included in the different numbers of his repositories an "Address" to the purchasers of his pocket volumes. In his 1787 "ADDRESS to the PUBLIC" he expressed his commitment to continually improving the *Polite Repository* in order to make it superior in layout and ornament to its competitors. He assured his customers that he "will endeavour to merit a continuance of such distinguished patronage, by every exertion that may tend to the elegance and perfection of this work, which, he trusts, is found equally satisfactory in regard to general utility, as well as to ornament. ... every means will be taken to render all parts of the POLITE REPOSITORY as accurate as the nature of the publication will

²⁸ This deterioration in terms of tonal sophistication is especially pronounced in the frontispiece for the 1810 number of the *Polite Repository*, engraved by W. Hawkins.

admit.”²⁹ The general quality of printing, the extensive paratextual apparatus (including the ornate and elaborately engraved title-pages), and the makeup of the pocket diary improved over the next five years, primarily in response to Peacock’s recognition of the growing market for these printed ephemera and competing publications such as, among others, Baker’s *Pocket Atlas* and the short-lived *Royal Repository*, as well as a “great variety of Ladies and Gentlemen’s Pocket Books, Wallets, French Wallets, roll-up Pocket Books,” such as the popular *The English Ladies Pocket Companion*,³⁰ *The Christian Lady’s Pocket Book*,³¹ and *The Pocket Museum*, “containing twelve Views of Gentlemen’s Seats, an Almanack,”³² available at stationers’ or specialist pocket-book makers’ shops.³³ Little is known about the *Royal Repository, or, Polite Pocket Diary* which was issued from at least 1791, when it was advertised in the *Star*. It was “Embellished with an emblematical Frontispiece, and Twelve other capital Engravings.”³⁴ In make-up, it is much closer to Peacock’s *Polite Repository* than it is to Baker’s *Pocket Atlas* (especially in the close resemblance of the title-pages, the way in which the captions for the illustrative views are printed, and an “Address” to the public it included), but the defective 1795 British Library copy, lacking all but the frontispiece plate, does not enable a comprehensive comparative analysis of its illustration practice with Peacock’s diary. Its publishers, J. Evance and W. Richardson departed from the general advertising formula established in the 1780s and insisted that the publication’s proprietors “will . . ., to render it worthy the cabinets of Ladies and Gentlemen of Fashion

²⁹ *The World*, 14 December 1787.

³⁰ This publication was widely advertised in the 1780s and 1790s. It was usually “Embellished with eight elegant Head Dresses for the year.” See *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 24 December 1783.

³¹ *London Chronicle*, 3 November 1791.

³² *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 19 November 1791. *The Ladies Polite Repository* was widely advertised in the early 1800s.

³³ *World*, 19 November 1790.

³⁴ *Star*, 27 December 1791.

and Literature, always employ the most approved artists for its interior decoration. By taking these measures to render this Work equal, if not superior to any rival publication, they trust they shall secure to themselves that distinguished patronage which our Nobility and Gentry have, for time immemorial, bestowed on the buds of Genius.”³⁵ Evance and Richardson appear to be the only pocket-book makers who advertise their publication as an accessory that can find a place in the home; it therefore is ranged with furniture (prints) rather than books and, in its artistic aspirations, requires real patronage recognizing its value, rather than commercial consumption (which, of course, it needs, too). Like Peacock, Evance and Richardson (in 1795) also stated that the proprietors were committed to “exert their best Abilities in making such Arrangements as would tend to the Illustration of so valuable an annual Production.”³⁶

Peacock appears to have been one of the leading pocket-book makers. He published the untraced *Historical Almanack*, a cheaper pocket diary, advertised for the first time in November 1793 and “ornamented with an elegant Frontispiece,”³⁷ which appears to have run and been advertised up until at least 1837.³⁸ From 1800 onwards, Peacock also appears as the co-publisher, with Suttaby, another prominent pocket book maker, on the colophon of Baker’s *Pocket Atlas*. Like his competitors’, all his pocket volumes were available “In a great Variety of Bindings, and neatly printed on superfine Paper.”³⁹ Despite his evident success with the *Polite Repository*, he was not appointed

³⁵ *Star*, 10 December 1791.

³⁶ *The Royal Repository, or Polite Pocket Diary* (London: printed for J. Evance and W. Richardson, 1795), 1.

