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# Fugitive Knowledge: Romantic Compilation and the Materials of Method

PART ONE OF TWO

Marianne Brooker

Birkbeck College  
University of London

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in English & Humanities

The work presented in this thesis is the candidate's own

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between materials described as ‘fugitive’ in the Romantic period, and the methods by which these materials were arranged, displayed and preserved. It situates the organisation of knowledge within specific domains of practice, reading across alternative models of disciplinary mapping and composite organisational genres such as encyclopaedias, poetry collections, bookkeeping ledgers, colour charts, albums of newspaper clippings, and museum descriptions. In each case, fugitive knowledge is produced through an interplay between loose, ephemeral or otherwise volatile materials and the methods devised to bring them into order. This thesis is divided into four chapters that each adopt the nomenclature of early nineteenth-century fugitive forms to explore compilation across and between disciplines: *volatilia* (the flying leaves of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s notebooks and his manuscript plans for encyclopaedias); *inserenda* (Jeremy Bentham’s storehouse of manuscripts, waste-books, and paper tables and trees); *materia pictoria* (pigments, paper tools, and books of colour theory); and *spolia* (John Soane’s architectural and manuscript fragments, and albums of clippings). Fugitive knowledge articulates the tension between scraps, books, and systems, and locates meaning in the contingent juxtapositions of compilation.

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## Abbreviations

- BL Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983)
- C Jeremy Bentham, *Chrestomathia*, ed. by M. J. Smith and W. H. Burston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983; repr. 2015)
- CH John Soane, *Crude Hints Towards a History of my House*, in *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies and Designs for Garden Follies*, ed. by Helen Dorey (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 1999), 53-78
- CJB, II *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: Volume Two 1777-1780*, ed. by Timothy L. S. Sprigge (London: UCL Press, 2017)
- CJB, III *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: Volume III: 1781-1788*, ed. by Ian R. Christie (London: UCL Press, 2017)
- CJB, V *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: Volume V: 1794-1797*, ed. by Alexander Taylor Milne (London: UCL Press, 2017)
- CL *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971)
- D John Soane [and Barbara Hofland], *Description of the House and Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's Inn Fields* (London: Privately Printed by Levey, Robson and Franklyn, 1835)
- LS Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. by R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)
- M Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ed. by George Whalley, 6 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), II
- N *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Kathlenn Coburn et al., 5 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957-2002)
- OPMI Jeremy Bentham, 'Outlines of a Work Entitled Pauper Management Improved', in *Writings on the Poor Laws*, ed. by Michael Quinn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), II
- PP Jeremy Bentham, *Preparatory Principles*, ed. by Douglas G. Long and Philip Schofield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- RR Jeremy Bentham, *The Rationale of Reward* (London: John and H. L. Hunt, 1825)
- SRP Jeremy Bentham, 'Situation and Relief of the Poor', in *Writings on the Poor Laws*, ed. by Michael Quinn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), II

SWF

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. by H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

## Introduction: ‘In the element of the archive’

Archaeology describes discourses as practices in the element of the archive.<sup>1</sup>

Fugitive *Pieces*, among the learned, denote those little compositions which are printed on loose sheets, or half sheets; thus called, because they are easily lost, and soon forgot.<sup>2</sup>

To be ‘in the element of the archive’ is not simply to be among ‘Fugitive *Pieces*’, it is to participate in the production of fugitive knowledge. Reified as ephemeral, occasional, recycled or contingent, ‘Fugitive *Pieces*’ serve as the materials for what Michel Foucault described as a history of ideas: ‘The history not of literature but that of tangential rumour, that everyday, transient writing that never acquires the status of an *oeuvre*, or is immediately lost: the analysis of sub-literatures, almanacs, reviews, and newspapers, temporary successes, anonymous authors.’<sup>3</sup> Always a history in motion and from the margins, Foucault’s archaeology is characterised both by shapelessness and by possibility, concerned with the practices by which we ‘produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose’ knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Fugitive knowledge seeks to restore this sense of practical use and disuse, composition and decomposition, to the ‘loose sheets’ of Romantic-period textuality. This restoration works by way of archaeology in Foucault’s sense: not, that is, a metaphoric excavation, but a focus on the interaction between practice and the production of knowledge. What emerges in ‘the element of the archive’ is a media ecology within which fugitive pieces do not singularly rise and fall, ‘lost and soon forgot’, but are

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Fugitive’, in Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* [...], 2 vols (London: James and John Knapton, 1728), I, n.p.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 105.

continually taken up and remediated to produce new meaning through compilation and assemblage.<sup>5</sup>

For Samuel Taylor Coleridge, this interaction manifests in ‘the materials of Method’, which he defined as the ‘*relations between things*’, ‘*a way, or path, of transit*’.<sup>6</sup> These ‘relations’, Coleridge argued, distinguish progress from mere transition, and the ‘Methodical Encyclopaedia’ from the ‘compilation of a dictionary’.<sup>7</sup> Coleridge’s ‘path’ is a metaphor that sits clearly on one side of the fence later erected by Pierre Bourdieu between the ‘logical’ and the ‘practical’: on the one hand ‘an imaginary representation of all theoretically possible roads and routes’ and on the other ‘the network of beaten tracks, of paths made ever more practicable by constant use’.<sup>8</sup> Fugitive knowledge, by contrast, maps these paths onto one another, tracing the intersections between the beaten track of the materials and universalising method.

In this introduction I will describe the relationship between my own critical approach and the fugitive pieces that I explore in this thesis, situating the practice of compilation as the central object of the following study. In so doing I seek to free fugitive pieces from their reification, situating them as

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<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship in book history has emphasised this freedom from reification, particularly through the notion of a ‘media ecology’, see Multigraph Collective, *Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 10-11; Thora Brylowe, ‘Marxism and Literature Now: Book History and the Politics of Work and World’, *Romantic Circles Praxis* (2020) <<https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/williams/praxis.2020.williams.brylowe.html>> [accessed: 10.12.20]. In *After Print*, Rachel Scarborough King ‘pursues a methodology that considers both print and manuscript as continually contingent, in flux, and in conversation with each other’: see Rachel Scarborough King, ‘Introduction: The Multimedia Eighteenth Century’, in *After Print: Eighteenth Century Manuscript Cultures* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2020), pp. 1-24 (p. 9).

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Treatise on Method’, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. by H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), I, pp. 625-687 (p. 631 and p. 630). All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *SWF* in footnotes.

<sup>7</sup> *SWF*, p. 636. Tilottama Rajan discusses the same distinction between ‘material’ and ‘metaphorical’ encyclopaedias in ‘Models for System in Idealist Encyclopaedics: The Circle, the Line, and the Body’, *Romantic Circles Praxis* (2016) <<https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/systems>> [accessed: 13.12.20]

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 37-38.

elements in a broader current of fugitive thinking, connecting the text at hand (or out of hand) to habits of mind. According to the logic of fugitive knowledge, epistemology hangs in the balance between historical specificity and material contingency. Thinking in this way, I repurpose a lesson that Ruth Mack learns from William Hogarth. That is: ‘to think of the way an object (a candlestick, or a piece of wallpaper) could be tied to a cultural world – the world of people, of practices – that surrounds it.’<sup>9</sup> This thesis argues that we can recover the ways in which ‘Fugitive *Pieces*’ are ‘tied to a cultural world’ through a reengagement with the practice of compilation. The texts explored in what follows each lilt between Coleridge’s poles of ‘Methodical Encyclopaedia’ and mere ‘dictionary’: they tend on the one hand toward ‘genesis, continuity and totalisation’, and are yet each defined by the ‘emphatic *materiality* of [their] alterable and composite forms’.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis participates in a recent critical turn towards what Brit Rusert has described as ‘the praxis of fugitivity’. In her study of empiricism and early African American culture, Rusert argues that ‘fugitivity names a critical method, or a particular mode of study that experiments with new ways of reading and analysing texts and contexts from the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment.’<sup>11</sup> Such a method is to be found in Catriona MacLeod’s study of nineteenth-century sculpture as ‘a dislodged, precarious object’; in the queer ‘fugitive poetics of anachronism’ that Michael Nicholson locates in the work of Walpole and Byron; and in the ‘fugitive voices [of the] [...] still-pervasive, threatening oral practices such as the singing of bawdy or oppositional ballads’ explored by Paula McDowell.<sup>12</sup> In

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<sup>9</sup> Ruth Mack, ‘Hogarth’s Practical Aesthetics’, in *Mind, Body, Motion, Matter: Eighteenth-Century British and French Literary Perspectives*, ed. by Mary Helen McMurrin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), pp. 21-46 (p. 40).

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 38; Natalie Pollard, *Poetry, Publishing and Visual Culture from Late Modernism to the Twenty-First Century: Fugitive Pieces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Brit Rusert, *Fugitive Science: Empiricism and Freedom in Early African American Culture* (New York: New York University Press), p. 17. See also Andreas Beer and Gesa Mackenthun, *Fugitive Knowledge: The Loss and Preservation of Knowledge in Cultural Contact Zones* (New York: Waxmann, 2015), pp. 7-12.

<sup>12</sup> Catriona MacLeod, *Fugitive Objects: Sculpture and Literature in the German Nineteenth-Century* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), p. 8; Michael Nicholson,

each case, the method is shaped by the variously fugitive nature of materials: partial, ephemeral and volatile. For my purposes, fugitive knowledge names the recalcitrant materials that shape disciplinary mapping. I adopt the nomenclature of early nineteenth-century fugitive textuality to explore compilation within different bibliographic formations: *volatilia* (the flying leaves of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s manuscript plans); *inserenda* (Jeremy Bentham’s waste-books, trees and tables); *materia pictoria* (the pigments and paper tools of colour theory); and *spolia* (John Soane’s architectural fragments and his paper pasticcio). In each case, I explore the relationship between the materials variously gathered and the ‘paths’ or methods by which they are connected within composite contexts such as the poetry collection, encyclopaedia, bookkeeping ledger, album, colour chart, and museum.

Fugitive knowledge arises from the ideals, anxieties and temporalities of compilation; it is knowledge that is ‘set loose from the very specific histories of printing, print publication, regulation, and circulation’.<sup>13</sup> The Advertisement for *The Poetical Register* of 1812, for example, asked prospective contributors to ‘write “Fugitive” on such poems as have before appeared in print’.<sup>14</sup> In an earlier volume of the *Register* printed in 1807, contributors are warned to send duplicate copies only, as ‘all rejected contributions are committed to the flames.’<sup>15</sup> The fugitive activates chains of association through circulation and reproduction, but the threat of destruction, dispersal and loss looms large. Gillian Russell argues that Samuel Johnson’s term ‘*Ephemerae*’ rehabilitates the wayward fugitive, stilled and preserved within the miscellany: ““Ephemera” objectified and

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‘Fugitive Pieces: Walpole, Byron and Queer Time’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 60.2 (2019), pp. 139-162 (p. 148); Paula McDowell, *The Invention of the Oral: Print Commerce and Fugitive Voices in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Towards a Media History of Documents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1808-1809* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1812), iv.

<sup>15</sup> *The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1805* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1807), iv.

fixed such publications in the way that “fugitive” did not.’<sup>16</sup> It is important, then, to distinguish between the two categories and to ‘unfix’ the fugitive, recognising the limits of the category ‘ephemera’ in engaging with wider currents of fugitive knowledge.