³⁷ *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 21 November 1793.

³⁸ *Bent’s Literary Advertiser*, 393 (10 October 1837): 118. Even in the 1830s, it still included “an interesting Frontispiece.” The advertisement also includes another untraced pocket book, “The Coronet [1836–72], an Elegant Pocket Annual, embellished with Four splendid Steel Engravings, containing an Almanack.”

³⁹ *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 21 November 1793.

pocket-book maker to the Prince of Wales, a title that John Godwin, a jeweller and pocket-book maker, used in the advertisements of his business. While Baker's advertisements commented in detail on the range of bindings and expensive materiality of some of the more ornate copies of his pocket diary, including the price range of more elaborately decorated volumes, Peacock issued the *Polite Repository* primarily in the common red leather wallet (also used for Baker's publication and many later pocket diaries until the late nineteenth century), which included a pencil holder, pencil, and occasionally an extra wallet for writing paper or letters. An advertisement that Godwin placed in the late 1780s reflects the kind of skill that he utilised in marketing his expensively decorated pocket diaries.

John Godwin, Goldsmith and Jeweller, Pocket Book Maker to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, opposite the New Church, Strand, takes the early opportunity to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry, and his many respectable Customers, and Friends in particular, [...] that he has just completed a large assortment of Almanacks, Atlases, and Repositories, in the most elegant taste, in Cases of Ivory, Satin, and Morocco, ornamented with gold, silver, and steel, some fitted with very fine Instruments, and made particularly useful and complete, in many of which are introduced a new sett [sic] of Writing Pens, in gold, silver, and steel, all of which are on a new and improved plan, so as to suit every hand.⁴⁰

Some of the best-preserved copies of pocket books such as the *Royal Engagement Pocket Atlas* and *Le Souvenir* were bound ornately, using, among others, silk, variously coloured

⁴⁰ *Morning Herald*, 16 December 16 1788.

morocco leather applications, gilding, ivory, and other expensive materials for ornamentation that transformed the pocket book from a mass-produced object of daily use into an *objet d'art* that could be personalised in response to the purchaser's wishes. The producers and sellers of these publications, therefore, had to possess an extensive range of skills that enabled them to market individualised publications to those who could afford them. Like Godwin, most pocket-book makers combined their trade with another. Apart from producing pocket books, Peacock was also active as a tanner, likely preparing some of the leather he would use in his bindings of the *Polite Repository*. Another pocket-book maker, William Carter, was also active as an instrument-case maker,⁴¹ whereas N. Middleton not only produced and marketed pocket-books but also was a black lead pencil maker.⁴²

In 1791 the *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* not only featured an advertisement for the *Polite Repository* but also announced the publication of Godwin's new and "superlatively embellished"⁴³ diary-cum-almanac, *Le Souvenir, or, Pocket Remembrancer*.⁴⁴ Each was issued in "paper boxes,"⁴⁵ card slip cases (in various colours), and sold at a price of 3s. 6d. (after 1797, owing to "the great Advance on Stamps," increased to 4s.), the regular price for pocket diaries such as Baker's *Pocket Atlas* and Peacock's *Polite Repository*.⁴⁶ In the following year, Godwin's pocket book was described in more detail as:

⁴¹ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 15 March 1785.

⁴² *True Briton*, 6 November 1798.

⁴³ *World*, 22 November 1791.

⁴⁴ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 19 November 1791. Locations of traced copies of *Le Souvenir; or, Pocket Remembrancer*: 1793 (BL); 1796 (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); 1797 (National Trust, Dorneywood); 1799 (Yale Center for British Art); 1800 (BL); 1803 (Grolier Club Library).

⁴⁵ *World*, 17 November 1792.

⁴⁶ G. Thomas Tanselle, "Dust-Jackets, Dealers, and Documentation," *Studies in Bibliography*, 56 (2003–2004): 80, identifies these "sheets" as the first kind of dust-jacket to be issued by the book trade: "It seems

A New, Elegant, and Superb POCKET-BOOK, entitled LE SOUVENIR: or, Pocket Remembrancer; embellished with twelve elegant Engravings by Heath, after Drawings by Burney and Dodd, selected from English History, and twelve Miscellaneous Plates, engraved by Milton and Landseer, consisting of Gentlemen's Seats, Views in the Isle of Wight, &c. &c. from Drawings by Nattes, Barrow, and J. Nixon, Esq., to which is subjoined Monthly Memorandum Pages, and a Complete Cash Account Table for each Month.⁴⁷

As publications such as the *Pocket Atlas*, *Polite Repository*, and *Le Souvenir* were issued annually, consulted throughout the year, filled up with appointments, and generally disposed of after their purpose as a diary had been fulfilled, they are very scarce today, with no complete run of any surviving. One of the scarcest, traceable pocket books, *Le Souvenir* clearly distinguished itself from its better known competitors. Unlike Peacock's, advertisements for *Le Souvenir* carried detailed information on the subjects of the engraved plates included. The 1792 advertisement noted that

The Proprietors flatter themselves, with the joint efforts of Messrs. Collier, Milton, Smith, Neagle, Landseer, as Engravers, and that eminent artist, Mr. Burney, as their Historical Designer, they shall render it a performance worthy their continued encouragement. The Monthly Embellishment, added to an Elegant Frontispiece,

reasonably certain that the earliest detachable coverings enclosing publishers' bindings were the sheaths that came with pocket diaries beginning in the late eighteenth century and with children's doll-dressing books beginning about 1810.”

⁴⁷ *General Evening Post*, 17 November 1792.

will be striking selections of the most important Events from the History of England; Views of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats. ... A great variety, bound in Morocco or Satin, with Gold, Silver, and Steel Locks, fitted up with fine Instruments, so as to render it an elegant present for the New Year.⁴⁸

The 1795 advertisement provided a detailed list of subjects illustrated (in the form of octagonal vignettes heading the monthly diary pages) in the new number of Godwin's pocket book. *Le Souvenir* for 1796 would be

embellished with exquisite Engravings, after Drawings, by Burney, Barrow, and Francis; consisting of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats, and Historical Subjects, in which is most admirably depicted the following events from the History of England, and engraved by Smith, viz. Caligula's Expedition against Britain; Druids Worshipping and Sacrificing; Redwald persuaded by the Queen to protect Edwin; Ercombert destroys the Saxon Idols; Alfred toasting the Cake; Edwy and Elgifer parted by Dunstan; Henry I. seizes his brother's treasure at Winchester; Henry II. does penance at Becket's Tomb; the Countess of Montford implores protection for her infant Son; Queen Phillippa takes David King of Scots prisoner; French Ambassador taking leave of Henry, son of James I.; Princess of Wales lands at Greenwich; and 12 Views of Seats and Antiquities, engraved by Milton.⁴⁹

(Figures 6a and 6b)

⁴⁸ *Oracle*, 5 November 1792.

⁴⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 29 December 1795.

While Baker and Peacock had each established one continuous narrative – the one providing a sequence of interpretive vignettes of a chosen literary text, the other a series of architectural designs, *Le Souvenir* introduces a mixed format, alternating its vignettes of historical subjects with those depicting the nobility's country seats. The designs that Stothard provided for the *Pocket Atlas* usually focused on the depiction of character and the evocation of mood by placing the landscape in relation to man.⁵⁰ Only in the last, 1826 number of the *Pocket Atlas* does Stothard illustrate architectural scenes from his patron Samuel Rogers's *Italy* (which he was to illustrate for edition publication with J. M. W. Turner),⁵¹ maybe reflecting the shift from literary subject to the more popular architectural one. In the case of Godwin's pocket book, the vignettes reworking historical scenes are more dramatic and stagey than Stothard's had been. Vignettes depicting, in the 1793 number, scenes involving Vortigan and Rowena, the Surrender of Calais to Edward III, Queen Eleanor poisoning Rosamond, and Henry III renewing Magna Charta contrast with the (in comparison with Peacock's) less sophisticatedly executed architectural designs. By 1797, Godwin had enhanced the illustrative makeup of *Le Souvenir* further, by including "26 Engravings, most exquisitely finished, by Milton; from Drawings by Burney, Barrow, Dayes, Underwood, and Francis; consisting of select Views and Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats, Antiquities, and Remarkable Events, taken from the History of England."⁵² From 1799, Cosmo Armstrong (1781–1836), who would subsequently engrave designs for Charles Cooke's and W. Suttaby's series of the *British Classics*, became the engraver of all illustrations. The last traced copy of *Le Souvenir* was

⁵⁰ For a general account of Stothard's work for the periodicals and annuals, see A. C. Coxhead, *Thomas Stothard, R.A.: An Illustrated Monograph* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1906).