If the author’s coming into being was marked, according to Foucault, by a ‘privileged moment of individualisation’, the life of the compiler was quite different.<sup>17</sup> Often cloaked in industrious anonymity, the compiler resists ‘individualisation’ and is deeply embedded in the divisions of labour and practical materialities attendant upon bookmaking. Rather than pitch the compiler as the antithesis of the author, I demonstrate the ways in which authorship and other forms of cultural production are predicated on compilation. My focus is less on ‘the *authorial* self, captured between the boards of the codex’ and more the composition and mutability of the codex form itself.<sup>18</sup> Foucault’s notion of the author has a centrifugal force, destabilising the primacy and integrity of the book, spinning outwards from the central figure into an abyss of proliferating possibilities:

What is a work? What is this curious entity which we designate as a work? Of what elements is it composed? [...] [In publishing a collection of works] where should one stop? Surely everything must be published, but what is “everything”?’<sup>19</sup> What could possibly exist outside of the book at hand if one could publish “everything”? And, publishing “everything”, how might such a quantity of material be arranged and read?

These questions weighed heavily on the compilers discussed in this thesis, for whom the proliferation of materials was a pressing concern. For Foucault, the author function operates as a ‘principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning’, a principle

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<sup>16</sup> Gillian Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability and Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. by James D. Faubion, trans. by Robert Hurley et al. (New York: New York Press, 1998), p. 205.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Gamer, *Romanticism, Self-Canonization, and the Business of Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, p. 207.

which works by way of selection and limitation.<sup>20</sup> These are, perhaps, operations more closely associated with the compiler and the reader, figures who ‘pick out the best parts of books’ in a process of literary gleaning.<sup>21</sup> Recent scholars of book history have fashioned a critical practice from this ‘principle of thrift’, ‘pick[ing] out’ and picking apart. This kind of work is exemplified in Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth’s edited collection *Book Parts*, a scholarly blazon that treats ‘the work’ not as a ‘stable object, but a coming together or alignment of separate component pieces, each possessed of particular conventions or histories’.<sup>22</sup> In this way, knife in hand, the reader-anatomist dissects the corpus to reveal the ‘workings and changing histories of each piece.’<sup>23</sup>

There is a longstanding paradox nestled in the verb ‘compile’, which connotes both a gathering together and a taking away. Rivals of Virgil, for example, levelled the charge of ‘*compilātor*’ against him, condemning his imitation of Homer. At best, the term implies a lack of originality, at worst flagrant plagiarism. Synonymous with the hack and cloaked in industrious anonymity, the work of compiling was seemingly incommensurate with the work of authorship. This tension commands a long legacy. In 1815, writing on Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), William Wordsworth described the work as ‘collected, new-modelled, and in many instances (if such a contradiction in terms may be used) composed by the Editor, Dr Percy.’<sup>24</sup> Collection and composition are figured as intuitively opposite, even for the ‘new-modelled’ volume that otherwise attracts Wordsworth’s praise. The ‘contradiction’ between the two lies in their differing

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<sup>20</sup> Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, p. 215.

<sup>21</sup> Vicesimus Knox, *Winter Evenings; or, Lucubrations on Life and Letters*, 3 vols (London, 1788), II, 224. See Barbara M. Benedict, ‘The Paradox of the Anthology: Collecting and Différence in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *New Literary History*, 34.2 (2003), 231-256 (p. 236); Ann Blair, ‘Errata Lists and the Reader as Collector’, in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Erin N. Lindquist, and Elanor F. Shelvin ed., *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 2007), pp. 21-44 (p. 37).

<sup>22</sup> Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth, ‘Introductions’, in *Book Parts*, ed. by Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 1-11 (p. 4).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), III, 76. See Brian R. Bates, *Wordsworth’s Poetic Collections, Supplementary Writing and Parodic Reception* (Abingdon, Routledge: 2012), 87-89.



strategies for producing meaning: compilation merely juxtaposes extant materials, while composition creates and methodizes anew.

A simile contained in the encyclopaedic *Etymologies* of seventh-century philosopher Isidore of Seville is instructive: for him, the ‘*compilātor*’ is not simply a plagiarist, but ‘one who mixes the words of another with his own, as pigment-makers customarily crush together diverse things mixed up in a mortar.’<sup>25</sup> Isidore’s works were not in circulation in Britain in the early nineteenth century, but the palpable practice of mixing is a central aspect of the compilations discussed in this thesis. This kind of mixing imbues compilation with a more formative power: ‘diverse things’ crushed and combined in the mortar can scarcely be transformed back into discrete entities, they are changed through the process of mixing, creating new colours, textures and meanings. In the long eighteenth century, compiling colour in this way also involved a wide range of multimedia binding agents and varnishes.<sup>26</sup> Mixing was a mode of experiment, the resulting colour often exposing its unstable nature through fading and cracks. In this way, Isidore’s metaphor holds, but only just. Compilation is another kind of discontinuous ‘rough mixing’, characterised by David Duff as ‘a type of generic combination in which the formal surfaces of constituent genres are left intact’.<sup>27</sup> In the compiled text, component parts are never fully unified or assimilated, their distinct edges, joints and points of origin remain visible, whether through literal tears and disjunctions or through typographic markers.

Compilation materialises the points of contact between disciplines and domains of practice: if originality was out of reach, unity might yet be possible. The anthology *Poetical Selections* (1811) offers a case in point, pitching a synthetic and totalising ideal against the desultory materialities of reading and writing. The volume is mapped onto the axes of merit and morality, gathering together ‘[s]pecimens of

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<sup>25</sup> *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 216. See Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 3, II.

<sup>27</sup> David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 23. See also Dahlia Porter on composite orders, by which ‘the constituent parts maintain a material separation rather than coalescing into a unified form’: Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 6.

such beautiful varieties' in a compilation designed to delight and instruct in equal measure. As the favourable reviews printed on the flyleaf attest, the book consciously resists the miasmatic threat of textual contamination: it carries no risk of 'indiscriminate perusal' by children, having only included poems from most eminent and respectable writers; its assembly of 'fugitive pieces, and some original poetry' would be perfectly safe nestled in a 'cabinet of class books' at the seminary.<sup>28</sup> If there is little particularly notable in the volume's materials, the framing of its method is telling. The *Selections* are arranged into eight thematic groups: martial, rural, descriptive, elegiac, humorous, sentimental and pathetic. In addition to being 'compiled with taste and judgement', the editor frames anthologization as a species of 'poetical science', its constitutive pieces probed and classed like 'specimens', according to their 'evident' qualities.<sup>29</sup> In this way, an editorial ethic is shaped in the manner of empirical inquiry.<sup>30</sup> As the language of classification, arrangement and display is brought to bear on the 'various and diffuse' nature of poetry, *Poetical Selections* frames literary compilation not in opposition to scientific methods, but at the intersection between art and science.

This thesis begins with Coleridge and locates fugitive knowledge in the relationship between the Sibylline leaves of his poetry collection and his multiple and abortive manuscript plans for encyclopaedias. Chapter 1 charts an alternative genealogy for the sibyl through Coleridge's notebooks and variously printed works, and explores the development of this figure as the basis for a prophetic temporality for Coleridge's encyclopaedia, a curiously 'living oracle' itself.<sup>31</sup> I borrow the title of this chapter from Coleridge's own 'Volatilia or Day-book for bird-liming ~~stray~~ small Thoughts, impounding Stray thoughts, and holding Trial for doubtful Thoughts'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Poetical Selections, consisting of the most approved pieces of our best modern British Poets, excellent specimens of fugitive poetry, and some original pieces, by Cowper, Darwin, and others that have never before been published* (Birmingham: Thomson and Wrighton, 1811), p. iii.

<sup>29</sup> See David Duff, 'Literary Sampling and the Poetics of the Specimen', *Studies in Romanticism*, 59.1 (2020), 109-132.

<sup>30</sup> On excerption and British Romanticism's inductive logic, Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction*.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 1, III.ii.

<sup>32</sup> *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn et al., 5 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957-2002), V, xlix. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *N* in footnotes.

Parsing his title returns us to the ‘element[s] of the archive’: from the Old French *volatil*, Coleridge’s inscription summons a meaning otherwise obsolete at the time of his writing, a collective noun for birds and other wild winged creatures; from contemporary chemistry books, ‘volatilia’ refers to a quality in oils, indicating chemical compounds that quickly evaporate. ‘Bird-liming’ involves the application of an adhesive substance on the branches of a tree as a method for trapping birds. The title emphasises the notebook’s apprehensive qualities as a tentatively carceral repository that might impound and adjudicate. Coleridge emphasises that this is a ‘Day-book’, indicating diurnal miscellaneity, a temporality further evidenced in his letters: in 1833, he described ‘a little poem I composed from a rude conception which I accidentally found in one of my many old ‘Fly-catchers’ (Fliegen-fänger) or Mss Day Books for *impounding* (Einsperrung) Stray Thoughts, as I was lying in bed’.<sup>33</sup> Resisting Wordsworth’s ‘contradiction in terms’, Coleridge’s ‘Volatilia’ exposes the fugitive knowledge at the heart of his composition as well as his compilation practice.

Chapter 2 explores the primordial textual condition of Jeremy Bentham’s manuscripts, locating the fugitive on the margins of his carefully tabulated papers. For Bentham, knowledge and practice were much more explicitly tied than they were for Coleridge, indeed the two are often pitched as ‘formative yet antithetical forces in British intellectual history’: on one hand, the avatar for Romantic idealism in Britain, on the other the arch utilitarian.<sup>34</sup> For Bentham, the materials of method lie in the vast institutional apparatus designed for the purposes of information management. Chapter 2 focusses on his reformulation of the terminologies and practices associated with book-keeping as they shape his encyclopaedism and his remapping of the disciplines. Book-keeping relies on the continual transfer of information between

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<sup>33</sup> *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), VI, 963. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *CL* in footnotes.

<sup>34</sup> Jon Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 163. See John Stuart Mill, *On Bentham and Coleridge*, ed. by F. R. Leavis [1950] (New York: Harper, 1962). Anthony Julius’s contribution to the volume *Bentham and the Arts*, and the UCL Bentham Project more generally, have gone some way to expose the fault lines inherent in this now-commonplace opposition. See Anthony Julius, ‘More Bentham, Less Mill’, in *Bentham and the Arts*, ed. by Anthony Julius, Malcolm Quinn and Philip Schofield (London: UCL Press, 2020), pp. 160-201.

notebooks, the first of which is conventionally referred to as a ‘waste-book’. For Bentham this is a key site of contention. I explore his refashioning of the waste-book into an elementary book, and the associated shifts in temporality and in practice. Surrounded by his manuscripts, marginal contents, pigeonholes, printed tables and ledgers, Bentham works to lend the book the mobility and comparability of loose papers, while at the same time holding each part together in a common union. The materials of method are evident here in the ways in which the commonplace workings of the waste-book inform his sense of the ‘Common-hall’ of encyclopaedism.

Chapter 3 explores the literal compilation of colour in theory and in practice, rooting its analysis in the bibliographic contingencies developed for organising volatile or fugitive pigments that tended to crack or fade with time. Fugitive colour oscillates between the proverbial ground of matter and flashes of light in the rainbow, combining geometric abstraction with the unctuous materiality of paint. This chapter turns to Reynolds’s experiments with fugitive pigment, and to the increasingly experimental tables and paper tools designed to represent all possible colours and combinations. Organising colour exposes the densely intermedial relations that structure early nineteenth-century textual production, combining the flying leaves of the press and the flying colours of paint. I explore the methods by which colour is taken up as a specimen to be collected, organised and displayed on paper, through the paper slips, hand-coloured ‘blots’, analogical staves and extra-illustrated compilations.

My final chapter traces the development of the House and Museum of Sir John Soane as it transitioned from private collection to public institution. Here I consider architectural practice in relation to compilation, locating manuscript writing, album-making and the periodical press at the heart of the museum. Here, the tearing and recompilation of manuscripts, newspapers and book parts illuminate the broader projects of architecture and nation-building. I figure bibliographic compilation as the restorative counterpart to spoliation within the museum. This chapter reads Soane’s ‘pasticcio column’, composed of marble, stone, and cast iron elements, alongside the pasticcio as it appears in his manuscripts. Reading across architectural and textual assemblages, I then turn to Soane’s vast albums of newspaper clippings, generative compilations within which the densely interconnected and intermedial nature of the museum’s materials are clearly visible. These compilations show Soane in a new

light, as a compiler of poetry and ephemera. I close by turning to the final edition of his printed *Description of the House and Museum*, considering the workings or excerption, compilation and collaboration as they structure the printed page. If an artefact is ‘a fragment, but one that remains sufficiently intact to support reconstructions of the object’s full shape and history’, the textual and architectural fragments described in this chapter are emphatically not artefacts but fugitive pieces: they create meaning through compilation and through new assemblages that inhibit the ‘reconstruction’ of their ‘full shape’, emphasising instead their positions as partial and out-of-place.<sup>35</sup>

Across these four chapters, fugitive knowledge arises from the dialectic between materials and method, rooting the pursuit of complete knowledge in the ‘moving ground of history.’<sup>36</sup> This thesis serves to widen the scope of the early nineteenth-century ‘printscape’, exploring the interactions between a variety of printed, scribal and visual media and pursuing a methodology ‘that considers both print and manuscript as continually contingent, in flux, and in conversation with each other’.<sup>37</sup> Fugitive knowledge thus returns us to the ‘element[s] of the archive’, charting alternative genealogies and temporalities for the composite book across a range of disciplines and domains of practice.

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<sup>35</sup> Crystal B. Lake, *Artifacts: How We Think and Write About Found Objects* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), p. 6. On the role of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthologies of fugitive pieces from antiquity in the evolution of the Romantic fragment, see Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1986), pp. 5-28.

<sup>36</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), p. 150.

<sup>37</sup> Louisiane Ferlier and Bénédicte Miyamoto, *Forms, Formats and the Circulation of Knowledge: British Printscape’s Innovations, 1688-1832* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); see also James Raven, *Bookscape: Geographies of Printing and Publishing in London before 1800* (London: The British Library, 2014).

1.

*Volatilia: History, Miscellany and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'scattered elements of future science'*

I. 'Fugitive publication'

i. The book to come

Compilation is often pitched as an antithesis to composition, the drudge work of the compositor against the imagination of the poet, heterogeneity against harmony. As poetry travels from the moment of inception into the matter of print, endlessly reproduced and rearranged, 'all its bloom is brushed off'.<sup>38</sup> For Coleridge, the proliferation and mechanisation of print shaped a 'typical writer [...] all too ready to settle into the routine vagrancy of the compositor as an eternal wanderer on the face of the page'; such a writer might achieve transition but not progression.<sup>39</sup> There is a keen distinction in Coleridge's work between the arbitrary and lifeless work of mere arrangement and the workings of method, but that does not mean that the poet is a stranger to the work of compilation. Among early nineteenth-century poets and critics alike, compilations were 'understood as contingent and ramshackle collections rather than compositions, modes of lazy and opportunistic publication that exploited the technological power of the press to transfer and reproduce text rather than the mental powers proper to authorship and literary genres.'<sup>40</sup> These same criticisms extended to the single-author collections put together by poets-turned-

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<sup>38</sup> Unsigned Review, 'Coleridge's Sibylline Leaves', *Monthly Review, or Literary Journal*, 88 (January 1819), 24-38 (p. 25).

<sup>39</sup> Jerome Christensen, *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 163. For a discussion of Christensen's approach and of Coleridge's 'patchworks of quoted, summarised and sometimes plagiarised texts that obscure the boundary between writing and glossing, creation and mere arrangement', see John Savarese, 'Cognitive Scaffolding, *Aids to Reflection*', in *Distributed Cognition in Enlightenment and Romantic Culture*, ed. by Miranda Anderson, George Rousseau and Michael Wheeler (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 153.

<sup>40</sup> Ina Ferris, 'Antiquarian Authorship: D'Israeli's Miscellany of Literary Curiosity and the Question of Secondary Genres', *Studies in Romanticism*, 45.4 (2006), 523-542 (p. 524).

bookmakers.<sup>41</sup> In April 1797, wrestling with just these contradictions, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote to the publisher Joseph Cottle in financial difficulty: the poet felt a ‘calm hopelessness’ as ‘every mode of life which has promised [him] bread and cheese, has been, one after the other, torn away.’<sup>42</sup> The problem was not so much one of professional failure, but of the failings of professionalisation. Coleridge wrote disdainfully of Robert Southey’s comparative fame and financial success, alluding to a largely favourable review of the latter’s then most recent collection, *Poems* (1797).<sup>43</sup> Both Coleridge’s letter and the review present two divergent senses of authorship, the one predicated on notions of singular, immortal genius and the other on the hasty construction of fanciful nothings, popular only for a moment. For Coleridge, to mingle the two did nothing to consolidate an authorial identity, rather, such collections destabilised any coherent notion of authorship by privileging reproducibility over originality and variety over order: ‘to posterity [Southey’s] wreath will look unseemly – here an ever living amaranth, and close by its side some weed of an hour, sere, yellow and shapeless – his exquisite beauties will lose half their effect from the bad company they keep.’<sup>44</sup> The anthological metaphor – weeds and flowers gathered together – animates a crux between intellectual and vocational identities, and between their respectively eternal and the ephemeral legacies. The

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<sup>41</sup> For an example of the competing claims of commerce and canonicity in the making on single-author collections, see Michael Gamer’s discussion of Wordsworth’s invective against booksellers in *Romanticism, Self-Canonization and the Business of Poetry*, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> *CL*, I, 319-321 (p. 320). On Coleridge’s relationship to Cottle see Tim Whelan, ‘Joseph Cottle and the Romantics, by Basil Cottle’, *Coleridge Bulletin*, 32 (2008), 99-106. On Coleridge’s frustrated vocational identity see a further letter to Cottle on 22 February 1796, *CL*, I, 185. For a discussion of these letters in relation to the problem of professionalism, see Brian Goldberg, *The Lake Poets and Professional Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 132-135. On the paradoxical connection between professionalisation (earning a living through writing) and ‘an ideology of literature founded on the radical autonomy of the world of art and the disinterestedness of the creative act’ see Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 37. On the ‘vocational imagination’ see Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 332.

<sup>43</sup> See unsigned review of *Poems* by Robert Southey, *Monthly Review*, 22 (March 1797), 297-302 (p. 297).

<sup>44</sup> *CL*, I, 320. On the anthology as flower garland see Barbara M. Benedict, *The Making of the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 7.

task, then, is to create a collection fit for ‘posterity’, a collection that looks toward the future as much as it recollects the past.

Coleridge’s letter takes a surprising turn at the invocation of one most exemplary poet, shifting focus from the compilation of poems by living poets to the composition of an epic under the auspices of canonical precedent: ‘Observe the march of Milton’, Coleridge pleads, emphasising the sense of continual progression and development and figuring observation not as a passive witnessing but an active practice, a figure to follow.<sup>45</sup> In Milton’s image, Coleridge ‘should not think of devoting less than 20 years to an Epic Poem’:

Ten to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable Mathematician, I would thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics, and Astronomy, Botany, Metallurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine – then the *mind of man* – then the *minds of men* – in all Travels, Voyages, and Histories. So I would spend ten years – the next five to the composition of the poem – and the five last to the correction of it.<sup>46</sup>

This profusion of ‘materials’ roots the singular ‘mind’ in the plural ‘minds’, dispersing the poet’s attention across multiple disciplines and domains of practice, and marching forward some twenty-five years into the future, undeterred by the tenuously conditional declarations that hold this epic web together: ‘I would... I would... I would...’. This dream of an epic exposes another locus for what Mark W. Turner has described a ‘linked dynamics of print’ that connects ‘disorderly miscellaneity and orderly encyclopaedism’.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, in his writings on method, Coleridge makes extensive use of excerpts from Milton, textually ‘infusing’ poetic expression with ‘the empirical base of scientific enquiry’.<sup>48</sup> As Seth Rudy has demonstrated, epic poetry ‘has long enjoyed a critical association with various manifestations of encyclopaedic learning’.<sup>49</sup> But, cautioned against the ‘bad company’ of the collection, how might the Romantic poet hope to navigate the vast

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<sup>45</sup> *CL*, I, 320.

<sup>46</sup> *CL*, I, 320.

<sup>47</sup> Mark W. Turner, ‘Seriality, Miscellaneity, and Compression in Nineteenth-Century Print’, *Victorian Studies*, 62.2 (2020), 283-294 (p. 291).

<sup>48</sup> Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction*, p. 247.

<sup>49</sup> Seth Rudy, ‘Stories of Everything: Epics, Encyclopaedias, and Concepts of “Complete” Knowledge’, *The Eighteenth Century*, 55.4 (2014), 411-430 (p. 411).



and various sweep of ‘universal science’? How do compilations of encyclopaedic learning relate to the ‘sere’ and ‘shapeless’ poetry collection?

Coleridge wrestled with a broader trend in early nineteenth-century publishing practice which saw the gradual disaggregation of print, moving by the fits and starts of diurnal ephemerality rather than by unified progression worthy of the ‘March of Milton’. Fugitive publication in miscellanies, pocket-books, almanacs and gift books ‘played an important role in marking the transition from the cyclicity to the seriality of cultural production’.<sup>50</sup> Coleridge largely resisted this shift, sketching plans for various kinds of composite works that sought to resolve the contradiction between transition and progression. Reading the gradual development of Coleridge’s own theorisation and practice of compilation across manuscript plans and printed works pushes at the limits of the critical commonplace that ‘canon formation is an ongoing process driven not by the past but by the exigencies of the present.’<sup>51</sup> Instead, these projects and their shared investments in the materials and metaphors of sibylline forms emphasise Coleridge’s focus on a method that might lay the groundwork for the production of knowledge in the future and in perpetuity. Tracing Coleridge’s encyclopaedism from his early, unfilled manuscript plans to later printed works reveals a persistent investment in prospective, discontinuous forms, for which the ‘exigencies of the present’ are less pressing than the enticing possibilities of what Coleridge describes as ‘future science’.<sup>52</sup>

This chapter begins by exploring the imbricated fields of poetry and encyclopaedism in the early nineteenth century, preparing the ground for an analysis of Coleridge’s own publication plans, which range from miscellanies to encyclopaedias. For Tilottama Rajan, gesturing towards Coleridge’s capacious notebooks, Romantic encyclopaedism ‘is not a compilation of knowledge but an encyclopaedic thinking: a perception about the disseminative interconnectedness and incompleteness of knowledge.’<sup>53</sup> I take the inverse approach, exploring the extent to which that ‘encyclopaedic thinking’ is conditioned by the material terrain and

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Piper, *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Gamer, *Romanticism, Self-Canonisation and the Business of Poetry*, p. 16.

<sup>52</sup> *SWF*, I, 576-587 (p. 587).

<sup>53</sup> Tilottama Rajan, ‘The Encyclopaedia and the University of Theory: Idealism and the Organisation of Knowledge’, *Textual Practice*, 21.2 (2007), 335-358.

metaphorical movements of compilation. This chapter positions miscellaneity and method as equal and opposite constituent aspects of an encyclopaedic project ‘obsessed with its own conditions of possibility but also with its own bibliographic form and technologies.’<sup>54</sup> Nowhere is this clearer than in the midst of Coleridge’s manuscripts. This chapter’s second section explores the relationship between method and miscellany in three key groupings of texts. Firstly, I read three manuscript outlines for a history, an encyclopaedia and a miscellany, which Coleridge composed between 1796 and 1812, each of which suggests a shifting sense of how the poet positioned himself in relation to the work of compilation, to the shaping of literary canons, and to other disciplines and histories that comprise ‘universal science’. These plans, I argue, are the training grounds for ideas that would cohere for Coleridge under the auspices of method, always understood in relation to its opposite, miscellaneity. Next, I turn to *The Statesman’s Manual* (1816), which positions the sibyl as the authorising figure for a spurious and mechanical ‘Multiscience without Method’. I situate the *Statesman’s Manual* as an important precursor to the publication of Coleridge’s 1817 poetry collection *Sibylline Leaves*, and a site in which the poet explores contrasting genealogies for the sibyl, ranging between Heraclitean and Virgilian sources. Both the manuscript plans and the *Manual* offer a fuller context for *Sibylline Leaves* than is supplied in the volume’s short preface and in its immediate reception. My reading of the volume takes an exemplary poem and scene of reading – ‘Frost at Midnight’ – and explores how Coleridge’s preoccupation with the fits and starts and flying leaves manifests at the level of formal innovation and textual revision.