⁵¹ Adele M. Holcomb, "A Neglected Classical Phase of Turner's Art: His Vignettes to Rogers's *Italy*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 32 (1969): 405-10.

⁵² *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 16 December 1797.

published in 1803 (now at the Grolier Club Library) and Godwin died in 1804;⁵³ based on the format of Godwin's publication, Peacock and Sons issued a pocket diary, titled *Le Souvenir, or, Pocket Tablet* from 1808, which – although changing booksellers appear on the title-pages – survived until at least 1871. While in the 1820s and 1830s the publication featured wood-engraved frontispieces and vignettes, in the 1850s it included colour plates, “illustrations in oil colours,” by J. M. Kronheim. A short-lived American venture also capitalising on the success of Godwin's and Peacock's *Le Souvenir* was *Le Souvenir, or Picturesque Pocket Diary* (Philadelphia: R. A. Poole, 1824–27).

While Baker's, Peacock's, and Godwin's annuals were successful on the highly competitive market for ephemeral, illustrated pocket books, there were a number of illustrated pocket diaries or memorandum books of which only one or two copies were ever published. One of these is (the untraced) *The Tablet*, an “elegant Memorandum Book,” which was published at the end of 1797.⁵⁴ It included “Four Engravings, emblematical of the ELEMENTS” and views of country seats, based on drawings by J. Barber that were engraved by Landseer.⁵⁵ Its design is particularly interesting, as it offers an explanation for the frequent absence of some or all engravings from copies of illustrated pocket diaries. The publisher's design

is to give an elegant Pocket-Book, combining as much useful Information as can be compressed within so small a compass, with accurate Views of the principal Seats in the Kingdom, beginning with those situated in the Central Counties; and

⁵³ *The Morning Chronicle*, 31 January 1804. The National Library of Ireland holds a set of architectural vignettes ascribed to *Le Souvenir*, published in Dublin, rather than London, in 1805, by John Exshaw.

⁵⁴ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 16 December 1797.

⁵⁵ *Star*, 14 December 1797.

therefore in no very long period, by preserving the Engravings (and they are so placed in the work, that at the end of every Year they may be taken out without destroying the Memorandums made) the Purchasers may transfer to their Cabinets, a Collection of accurate Views of the principal Seats in their own and the neighbouring Counties.⁵⁶

The publisher of *The Tablet*, the Birmingham-based Thomas Pearson,⁵⁷ envisaged that the purchasers of his publication, after exhausting the actual use of the almanac, diary, and memoranda sheets, would want to preserve the illustrations. To that end, he positioned them in such a way in the pocket book so that the owner could easily remove them without damage. The novel impulse to recycle illustrations is also related to the character of the gift book that pocket books had acquired by the early nineteenth century, when they were specifically marketed as Christmas or New Year's presents.⁵⁸ The collecting of prints on a more ambitious scale in the form of portfolios or extra-illustrated, Grangerised works was practiced extensively from the mid-century. In fact, some of the visual material known to have existed in pocket books such as Baker's *Pocket Atlas* and Peacock's *Polite Repository* has been preserved in extensively illustrated albums featuring cut-out vignettes from these publications. Two of the most extensive of these collections are held by Princeton University Library and the Houghton Library, Harvard University. Proof copies of other illustrated memoranda pages and

⁵⁶ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 16 December 1797.

⁵⁷ Pearson also (co-)published the long-running *Poor Robin. An Almanack* after the old a new fashion (originating in the second half of the seventeenth century) and *Vox Stellarum: or, a Loyal Almanack*.