Buoyed by the vatic tradition of the sibyl and moving beyond the bounds of retrospective compilation, Coleridge’s prospectus for the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* declares that the work, itself a ‘living oracle’, ‘will have to collect and combine the rich but scattered elements of future Science’.<sup>55</sup> In this chapter’s third section, I turn to Coleridge’s introduction to the *Metropolitana*, a book which never came to be, or at least not in the form that Coleridge desired and not with his support. The encyclopaedia (like Milton’s epic) promised a corrective to the two

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<sup>54</sup> Chad Wellmon, ‘Touching Books: Diderot, Novalis, and the Encyclopaedia of the Future’, *Representations*, 114 (2011), 65-102 (p. 67).

<sup>55</sup> *SWF*, I, 587.

modes of authorship described in the letter to Cottle quoted above, reconciling the ideal and mechanical, and unifying disparate parts into an all-encompassing whole – but failed to deliver.<sup>56</sup> The sibyl presents a challenge to encyclopaedic unity, opposing the notions of the bounded, finite and immortal great work to the chance movements of flying leaves, unbound manuscripts and errant scraps. She represents an investment in fragmentary materials that attracts both Coleridge’s derision and his ongoing intrigue, and embodies what Jon Mee has characterised as a ‘vulgar avatar’ that haunted a poet fearful that his ‘nobler enthusiasm’ might laps into chaos.<sup>57</sup>

Historical appraisals of Coleridge’s sibyl have tended toward the sardonic, picturing the poet as he apes the ‘character of an old woman’ and as his enigmatic collection refuses the advances of ‘time pressed critics’.<sup>58</sup> As promiscuous scraps circulated outside the purview of an authoritative edition, the sibyl served as fodder for the chauvinistic feminisation of textual transmission and for charges of obfuscation. Modern accounts push the prophetic lineage further: Gary Dyer reads *Sibylline Leaves* in relation to the ‘discontinuous history of the Sibylline Books that guided Rome’s leaders’ and the controversial *Oracula Sibyllina*, gathered by a sixth-century editor, first published in 1545 and translated into English in 1713; Chris Murray focusses on the sibyl’s epic associations and argues that ‘Coleridge’s allusion to Virgil identifies him with the ancient oracles [...] The reader too is flattered by the part of the questing Aeneas.’; Samantha Webb contends that in the nineteenth century the sibyl’s leaves were evoked as relics valuable for their curious, antiquarian rarity, but that that their prophetic and political authority had much diminished.<sup>59</sup> None of these accounts, though, trace Coleridge’s engagement with the sibyl beyond his eponymous collection, an engagement that reveals the figure’s intermedial associations with notebooks and newspapers, and the lingering presence

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Sibylline Leaves, a Collection of Poems; by S. T. Coleridge, Esq.’, *The Literary Gazette: Journal of Belles Lettres, Politics and Fashion* 27, 26 July 1817, 49-51 (p. 49).

<sup>57</sup> Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), p. 134.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Sibylline Leaves’, *The Literary Gazette*, 49.

<sup>59</sup> Samantha Webb, ‘Reading the End of the World: *The Last Man*, History, and the Agency of Romantic Authorship’, in *Mary Shelley in Her Time*, ed. by Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2000), 119-134 (p. 132); Gary Dyer, ‘Unwitnessed by Answering Deeds: “The Destiny of Nations” and Coleridge’s Sibylline Leaves’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 20.3 (Summer 1989), 148-155 (p. 151); Chris Murray, *Tragic Coleridge* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 80.

of oracular vision in Coleridge's encyclopaedism. Understanding Coleridge's turn to the sibyl in 1817 is better served by an account that traces his engagement with the figure at particular junctures in his career, and as a figure that galvanises literary self-fashioning and textual production even as it threatens a concomitant destruction of the book.

Coleridge was an active and versatile participant in a vast media ecology that spanned multiple formats, from the production of ephemera to the construction of lavish volumes. Heidi Thomson attributes a relative lack of attention to the publication of Coleridge's poems in newspapers to the 'disposable, short-lived, transient nature of the newspaper. It is a genre that is fundamentally at odds with, even inimical to, the canonical, monumental, and, therefore timeless status we now associate with famous poems.'<sup>60</sup> But often, in Coleridge's work, the two planes of newspaper and book publication converge. A piece in the *Public Advertiser* in January 1776, connects fugitive media to the nature of the 'subject' that they communicate, situating the writer of history not in the library of books but in the grime and grub of the periodical press:

He who writes on a fugitive subject, can never find so ready and proper a vehicle for his thoughts, as a *fugitive publication*. A leaf, like the *Sybil's leaves* [sic], is more precious than a volume. Books stand unmolested on our shelves, but Papers are for ever in our hands, and on our tables. A subject of little or no importance to-morrow, may nevertheless be of great consequence today; and the compiler of such a *diary* is, for the moment, the author of history.<sup>61</sup>

Coleridge's work as a compiler, literary historian and encyclopaedist, I argue, straddles the dichotomy between leaf and book, harnessing the fugitive and anticipatory logics of newspapers and manuscripts to construct a method capable of unifying the 'scattered elements of future science.' The passage quoted above goes on to contrast the veracity of the 'historian of the day' with the 'historian of after

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<sup>60</sup> Heidi Thomson, *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper: The "Morning Post" and the Road to Dejection* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Mr Woodfall, 'From the Public Advertiser, January 23 1776', in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit. Being a Collection of Fugitive Pieces, in Prose and Verse*, 6 vols (London: J. Debrett, 1786), VI, 151-159 (p. 158). This passage is also collected in *An Asylum for Fugitives: Published Occasionally*, 2 vols (London: J. Almon, 1776), I, 52, quoted in Gillian Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century*, p. 37.

times' too tempted by the cumulation of 'the lyes [sic] of succeeding generations' to offer an honest account of the past. Coleridge, I argue, fashions himself not as a 'historian of after times' but a historian *for* future times, busy with the provision of a method that would unify knowledge even as it continued to change and develop.

If fugitive pages more generally comprise 'productions of the moment [that] anchor writing and printing to a specific place of origin, presence and exchange', the Coleridgean sibyl engages a prospective, future-oriented temporality, emphasising the multiple possibilities of the book to come and holding the 'moment' in tension with the encyclopaedic scope of all times and all places.<sup>62</sup> Coleridge's plans in manuscript and in print participate in the 'poetics of desire' that David Duff associates with the printed prospectus, 'a form of speculative, anticipatory, preparatory writing'.<sup>63</sup> These materials are turned towards the possibility of 'the book to come', in Blanchot's enchanting phrase, and settle uneasily on a paradox: Coleridge's encyclopaedism 'orients the future of the book both in the direction of the greatest dispersion and in the direction of a tension capable of *gathering* infinite diversity [...] Such a book, always in movement, always on the verge of scattering, will also always be gathered in all directions'.<sup>64</sup> Even – especially – as Coleridge insists in his introduction to the encyclopaedia on the transparency of the book at hand, envisioning instead the parameters of the book of to come, his efforts are conditioned by the tension between gathering and dispersal by which books are made and unmade. Coleridge's fugitive texts – manuscripts, marginalia and letters – pose the condition and limit to his method as a compiler, supplying a profusion of materials from which a potential method might be traced.

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<sup>62</sup> Luisa Calè, 'Extra-Illustration and Ephemera: Altered Books and the Alternative Forms of the Fugitive Page', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 44.2 (2020), 111-135 (p. 114).

<sup>63</sup> David Duff, 'Preludes to Knowledge: The Poetics of the Encyclopaedia Prospectus', in *Romanticism and Knowledge: Selected Papers from the Munich Joint Conference of the German Society for English Romanticism and the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism*, ed. by Stefanie Fricke, Felicitas Meifert-Menhard and Katharina Pink (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2015), pp. 189-200 (p. 200).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* See Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 224-245.

ii. 'Sibylline Leaves of Newspaper Essays'

Notebook, newspaper and book and their respective temporalities coalesce in Coleridge's work, demonstrating some of the ways in which diverse printed forms combine to mediate the exchange of ideas and to galvanise a textual condition that is neither wholly ephemeral nor wholly permanent. Coleridge turns to the sibyl as an authorising figure to describe his changing relationship to writing for the newspapers. Her first appearance in Coleridge's work is not in the printed poetry collection, but in an intimate notebook entry from January 1804, where she appears briefly and with little qualification to signify the particular materiality of the newspaper. Describing the 'insecurity' and suspicion' that might prove the 'Arsenic' of a love besieged by strangeness, Coleridge wrote: 'how differently it would impress me now from the time of my Sibylline Leaves of Newspaper Essays'.<sup>65</sup> Scarcely noted in readings of the 1817 collection, this aside suggests that something in Coleridge's scribal and authorial habits had changed, and figures cognition and affect in relation to paper technologies with little explanation, prompting questions about the relationship between the poet, the notebook entry and newspaper essay. Reading across the poetry collection and the encyclopaedia reveals the sibylline tendency at work in Coleridge's conception of the materials of method, and a tension between ephemeral works of the moment – newspapers – and the prophetic sibyl.

Coleridge noted that this entry on love, friendship and strangeness represented a 'current of thought' in order that he might later 'seek [it] out again and sail down with it'. This ebullient character is typical of his inconsistent note-keeping practice: for example, Coleridge worked across fourteen notebooks in 1809; while his notebook 3½, intended as a workbook for learning German, spans twenty-eight years and includes entries from 1803 right up to 1824.<sup>66</sup> These 'current[s]' appear in Notebook 16, which, as a whole, Coburn describes as an 'unmethodical mixture of interests taken up and apparently dropped'.<sup>67</sup> In Coleridge's words, the notebook is a

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<sup>65</sup> *N*, I, 525.

<sup>66</sup> Paul Cheshire, 'Coleridge's Notebooks', in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 288-307 (289).

<sup>67</sup> *N*, I, xxxix.

‘Metallic Pencil Pocket-book with Hints, Thoughts, Facts, Illustrations &c &c,’ comprising a record of his Scottish tour, months at Keswick and return to Grasmere, as well as his travels to Malta.<sup>68</sup> Coleridge’s turn of phrase suggests that there was a time before and after his engagement with the newspaper. This ‘time’ of Coleridge’s ‘Sibylline Leaves of Newspaper Essays’ was perhaps 1796, during which he produced ten issues of his own periodical *The Watchman*, or perhaps between 1797 and 1803, when he wrote prolifically for the *Morning Post* and other London dailies.<sup>69</sup> But such a time was not over in 1804, nor by 1818; perhaps it did not end.

Coleridge crystallised the relationship between the notebook entry and the periodical essay in his prospectus for *The Friend* in 1809:

[D]aily noting down, in my Memorandum or Common-place Books, both Incidents and Observations; whatever had occurred to me from without, and all the Flux and Reflux of my Mind within itself. The Number of these Notices, and their Tendency, miscellaneous as they were to one common End [...] first encouraged me to undertake the Weekly Essay [...].<sup>70</sup>

The ‘Flux and Reflux’ of the mind plays out through miscellaneous materials, gradually cohering into the serial form of the ‘weekly essay’. Fugitive knowledge expresses just this desire to reconcile the ‘miscellaneous’ to the ‘common end’ retaining both the integrity of the fragment and of the whole.

Beyond these incidental notes and the chance dispersal of flying leaves, fugitive knowledge has a deeper purchase on Coleridge’s development. The paradox of fugitive poetics that shapes Coleridge’s ‘Sibylline Leaves of newspaper essays’ is rooted early in his childhood learning, as an infamous scene of instruction that encapsulates the tension between wilderness and order makes clear. Writing in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), the poet reminisced:

I learnt from [my schoolmaster] that Poetry, even that of the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and

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<sup>68</sup> *CL*, II, 1031.

<sup>69</sup> Angela Esterhammer, ‘Coleridge in the Newspapers’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, pp. 165-185.

<sup>70</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. by Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), II, 16. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *F* in footnotes.

dependent on more, and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word.<sup>71</sup>

Even the superlatively lofty and wild verses are reconciled to this relative ‘logic’, always part of a discernible topography: ‘their ground, their firmament, their foundation’.<sup>72</sup> The accretive “more” signals degrees of comparative quality (‘more difficult’) and proliferating quantity (‘more, and more fugitive causes’), resulting in a sense of logic that is as replete as it is evasive. As it happened, Coleridge went on to describe how, when no satisfactory answer could be supplied to his schoolmaster, ‘the exercise was torn up’ and another produced in its place: textual creation and destruction are each figured as central to the poet’s early development.<sup>73</sup> What is expressed here as ‘logic’ and ‘reason’ is later borne out as ‘method – in H. J. Jackson’s words, ‘the ability to envisage the whole while unfolding the parts’.<sup>74</sup> In Coleridge’s dynamic metaphysics, there is a direct transparency between reason and the heterogenous principles and impressions from which it is derived: logic and life are mutually constitutive.<sup>75</sup> James Engell and W. Jackson Bate note that Coleridge’s reflection on the relationship between wilderness and logic draws on Edward Young’s ‘On Lyric Poetry’ (1728): ‘Thus Pindar, who has as much logic at the bottom as Aristotle or Euclid, to some critics has appeared as mad’.<sup>76</sup> Notions of what is logical and what is mad are not as distinct from one another as they might at first seem. Coleridge’s claim goes much further than suggesting that what seems mad is in fact relatively logical. Instead, poetry is not only *more* difficult, complex and subtle than science, but its logic is dependent on its madness, on those

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<sup>71</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), I, 9. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *BL* in footnotes.

<sup>72</sup> *BL*, I, 12 n1.

<sup>73</sup> *BL*, I, 11.

<sup>74</sup> H. J. Jackson, ‘The “Logic” in the “Wildest Odes”’, *Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Thomas Pfau and Robert Gleckner (Duke University Press: London, 1998), pp. 213-224 (p. 213).

<sup>75</sup> See Frederick Rainsberry, ‘Coleridge and the Paradox of the Poetic Imperative’, *ELH*, 21.2 (1954), 114-145; Tim Milnes, ‘Coleridge’s Logic’, in *Handbook of the History of Logic*, IV: British Logic in the Nineteenth Century, ed. by Dov M. Gabbay and John Woods (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2008), pp. 33-75.

<sup>76</sup> *BL*, I, 9n2.



amorphous and evasive ‘fugitive causes’. Compilation operates not only in service to retrospective self-fashioning but as one aspect of prospective encyclopaedic gathering, connecting poetry itself to all other departments of knowledge and laying down the foundation for future learning and technological innovation.<sup>77</sup>

In exploring the relationship between Coleridge’s materials and method, poetry comes to the fore not simply as something *as* severe as science but as the condition of possibility *for* science. Method, as Jon Klancher has argued, represented for Coleridge ‘the ultimate intellectual horizon of “*all* the Arts and Sciences” – with a pivotal, mediating function to be enacted by poetry and the fine arts’.<sup>78</sup> In Coleridge’s encyclopaedic divisions of knowledge, the fine arts –controversially elided by his impatient and more commercially savvy publisher, as I will describe – comprised the all-important ‘middle method’, the connection between theory and practice. Poetry’s mediating power is evident at the level of Coleridge’s discourse, as Dahlia Porter has shown, as he performs induction by way of literary excerption: in dealing with empiricist moral philosophy, Coleridge ‘heaps up textual examples and – by juxtaposition, minor modifications, substitutions, and analysis of specific aspects of language and construction – bends them into the service of his larger project of establishing universal principles.’<sup>79</sup> In doing so, he leverages fugitive pieces and sibylline scraps as materials through which to prove his method, treading a thin line between the unity and progression of the whole and a miscellaneous assemblage of disparate textual fragments.

Coleridge rearticulated his schoolmaster’s lesson on logic and fugitive causes in 1818-19, this time in the margins of *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* (1787), a work of Old Testament philology written by the Enlightenment theologian J. G. Eichhorn, whom Coleridge met on his trip to Göttingen in 1799.<sup>80</sup> Eichhorn contrasts implicitly

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Re-collection’ is described by Michael Gamer as ‘the authorised, transformational reprinting of works [...] [providing] a site for considering the materiality of books and writerly subjectivity simultaneously’, in Gamer, *Romanticism, Self-Canonization and the Business of Poetry*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences*, p. 164.

<sup>79</sup> Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>80</sup> On biblical criticism, philology and Coleridge’s relationship to Eichhorn’s ‘fruitless evidence-hunting’ see Ina Lipkowitz, ‘Inspiration and the Poetic Imagination: Samuel Taylor Coleridge’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 30. 4 (1991), 605-631 (pp. 612-613) and Michael John Kooy, ‘Romanticism and Coleridge’s Idea of History’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60.4 (1999), 717-735 (p. 719).

dubious oracular texts with the Bible, the veracity and historicity of which eclipses the power of poetry. In his notes on Eichhorn, Coleridge pictured oracular figures – Daniel, Merlin, Nostradamus, the Sibyls – as ‘many floating Traditions’ that make their way into ‘Sacred Books’ by way of ‘old fragments’ and clandestine pamphlets.<sup>81</sup> Responding in the margins of Eichhorn’s text, Coleridge rejected his exegetic surrender of poetic ‘ornament’ in these fragmentary materials, and made the same demand of Eichhorn as his schoolmaster had made years before:

Eminently must the Poet have a distinct meaning and reason for every word, [sic] he uses: for herein chiefly does Poetry differ from Prose. But a religious, an inspired Poet, and a Commissioned Prophet—that *he* should scatter about flighty fancies, and sentences senseless [sic], is too absurd.<sup>82</sup>

Coleridge contended that neither poetic lines nor scriptural archives can be mined and hewn in the way that Eichhorn’s method demanded. Taken together, Eichhorn’s and Coleridge’s accounts set up a bibliographic polarity between the ‘historical book’ and scattered fancies, neither of which offer a wholly appropriate model for the mediation of scripture nor of poetry, and both of which are subject to the management (and mismanagement) of “selectors and compilers” [sic] (M 2: 406). Turning to Coleridge’s own composition and compilation practices, however, quickly undercuts this polarity between unified and scattered knowledge, revealing the poet’s continued professional and intellectual investment in ‘fugitive causes’.

### iii. Poetic encyclopaedism

Before exploring Coleridge’s own interventions in the field of encyclopaedism, it is necessary to pause on the nature of the project in itself, and the changing relationship between the poet and the encyclopaedia. The early nineteenth century, a period that Dorothy Wordsworth dubbed the ‘age of systems [...] [and] booklearning’, was a productive time for encyclopaedists. Indeed, as *The Eclectic Review* put it in 1809, it

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<sup>81</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ed. by George Whalley, 6 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), II, 406. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *M* in footnotes

<sup>82</sup> *M*, II, 406.

was ‘the Age of Encyclopaedias’.<sup>83</sup> Despite this ubiquity, and Coleridge’s own admission that ‘the word ENCYCLOPAEDIA is too familiar to Modern Literature to require, in this place, any detailed explanation’, the genre is difficult to define and demarcate. Abraham Rees produced an enlarged five volume edition of the *Cyclopaedia* in 1778-88; by 1819, the year following the publication of Coleridge’s introduction to the *Metropolitana*, Rees’s *Cyclopaedia* had reached 39 volumes; it was completed in 1820, having amassed a staggering forty five volumes. The fifth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was completed in twenty volumes in 1817; eleven volumes of Brewster’s *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* had been published by 1817 (it was completed, in eighteen volumes, in 1830); and the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Perthensis* in twenty-four volumes appeared in 1816.<sup>84</sup> This burgeoning genre produced neither neutral nor hermetic repositories, but products of contested practices which questioned the conceptual potential and material capacity of books, words and readers, as well as the relationship between materials and method. The voluminous, composite encyclopaedia functions in a similar way to the anthology, which is, in Barbara Benedict’s formulation, ‘one work and it is many works. Inclusive and exclusive, communal and fractured, a physical representation of sociability and of elitism, heteroglossic yet homogenous’.<sup>85</sup> As commentators on the eighteenth-century anthology have noted, these composite books ‘cut across divisions of labour that make it possible for us to understand texts, or even to catalogue them’; thus they ‘become a powerful vehicle for defining both what and

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<sup>83</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth to Jane Marsall (1806), in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, Chester L. Shaver, 8 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), I, 180. Anon. ‘Dictionaries of Arts and Sciences’, *Eclectic Review*, 5 (June 1809), 541-53.

<sup>84</sup> On the development of encyclopaedism see Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and Joanna Stalnaker, *The Unfinished Enlightenment: Description in the Age of the Encyclopaedia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010). On the influence of German Romanticism on encyclopaedism in Britain see Tilottama Rajan, ‘Models for System in Idealism Encyclopaedics: The Circle, the Line and the Body’, *Romantic Circles: Praxis Series* (2016) < <https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/systems/praxis.systems.2016.rajan.html> > [accessed 02.06.16]; Tilottama Rajan, ‘Philosophy as Encyclopaedia: Hegel, Schelling, and the Organisation of Knowledge’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 35.1 (2004), 6-11.

<sup>85</sup> Barbara M. Benedict, ‘The Paradox of the Anthology’ (p. 252).

how to read'.<sup>86</sup> The status of such a position is accordingly indistinct: might it be that 'the compiler of an abridgement is a benefactor to mankind, in assisting the diffusion of knowledge'? Or might it be that 'there is no thought or skill brought to bear upon [such] work [...] it is a mere mechanical stringing together of marginal sidenotes'?<sup>87</sup>

Encyclopaedias competed with periodicals and poetical miscellanies for huge readerships. Macvey Napier, an editor for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, went so far as to say that 'works of fictions and periodical miscellanies [...] are the only other publications which rival Encyclopaedias in the extent of their circulation'.<sup>88</sup> William Hazlitt reflected on the relationship between the work of poetry and of encyclopaedism in a letter responding to Napier's request for an article on Drama for a supplement to the *Britannica*. Hazlitt refused, having already committed to 'an octavo volume of a set of Lectures on the Comic Drama of this country', and in so doing drew a line in the sand between two ways of thinking and two kinds of books:

The object of an Encyclopaedia is, I take it, to condense and combine all the facts relating to a subject, and all the theories of any consequences already known or advanced. Now where the business of such a work ends, is just where I begin, that is, I might perhaps throw in an idle speculation or two of my own, not contained in former accounts of the subject, and which would have very little pretensions to rank as scientific.<sup>89</sup>

The apparent distinction is between speculative and scientific knowledge: in Hazlitt's formulation, compilation and composition are markedly opposite forms of thought. The question of the 'object of the encyclopaedia', as Coleridge's work attests, is not so simple. In his work on the *Metropolitana*, Coleridge works to resolve this tension between speculative and scientific knowledge, placing poetry at

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<sup>86</sup> Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 2; Barbara Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader*, p. 212

<sup>87</sup> Both remarks are taken from mid-nineteenth century copyright cases, quoted in Isabella Alexander, *Copyright Law and the Public Interest in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2010), p. 197.