⁵⁸ *Publishers' Circular and Booksellers' Record* (15 November 1849): 385. The advertisement features *The Regent, or, Royal Tablet of Memory; Le Souvenir, or, Pocket Tablet; The Lady's and Gentleman's Polite Assistant and Useful Remembrancer; and The Sovereign*. See also, Anne Renier, *Friendship's Offering: an essay on the annuals and gift books of the 19th century* (London: Private Libraries Association, 1964).

frontispieces such as Stothard's, preserved in the British Museum Balmanno Collection, further evidence the interest of collectors in preserving these finely and elaborately produced engravings. Collectors' interest in these engraved plates facilitated a transformation of the ephemeral nature of the pocket book, shifting its transitory use lasting at most one year to a non-utilitarian consumption of the volumes as composite art works. This dual nature is clearly embedded in the earliest advertisements of the genre of the illustrated pocket memorandum book. The financial commitment made by Baker, Peacock, and Godwin to include high-quality visual material largely responded to these two parallel but not always simultaneous modes of consumption. Exploiting the ambiguity of their publications, these pocket book makers redefined their books' ephemerality, making their visual paratexts available to a culture of collecting and a growing archive of the visual interpretation of culture and politeness that the publications' images advocated. Apart from those illustrations that were removed from their simply bound pocket books, other volumes were bound ornately, using ivory, silk, gold, silver, or steel, as well as multi-coloured Morocco leather applications and gilt on-lays. These were conceived of not primarily in terms of day-to-day usefulness, but as clearly defined high-cultural commodity items and objects, made for display and exhibition in the domestic realm rather than for use in public. The cultural appeal and subject range of these major pocket books were reformulated in the early nineteenth century when landscape views, rather than the complex architectural scenes of the *Polite Repository*, increased noticeably.

As a greater number of mostly short-lived pocket books were published from the 1820s, publishers refashioned the traditional patterns that characterised up-market pocket

books of the 1780s and 1790s. Cheaper materials – such as roan as an alternative to morocco leather – were used to appeal to a larger consumer group, and the number of plates that the earlier pocket books included decreased significantly. The transition from copper- to steel-engravings was effected by the late 1820s, and the vignette format used by the late eighteenth-century pocket books was – with the exception of Peacock’s *Polite Repository* and publications overtly aligning themselves with earlier pocket books – replaced by the full-page plate designs that could easily be removed from the pocket books for framing and collecting. By the time the *Polite Repository* entered the final decade of its existence on the market for the illustrated pocket book, it was seen as a standard of the past. In December 1862, *The Bookseller* featured a review of a range of almanacs, including some illustrated ones. The reviewer noted that the *Polite Repository* was the oldest and “one of the most useful of the school to which it belongs”: “It is well printed, with little steel engravings at the heads of the memorandum pages, which give a nice pleasant, old-fashioned air to the well-bound volume.”⁵⁹ Peacock’s title was a successful brand that would survive for almost another decade, despite the widely proliferating market and new competitors, especially for a female consumer group.

Some of the most prominent examples of pocket books exclusively aimed at female users, including the up-market *La Belle Assemblée: or Ladies Fashionable Companion* (re-launched, in the 1850s, as *La Belle Assemblée: or Fashionable Repository*), were published in the 1830s. *Ruff’s Ladies New Daily Remembrancer* (1830s) included less expensive and less sophisticatedly executed engravings. Another pocket book, *Marshall’s Ladies Forget Me Not* did not feature the frontispiece fashion plates of *La Belle Assemblée*, but included full-page plates of natural scenes and fashion,

⁵⁹ *The Bookseller* (6 December 1862): 766.

rather than the traditional head vignettes that late eighteenth-century pocket books had featured. In addition to the usual memorandum and almanac material, it also included a number of short songs, as well as eight plates (two engravings of landscapes as well as six others of the fashion of the year) bound at the centre of the volume so as to be removed easily for insertion into an album. The frontispiece to the 1837 number depicts a fancy dress ball, and the engraved title-page features a vignette scene from a zoo, “The Giraffe seizing a Lady’s bonnet.” *The Wreath or Ladies Complete Pocket Book* adopted a similar format but is distinguished by the excellent quality of its steel-engraved frontispiece and title-page. By 1862, *La Belle Assemblée* had reduced the number of plates included to one hand-coloured frontispiece depicting Beaumont, the seat of Viscount Ashbrook, as well as two plates featuring fashion and a vignette scene of Breakwater, Plymouth. The *Forget Me Not* included a section of blank paper for memoranda, not the ruled and engraved pages that characterised earlier pocket books. Among those pocket books utilising popular new engraving technologies, *The Regent, or Royal Tablet of Memory* (mid-1820s–1850s) deserves mention, as it combined the steel-engraved frontispiece with wood-engraved vignettes on its diary pages. It was based on the general illustration make-up that Peacock had developed for the *Polite Repository* and was “Embellished with Twelve views of Gentlemen’s Seats, and Monuments.” By the mid-nineteenth century, more modest pocket books such as *The Lady’s and Gentleman’s Annual Ledger* and *Poole’s Gentleman’s Memorandum Book* are issued. These no longer contain the elaborate engraved matter of the earlier nineteenth-century pocket books for women, nor do they feature the vignettes that had become such an essential feature of the up-market genre.