<sup>88</sup> Macvey Napier, *Supplement to the fourth, fifth and sixth editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. With Preliminary Dissertations on the History of the Sciences*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1815-24), I, xxiv.

<sup>89</sup> William Hazlitt to Macvey Napier, 26 Aug 1818, in *The Letters of William Hazlitt*, ed. by Herschel Moreland Sikes, Willard Hallam Bonner and Gerald Lahey (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 185.

the heart of the division of disciplines and offering a corrective to the dogged materialism of his competitors.

In his Prospectus to the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, published in 1817, Coleridge acknowledged the tension between the material ‘object’ of the encyclopaedia and the infinite ‘object’ of its goal: ‘The most voluminous Encyclopaedia, which has yet appeared, is evidently too narrow to contain an universal History of Knowledge in its present state; selection is imperiously required.’<sup>90</sup> There is a speculative breadth required which must somehow be contained within and extend beyond the remit of a series of volumes, something achieved through diligent ‘condens[ing] and combin[ing] and ‘imperious selection’. On the one hand, these mechanisms enable the compression of a vast amount of knowledge within a small space; on the other hand, they enable the expansion of the fields of knowledge beyond the book. In both cases, the encyclopaedia is fundamentally reproductive work, seeking to gather a history in order to reproduce and expand fields of knowledge. For Coleridge, a ‘man of profound science’ goes to the encyclopaedia to:

Seek accessions to his knowledge in the world of contemporaries like himself employed in extending the boundaries of science, and will often be most interested in speculations, the world and stability of which are yet undetermined. But an encyclopaedia is a *History* of Knowledge, in which therefore speculations, which can be at best but truths in the *future* tense, have no rightful or beseeming place.<sup>91</sup>

As a ‘*History*’ and as a composite work compiled by multiple authors and editors, the encyclopaedia deals in the fugitive knowledge of republication – treatises and articles that condense, combine and select from what is already known. Indeed, such fugacity was frequently the basis of controversy. For example, Thomas Tegg, a publisher who specialised in reprints and abridgements, released the first volumes of *The London Encyclopaedia* despite an injunction three years’ earlier from rival editors of the *Metropolitana*. Tegg wrote in his preface that his sources were proudly ‘purloined’ from other sources and argued that the encyclopaedist’s ‘occupation was not pillaging but collecting’. Such ‘works, are supposed, in great measure,

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<sup>90</sup> *SWF*, I, 581.

<sup>91</sup> *SWF*, I, 581.

assemblages of other people.’<sup>92</sup> The *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* took a more refined approach to the same task, with Coleridge anticipating that the work would be ‘*historical* in all respects, that only what has been *established*, or is at least already to be found in the records of science and literature shall form the main body of every article’.<sup>93</sup> As extant records are reworked for the historical encyclopaedia, speculations are relegated to the confines of ‘mere appendix.’<sup>94</sup>

Coleridge’s sense of futurity in the Prospectus is contradictory. On the one hand, ‘truths in the future tense’ have no place in what is ostensibly a work of ‘History’. On the other hand, more recent developments are done no justice when confined to the ‘mere supplementary Postscript to former works’.<sup>95</sup> These developments are important because they have formative and prospective power; they ‘affect the whole theory and consequent arrangement of the Art or Science to which they belong. Our [Coleridge’s] project is in this respect therefore singularly fortunate in point of time. it will have to collect and combine the rich but scattered elements of future Science’.<sup>96</sup> Coleridge pitches this contradiction in relation to bibliographic supplements – the ‘Appendix’ and the ‘Postscript’ – creating, in his Prospectus no less, an uncertain and amorphous sense of the shape of the book to come. In the body of his introduction to the *Metropolitana*, Coleridge emphasises that it is not ‘things’ in and of themselves, as isolated units of knowledge, that interest him, but the ‘[...] relations of things form the prime objects, the *materials of Method*’.<sup>97</sup> The question then, in what follows, is not to set out ‘the object of the Encyclopaedia’ as Hazlitt put it, but the internal and external relations that constitute the encyclopaedia: what are its internal orders and how do they relate to the structure of preceding plans and collections within Coleridge’s oeuvre? How does ‘History’ relate to the present and future, to the book at hand and to the book to come?

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<sup>92</sup> *The London Encyclopaedia, or Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature and Practical Mechanics, comprising a popular view of the present state of knowledge*, 22 vols (London: Thomas Tegg, 1829), I, iv. See *Mawman v. Tegg* in James Russell, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Chancery*, 19 vols (London: A. Strahan, 1829), II, 385-405 (p. 388).

<sup>93</sup> *SWF*, I, 581.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *SWF*, I, 587.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *SWF*, I, 631.

The ‘object’ of the Janus-faced encyclopaedia, at once a work of ‘History’ and a work of and for ‘future science’, is more difficult to define than Hazlitt’s easy distinction between speculation and science suggests. For Roland Barthes, the encyclopaedia ‘proceeds to an impious fragmentation of the world’: rather than discriminating and stabilising, the encyclopaedia retains, even exacerbates, the disaggregated nature of ‘scattered’ knowledge.<sup>98</sup> Barthes wrote that Diderot and D’Alembert’s seminal *Encyclopédie* (1751–72) ‘practices what we might call a certain philosophy of the object, i.e. [it] reflects on its own being’.<sup>99</sup> Barthes goes on to develop an ‘Encyclopaedic poetics’, in which he contends that ‘it is the *Encyclopédie*’s wager (in its plates) to be both a didactic work, based consequently on a severe demand for objectivity (for ‘reality’), and a poetic work in which the real is constantly overcome by *some other thing*’.<sup>100</sup> Just as the encyclopaedia explains, defines and encircles, it risks being – if momentarily – eclipsed by everything excluded from its remit, by its ‘other’. Barthes’ ‘encyclopaedic poetics’ presents an encyclopaedism for which fragmentation and difference are central; this is a useful lens through which to read Coleridge’s own efforts, within which fragmentation and methodisation are mutually constitutive.

In his study of ‘complete knowledge’ and enlightenment thought, Rudy uses the term ‘poetic encyclopaedism’ to describe the ‘structural incompleteness’ of James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1730), a long poem which, in its many departures and digressions, ‘embraces developing rather than fixed knowledge’.<sup>101</sup> Rudy argues that the poem borrows from the principles of scope and scale that inform the organisation of the encyclopaedia, creating a long work in which many paths diverge and cross. Coleridge’s interventions sought to reform both poetry and encyclopaedism, bringing the one and the other into organic unity and resolving ‘structural incompleteness’ to form a whole. Writing to Cottle in 1815, Coleridge reflected:

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<sup>98</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The *Encyclopédie* and its Plates’, in *A Roland Barthes Reader*, ed. by Susan Sontag (London: Vintage, 1993), pp. 218–236 (p. 234)

<sup>99</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The *Encyclopédie*’, p. 218.

<sup>100</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The *Encyclopédie*’, p. 233.

<sup>101</sup> Seth Rudy, *Literature and Encyclopaedism: Literature and Encyclopaedism in Enlightenment Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 80.

The common end of all *narrative*, nay, of all Poems, is to convert a *series* into a *Whole*: to make those events, which in real or Imagined History move on in a *strait* Line, assume to our Understandings a *circular* motion – the snake with its Tail in its Mouth [...] Now what the Globe is in Geography, *miniaturizing* in order to *manifest* the Truth, such is a Poem to that Image of God.<sup>102</sup>

Whether the poem is ‘epic, heroic, divine, call it what you like’, it partakes in this ‘common’, encyclical aim of bringing everything into comprehension in a moment or in miniature, ‘all Past and all Future in one eternal present’.<sup>103</sup> This conception, marked by Coleridge’s characteristically ‘disruptive ebullience’, restores the eternal and limitless to the instinctively diminutive and instrumental ‘miniature’.<sup>104</sup>

Yet, ‘manifesting’ unity in this way is easier said than done, and Coleridge’s infinite ouroboros liable to tangle. In the previous year, Coleridge had requested that John Kenyon transcribe ‘the largest and only compleat Edition of [Jeremy Taylor’s] Polemical Tracts’ at the house of a Cheap Street bookseller.<sup>105</sup> Coleridge ‘put in a piece of Paper with the words at which the Transcript should begin & with which to end’, marking out a passage which ran over a mere two pages. While critical of Taylor, Coleridge admired his ‘broad, deep, and omnigenous’ erudition, which he imbues with planetary grace and grandeur:

With its streaming face unifying all at one moment like that of the setting Sun when thro’ one interspace of blue Sky no larger [than] itself it emerges from the Cloud to sink behind the mountain – but a face seen only at *starts*, when some Breeze from the higher Air scatters, for a moment, the cloud of Butterfly Fancies, which flutter around him like a moving Garment of ten thousand Colours – (now how shall I get out of this sentence? – The Tail is too big to be taken up into the Coiler’s Mouth) – well, as I was saying [...].<sup>106</sup>

Coleridge’s circumambient prolixity disturbs the ‘circular motion of the snake’; the circle’s tendency to endlessness is thus interrupted by the poet’s own ‘omnigenous’

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<sup>102</sup> *CL*, IV, 545.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Jerome Christensen, ‘Coleridge’s Marginal Method in the *Biographia Literaria*’, *PMLA*, 19.5 (1977), 938-940 (p. 930).

<sup>105</sup> *CL*, III, 540.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*



and infamously immethodical prose, neither straight line nor circle but characteristic of Rudy's sense of 'poetic encyclopaedism' or structural incompleteness. Similarly, the superlative 'largest and only compleat edition' is encountered and recorded via sections and scraps. The play is not simply between part and whole, but between fanciful cloud and 'interspace', cosmic orbits and airy scatterings, a unifying face and innumerable colours. Here, the simile comprehends not by imparting fixity but by acknowledging a 'flutter' and instability which brings the sense and question of the 'Whole' into being by likeness and 'starts', by 'striking passages'. At last, the circle is broken, cut off by a dash and parenthesis; its 'interspace' both disrupts and constitutes the scene. Reconstitution of this ouroboros is implosive: it has reigned too freely, grown too big.

Coleridge's encyclopaedism exists at the interface between material entities, 'multiply authored resources for information retrieval that were increasingly arranged in alphabetic form', and what Tilottama Rajan describes as an idealist encyclopaedia, 'a program of learning of *Bildung* that occurs through a "cycle" of the sciences' produced by philosophers such as Hegel, Schelling, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, it is this latter category to which Coleridge aspires in his plan for the *Metropolitana*, but it is only in restoring the plan to its material terrain that one can adequately grasp its failures and fault lines, its 'structural incompleteness'. Relegating the material encyclopaedia's 'logics of unification' – bodies, branches, and circles of knowledge – to the status of supplementary apparatus or 'strictly indexical and not conceptual' tools occludes the ways in which materials and method were imbricated. For Coleridge, the word 'encyclopaedia' is perhaps an unsuitable term: 'if we ever recall the original import of the word, (Instruction in a circle) it is to provoke an innocent smile at its incongruity with the present application – viz. Instruction in a straight line from A to Z.'<sup>108</sup> His 'methodical encyclopaedia' sought to resolve the contradiction between the circle and the line, abandoning the 'planless plan' of former works to move instead by the principles of progression.

After a century of controversial innovations in encyclopaedic practice, critics of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* and its legacy flipped his language on its head, turning

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<sup>107</sup> Tilottama Rajan, 'Models for System in Idealist Encyclopaedics'.