The proliferation of the market for pocket books in the early nineteenth century is not surprising, given the expanding realm of publishing and the development of specialised niche markets. It is striking, however, that the general make-up of the illustrated pocket book – at least in its incarnation for the upper middle classes – remains largely the same. The longevity of Peacock’s *Polite Repository* and, to a lesser extent, Baker’s *Pocket Atlas* indicate that, by the time they had been running for a decade or so, they had gained fashionable status, a reputation that, as they entered the nineteenth century, developed into small-scale print cultural institutions. The easily recognised branding, especially the engraved title-pages of these publications, the consistent use of artistically ambitious designs, and sophisticatedly engraved frontispieces and vignettes, endowed these pocket books with a proto-Benjaminian “cult” status that none of the Victorian pocket books, usually aimed at smaller markets, acquired. After William Peacock’s death in 1816, the Peacock business entered into business relations with Suttaby and Mansfield, themselves publishers of pocket books, thereby becoming market leaders, at least in the first three decades of the century. Booksellers capitalised on the titles of earlier pocket books and relaunched titles with slightly changed subtitles. The *Royal Repository, or, Picturesque Pocket Diary*, based on the original late eighteenth-century *Royal Repository*, was issued by Suttaby and Fox in the 1820s, thereby continuing a tradition of publishing generic versions of “souvenirs,” “repositories,” and “atlases” that had already been promoted in advertisements of the 1790s. In structure and formal make-up these differently branded pocket books invoked each other, and some publishers such as R. and A. Suttaby published sample books which contained a range of

samples of illustrative material and engraved memorandum pages that the firm marketed at the time.⁶⁰

The major change affecting the pocket book in the early nineteenth century is the general move away from historical subjects that had predominated in *Le Souvenir*. By the time, *Le Souvenir* was relaunched, its plates depicted romantic landscape scenes, vignettes featuring idyllic country settings and village architecture; its frontispieces depicted local, British architectural monuments, as in the 1831, 1836, and 1841 numbers, such as Bolton Abbey and two views of Riveaux Abbey, both in Yorkshire. At that time, John Pye, who had become Peacock's engraver after Peltro's death, produced the plates for *Le Souvenir* as well.⁶¹ Faithful to the easily recognised illustrative matrix depicting the landscape and stately homes (and, from the decade of the nineteenth century, extending it to include European and more remote, exotic settings) that Repton had fashioned for the *Polite Repository*, the Peacock business persisted in maintaining the highest engraving standards. Neither Peacock's *Polite Repository*, nor Baker's *Pocket Atlas* was equalled by any of the other, more fugitive, and by no means as long-lived annual pocket books that were frequently marketed as gift-books and increasingly adopted features of the German *Taschenbuch*. Ultimately, in the late nineteenth century, these new pocket books replaced altogether the standard and genre that Baker and Peacock had established in the late 1770s and early 1780s.

⁶⁰ A copy of one of these volumes, tentatively dated 1833, is held by Princeton University Library and contains samples from the following illustrated pocket books: *Le Souvenir, or Pocket Tablet*; *Marshall's Ladies Fashionable Repository*; *Poole's Select Pocket Remembrancer*; *Poole's Ladies & Gentleman's Polite Assistant and Useful Remembrancer*; *The Ladies Own Almanack and Diary*; *Marshall's Gentleman's Pocket Book*; *The Gem, or, Useful Pocket Book, adapted for Youth*; *The Universal Pocket Diary*; and *The Universal Remembrancer*.

⁶¹ The British Museum holds a collection of 1321 proof sheets of plates that Pye engraved for *The Polite Repository*, *The Royal Repository*, and *Le Souvenir*.