<sup>108</sup> *SWF*, I, 579.

the ostensible ‘material encyclopaedia’ to ideal ends. For Chambers, the ‘Form’ of the encyclopaedia was a relatively simple question of the ‘Order, and Economy of the Work’; by the 1820s, an essay in the Edinburgh-based *Blackwood’s Magazine* called ‘*encyclopaedic forms*’ into question.<sup>109</sup> This inversion shifts its emphasis from the practical ordering of the encyclopaedia to a quintessentially encyclopaedic method. This *Blackwood’s* piece, written by the little-known philosopher Alexander Blair and published in 1824, begins with a broad-brushed invective: ‘All attempts at bringing knowledge into *encyclopaedic forms* seem to include an essential fallacy. Knowledge is advanced by individual minds wholly devoting themselves to their own part of inquiry’. Rather than the bloated encyclopaedia and its persistent diffusion and ‘confusion’ of knowledge, Blair argued for a ‘speculative’ knowledge economy, an ‘ideal community’ or ‘*imaginary community*’. His use of the word ‘form’ is striking, a turn away from the grounds of matter. While Blair’s ideal knowledge must ‘transcend by almost infinite degrees the capacity and *means* of knowing’, Coleridge’s method concerns itself precisely with scattered fragments and the relations between things, turning to the material even as it disavows its limitations and trappings. Jon Klancher has argued that Blair’s ‘extravagant formal gesturing’ – the way in which its persistent anaphora and catalogues create a sense of burgeoning excess – mimics the essay’s own claim that ‘the *Human Mind* is extending its empire’, another kind of imitative ‘poetic encyclopaedism’.<sup>110</sup> Blair’s chief criticism of the encyclopaedists is that they have neglected the ‘*practical connexions*’ of the Sciences and deluded themselves with their ‘imaginary conjunction ... as if this must needs [sic] to be found somewhere, embodied and real [...] as if that circle of the Sciences, [...] did not yet truly exist unless it were *materially constructed*’. Proof of construction is evidence of negation: by their very embodied nature, by forging connections between finite articles, encyclopaedias eclipse the world of knowledge beyond their reach. This seething hypothesis, and the long and diverse history of encyclopaedism it rejects, underscores the complex relationship between the practical and the imaginary, the material and the ideal, multitude and the individual. In considering the relationship

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<sup>109</sup> ‘Thoughts on some errors of opinion in respect to the advancement and diffusion of knowledge’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (July 1824), 26-33 (p. 26).

<sup>110</sup> Jon Klancher, ‘Reading the Social Text: Power, Signs, and Audience in Early Nineteenth Century Prose’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 23.2 (1984), 183-204 (p. 192).

between the poet and the encyclopaedia, Angela Leighton's definition is useful: form, she writes, is 'abstraction from matter, removed and immaterial [...] at the same time, its whole bent is towards materialisation [...] Form is restless, tendentious, a noun lying in wait for its object'.<sup>111</sup> Thinking back to Hazlitt's fear that the 'object' of the encyclopaedia lies out of reach for the speculative poet, 'encyclopedic form' and 'poetic encyclopaedism' suggest ways of reconciling these two approaches. This synthesis is borne out in Coleridge's work, in which the dialectic between materials and method is paramount.

## II. Poetry and the 'pandect of human knowledge'

### i. Compiling 'Modern Poetry'

Approaches to Coleridge as a compiler tend to focus on his earliest collections. Much of the work included in Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) was composed during Coleridge's adult years, though he characterised it years later as his juvenilia – 'buds of hope' or 'hints of better works to come'.<sup>112</sup> This sense of the prospective is associated both with the poet in the early stages of development and with arrangement of the collection itself: 'There is no easy progress or sense of developing powers through the volume,' David Fairer writes, 'but an unsettling negotiation with its poetic materials – hesitant steps, daring leaps, purposeful strides (and not necessarily in that order) [...] The book was invested in the prospective as much as the achieved.'<sup>113</sup> This does not give rise to a sense of steady maturation, but rather to a disingenuous inconstancy: 'Coleridge chose in effect to veil his own chronological development as a poet, as if to remind himself of his unsteadiness and lack of direction'.<sup>114</sup> The collection works to reorient the contours of chronological development. By contrast, *Sonnets from Various Authors* is a volume that amounts to 'a dramatic "converse" meditating on themes of self and society, friendship and

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<sup>111</sup> Angela Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> *BL*, I, 5-6.

<sup>113</sup> David Fairer, *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 161.

<sup>114</sup> David Fairer, 'Coleridge's Early Poetry, 1790-1796', in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, pp. 359-375 (p. 360).

social action.’<sup>115</sup> The axis of one collection, then, charts individual progression, while the other charts horizontal exchange. In what follows, I chart a different trajectory, one that does not begin with *Sonnets* or *Poems* but with unfulfilled manuscript plans for encyclopaedic histories – ‘buds of hope’ of another kind.

Coleridge’s ambitions for an encyclopaedia had humble beginnings in an unwritten history of English poetry, plotted in 1796 on a manuscript sheet now compiled in the enormous Egerton MS 2800, a large album of posthumously bound sheets held at the British Library. The projected history runs:

English Romances

Chaucer

Spenser

English Ballads

Shakespeare!!!

Milton!!!

Dryden

Modern Poetry..

[...] to conclude with a Philosophical Analysis of Poetry.<sup>116</sup>

There is an almost acerbic disparity in Coleridge’s use of punctuation, from the exclamations to the incidental inadequacy of ‘..’. The headings comprise an assemblage of generic schools, single authors, and periodized groups. Historical poets are disaggregated into authorial units, while contemporary ‘Modern Poetry’ is yoked together on the outskirts of a plan that throws all its emphasis onto an enthusiastic and retrospective canonicity. Already, Coleridge conceives of the connection between ‘Philosophical Analysis’ and the work of the compiled history, but the two kinds of writing are islanded off from one another. Coleridge would return to this venture at various times and to various ends throughout his career, eventually superseding this catalogue with a method that aimed to comprehensively embed ‘philosophical Analysis.’

Coleridge returned to this plan with renewed vigour in 1803, in a series of letters to Robert Southey that make recommendations for the latter’s ‘History of

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<sup>115</sup> Fairer, *Organising Poetry*, p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Literary, political and miscellaneous remains, 1796-1899’, British Library Egerton MS 2800, p. 52.

British Literature’ or ‘*Bibliotheca Britannica*’.<sup>117</sup> These early letters negotiate a scheme that might become Southey’s ‘grand work’, a history comprised of a number of singular biographical treatises dealing with all prominent writers from Chaucer to Sterne, but which would also stretch beyond literary history to include treatises on ‘metaphysics, theology, medicine, alchemy, common, canon, and Roman law’ and a chronological catalogue ‘of all noticeable or extant books’.<sup>118</sup> Its index, completed last, would amount to ‘a pandect of knowledge, alive and swarming with human life, feeling, incident’; its impetus is inchoate and vital, excited at its own prospect, impelled by possibility and undeterred, at least at first, by impracticality – a ‘bud of hope’.<sup>119</sup> This buzzing ‘pandect’ exists (in these manuscript imaginings, at least) at the interface between materials of method, where life and logic coalesce. Such a ‘great work upon English Literature’, Southey reported to William Taylor, ‘is to be published in parts like the Cyclopaedia, two to a volume, in 4to, 40 lines in a page, 300 pages in a volume’.<sup>120</sup> Far exceeding the limits of a ‘History of British Literature’, the monumental plan was abandoned not long after its inception, its publisher concerned over the necessary financial outlay. These tensions between scope, generic differentiation and commercial viability would return in 1817 when Coleridge ventured his own plan.

Poetry, though, occupied quite a different place in the order of the *Bibliotheca* than it would in the proposed *Metropolitana*. The first half of Southey’s work would be organised – as in 1796 – under the heads of great poets, while the second would include a ‘history [...] more flowing, more consecutive, more bibliographical, chronological and complete’ (L 2: 955). Coleridge’s cumulative anaphora pushes this sentence and its ambition to the brink of excess – more, more, more – finally forcing an absolute form (‘complete’) into the realms of relativity, as something that might be continually expanded and improved. This superlative plan offers a corrective to conventional encyclopaedias – for Coleridge, unreadable (and, as it turned out, unwritable) – by holding the principle of chronology at once close and in high suspicion. He suggested to Southey that singular treatises would proceed

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<sup>117</sup> *CL*, II, 955.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *CL*, II, 956. On indexes see Dennis Duncan, ‘Indexes’, *Book Parts*, ed. by Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 196-204.

<sup>120</sup> Kenneth Curry, *Southey* (London: Routledge, 1975), p. 44.

by an internal chronology, but the project as a whole would be more thematised, since it required a ‘bond of connection’ stronger than that of time: ‘Think what strange confusion it will make, if you speak of each book, according to its date, passing from the Epic Poem to a treatment on sore legs’.<sup>121</sup> Instead, Coleridge laid out a plan that might balance the provision of ‘connected trains of thought’ with a ‘delightful miscellany’.<sup>122</sup> Linting between history, encyclopaedia and miscellany, these conjectures provide a training ground for principles that would go on to inform and – as it turned out – undercut Coleridge’s work on the *Metropolitana*, for which the ‘bond of connection’ between parts was paramount. Such a work was sorely needed, Coleridge lamented, given the ‘strange abuse [which] has been made to the word Encyclopaedia! [...] to call a huge unconnected miscellany of the *omne scibile* [everything knowable], an arrangement determined by the accident of initial letters, an Encyclopaedia, is [...] impudent ignorance’.<sup>123</sup> His displeasure lay precisely in the issue of arrangement – alphabetisation, a mere mechanism, was not a strong enough bond with to hold such a ‘pandect’ together.

Soon after, Coleridge declared to Southey that existing encyclopaedias ‘appear to me a worthless monster. What Surgeon, or Physician, professed Student of pure or mixed Mathematics, what Chemist, or Architect, would go to an Encyclopaedia for *his* books?’.<sup>124</sup> The question is not singularly one of practicality, but one of method: in the alphabetised cacophony – how can a physician or mathematician grasp the foundational principles of their discipline? How can they distinguish their practice? In a rare moment of concern for public, utilitarian readership, Coleridge contended that any ‘valuable treatises’ contained within such works are ‘out of their place’ in such miscellaneous compilations which ‘the General Readers’ simply ‘cannot read’ let alone ‘afford’.<sup>125</sup> ‘Familiar’ though the term may be, the encyclopaedia’s ubiquity masks a form as desultory and evasive as it is longstanding. Proper use required a proper order, something sorely lacking in contemporary reference texts, but something too that proved beyond the friends’

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<sup>121</sup> *CL*, II, 963.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *CL*, II, 956.

<sup>124</sup> *CL*, II, 962.

<sup>125</sup> *CL*, 963.

abilities: Southey diplomatically edged away from the project, a Coleridgean plan characteristically ‘too good, too gigantic, too beyond [his] powers.’<sup>126</sup>

‘Modern Poetry’ might be briefly and ambivalently annexed at the end of a history, but taken on its own terms it is a heterogenous category that poses a number of problems, many of which became gradually more immediate for Coleridge as he pursued a plan for collecting together his own works. Writing to his publisher John Murray in 1812, Samuel Taylor Coleridge sketched the ‘*physiognomy*’ of a new two-volume collection that worked to assimilate his fugitive writings within the frame of the more discerning codex: ‘In the huge cumulus of my Memorandum & commonplace Books I have at least two respectable Volumes’.<sup>127</sup> A proposed title page for *Exotics Naturalised* followed:

i.e. impressive Sentiments, Reflections, Aphorisms, Anecdotes, Epigrams, short Tales and eminently beautiful Passages from German, Spanish, and Italian Words, of which no English Translations Exist; - the whole collected, translated and arranged by S. T. Coleridge, with the explanatory, critical, and biographical notes and notices by the Collector.<sup>128</sup>

This epistolary plan represents a half-way house that mediates the ‘*idea* of the work’ and the ‘Specimen of it as realized.’ *Exotics Naturalised* marks a clear departure from the earlier prospects of 1796 and 1803 and is instead immediately recognizable as a contribution to the genre of miscellanies, explicitly emphasizing a sense of individual works as fugitives from the occasion of their composition to their posterity in the collection. Contrary to the canonizing work of the history and the disciplinary work of the *Bibliotheca*, the ‘huge cumulus’ of Coleridge’s notebooks conspire to project a printed miscellany in its own image, supplemented by paratextual critical apparatus that might explain and ‘naturalise’ their desultory materials. Coleridge’s proposed title explicitly registers the processes of assimilation integral to the movement of text from manuscript to print, while also exhibiting a kind of self-fashioning not often associated with his persona: Coleridge fashions himself neither as an author nor poet but a ‘Collector’.

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<sup>126</sup> Quoted in Henry Duff Triall, *Coleridge* (London: Macmillan, 1884), p. 103.

<sup>127</sup> *CL*, III, 417.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

ii. *The Statesman's Manual: 'Multiscience without Method'*

*The Statesman's Manual* is an important link between Coleridge's unfulfilled plans, his 'Sibylline Leaves of newspaper essays', the *Sibylline Leaves* of his published poetry collection, and his writings on method. In it, Coleridge presents a vision in opposition to the 'mechanic philosophy' that comprised the 'general contagion' of the times, a 'disguised and decorous *epicureanism*' that had been devilishly '*transvenomed*' [sic] from seventeenth-century atomism to eighteenth-century empiricism, fanning the flames of the 'madhouse of Jacobinism.'<sup>129</sup> Ian Balfour describes Coleridge's *Lay Sermons*, of which *The Statesman's Manual* is the first, as 'one version of the elusive encyclopaedic text of which Coleridge often dreamed' – elusive because this project was never completed; encyclopaedic in its pairing of political and theological teaching with the 'predictions' of 'permanent prophecies' and 'eternal truths [...] [to] teach the science of the future in its perpetual elements'.<sup>130</sup> This ambition of permanence works by curiously fugitive means. On the fly leaves of a copy of *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge wrote that the Appendix to the work 'is by far the most miscellaneous and desultory of all my writings. It had a right to be such: for it professes [*sic*] to be nothing more than a maniple or handful of loose flowers, a string of hints and materials for reflection [...] to rouse and stimulate the mind – to set the reader thinking'.<sup>131</sup> Drawing once again on the methods and metaphoric of the poetry anthology, Coleridge argued that the diffuse and digressive structure of the Appendix had an intrinsically didactic value, even more so than could be achieved through 'a connected train of proofs and arguments'.<sup>132</sup> The note goes on to propose a cluster of keywords that might provide 'Common Heading[s] for these Essays' (the sermons): reason, understanding, sense,

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<sup>129</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. by R. J. White (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 88. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *LS* in footnotes. Amanda Jo Goldstein positions this passage as a key turn in organicism and Romantic biopoetics, see *Sweet Science: Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2017), pp. 18-19.

<sup>130</sup> Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 253; *LS*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>131</sup> *LS*, pp. 114n2.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*



imagination, conscience and ideas.<sup>133</sup> Through the elucidation of these categories, the sermons ‘tend [to] a common result, [and] cannot justly be regarded as a motley ~~Crew~~ or Patchwork, a farrago of heterogenous Effusions! Even tho’ the form and sequence were more aphorismic and disconnected’.<sup>134</sup> Thus, as in poetry, logic is predicated on fugitive causes. Coleridge distinguished between the ‘loose flowers’ – rousing and provocative – and the ‘farrago’, implying that there are varying forms and effects of miscellaneity. This same ‘test’, Coleridge went on to assert, might be applied to all of his most recent published work, including a ‘Series of Letters on as many different important Subjects and of permanent interest, morally, politically and historically, in the Morning Post and Courier’.<sup>135</sup> Coleridge’s ‘Sibylline Leaves of Newspaper Essays’ are invoked again, but this time as a constitutive aspect of the poet’s voluminous canon. Through this invocation Coleridge defended his corpus against those reviewers who persistently caricatured him as a ‘wild and eccentric Genius that has published nothing but fragments & splendid Tirades’.<sup>136</sup> Coleridge mounted a defence against this accusation not by distancing his writing from fragmentary forms, but by arguing for the political and theological learning that might be gleaned from these ‘handful of loose flowers’.

*The Statesman’s Manual* introduces the sibyl as the classical precedent for Coleridge’s ‘aphorismic and disconnected’ method. Half-way through the sermon Coleridge turns to Pagan sources and argues that ‘the main hindrance to the use of the Scriptures, as your Manual, lies in the notion that you are already acquainted with its contents. Something *new* must be presented to you, wholly new and wholly out of yourselves’.<sup>137</sup> This combinatory power of the ‘union of old and new’ grounds Coleridge’s defence of his miscellaneous method. The first of two ‘great examples’ that follow is Heraclitus, himself infamous for fragmentary and aphoristic writing; the second is the Augustan poet Horace.<sup>138</sup> Coleridge’s engagement with Heraclitus in *The Statesman’s Manual* is implicitly recuperative and even defensive, positioning the writer of fugitive texts as an exemplary authority. As Adam Roberts points out,

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> *LS*, p. 25.

<sup>138</sup> *LS*, p. 26.

Heraclitus is ‘the first great philosopher of the *logos*, a much-debated principle of “order” or “organisation”’, and a theorist of flux and fluidity whose texts are deliberately fugitive – epigrams are always already fragmentary and suggestive.<sup>139</sup> According to Coleridge: ‘in Heraclitus it is all in perpetual Genesis’.<sup>140</sup> Heraclitus and Horace are ‘removed from each other by many centuries and not more distant in their ages than in their characters and situations’.<sup>141</sup> This temporal distance underpins the logic that Coleridge crystallised in his ‘Essays on Method’, that ‘things the most remote and diverse in time, place, and outward circumstance, are brought into mental contiguity and succession, the more *striking* as the less expected.’<sup>142</sup> Fugitive knowledge works by creating contiguity from seeming disorder, so that ‘something *new*’ can be brought to bear on ‘the archives of the Old Testament’.<sup>143</sup>

This combinatory power characterises Coleridge’s invocation of the Sibyl in *The Statesman’s Manual*. R. J. White notes that Coleridge spliced together two fragments from Heraclitus in the sermon, both from Friedrich Schleiermacher’s ‘Herakleitos’, an article that served as the first comprehensive critical edition of Heraclitus, published in 1807 in the *Museum der Alterthums-Wissenschaft*.<sup>144</sup> Coleridge reproduced the fragment in ancient Greek followed by a translation in English, positioning the sibyl as a sublime mediator, not unlike poetry itself in his later divisions of disciplines for the *Metropolitana*:

Multiscience (or a variety and quantity of acquired knowledge) does not teach intelligence. But the SIBYLL with wild enthusiastic mouth shrilling forth unmirthful, inornate and unperfumed truths reaches to a thousand years with her voice through the power of God.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Adam Roberts, ‘Coleridge’s Classicised Politics’, *Greek and Roman Classics in the British Struggle for Social Reform*, ed. by Henry Stead and Edith Hall (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 37-55 (p. 51).

<sup>140</sup> *M*, V, 714. Quoted in Kathleen Wheeler, ‘Coleridge’s Theory of Imagination: A Hegelian Solution to Kant?’, in *The Interpretation of Belief: Coleridge, Schleiermacher and Romanticism*, ed. by David Jasper (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1986), 16-41 (34).

<sup>141</sup> *LS*, p. 26.

<sup>142</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *F*, II, 455.

<sup>143</sup> *LS*, p. 8.

<sup>144</sup> *LS*, p. 25n4.

<sup>145</sup> *LS*, p. 26. See Emily Pillinger, *Cassandra and the Poetics of Prophecy in Greek and Latin Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 166. Later, Coleridge

For Coleridge, ‘Multiscience’ represents a kind of polymathy fuelled by desultory and ‘collectaneous Learning [sic]’.<sup>146</sup> The passage in the *Statesman’s Manual* hinges on the ‘consubstantial’ or mediating function that the Sibyl serves: both the Sibyl and the text are ‘the living *educts* of the Imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors’.<sup>147</sup> Here Coleridge exercises the poetic encyclopaedism that he will attempt to fully develop in his plan for the *Metropolitana*: more than the mechanical heft of ‘Multiscience’ the encyclopaedia must reach forward through all of time, mediating knowledge through a Heraclitean reconciliation of seeming opposites – wild and divine truths. In *The Friend* Coleridge wrote: ‘Every Power in Nature and in Spirit must evolve an opposite as the sole means and condition of its manifestation [...] This is the universal Law of Polarity or essential dualism, first promulgated by Heraclitus.’<sup>148</sup> It is this dialectical polarity that characterises the uniquely chiasmatic temporality of scripture in *The Statesman’s Manual*: ‘the Sacred History becomes prophetic, the Sacred Prophecies historical’.<sup>149</sup> Scripture is both ‘temporary’ and ‘perpetual’; the ‘portrait’ and the ‘ideal’.<sup>150</sup>

iii. *Sibylline Leaves*: ‘How comes this poem here?’

Coleridge first alluded to the sibyl’s Virgilian roots in the *Statesman’s Manual*: ‘But alas! the halls of old philosophy have been so long deserted that we circle them at a shy distance as the haunt of Phantoms and Chimeras. The sacred Grove of

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wrote that this was ‘one of the few genuine fragments’ from Heraclitus and one in which the Sibyl is ‘so magnificently characterised’, *M*, VI, 5.

<sup>146</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Note on Spinoza’, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, II, 609-624 (p. 614).

<sup>147</sup> *LS*, p. 29. See also Nichols Halmi, *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 99-133.

<sup>148</sup> Coleridge, *The Friend*, II, 479. See Kathleen Wheeler, *Sources, Processes, Methods in Coleridge’s Biographia Literaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 47-48.

<sup>149</sup> *LS*, p. 29.

<sup>150</sup> *LS*, p. 30.

Academus is held in like regard with the unfoodful trees in the shadowy world of Maro [Virgil] that had a dream attached to every leaf. The very terms of ancient wisdom are worn out, or (far worse!) stamped on baser metal'.<sup>151</sup> The sibyl's leaves – unripe and oneiric – are a confounding medium, the lofty counterpart to 'baser metal' but similarly fruitless in furnishing the reader with 'the power of an idea', transcendent and singular. Is the sibyl of the poetry collection, then, anything other than the 'practical anachronism' derided in the *Statesman's Manual*?<sup>152</sup> Neither history nor miscellany, is there an underlying method shaping the arrangement of the 1817 poetry collection, and how does their compilation relate to Coleridge's simultaneous dream of an encyclopaedia?

*Sibylline Leaves* is not furnished with a contents page or index. It begins with a short preface, three juvenile poems that precede an errata sheet, and two further poems ('The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' followed by a dramatic fragment), before presenting works which mostly fall under four main headings: 'Poems occasioned by political events, or feelings connected with them'; 'love poems'; 'meditative poems in blank verse'; and finally 'Odes and miscellaneous poems'. 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter, a War Eclogue', and 'The Three Graves' are islanded awkwardly in the middle. A piece in the *Monthly Review* of 1819 takes aim at Coleridge's habit of 'not classing his compositions better', a failing that is apparently symptomatic of Coleridge's tendency towards 'mismanagement'.<sup>153</sup> Coleridge, we are told, 'has never endeavoured to produce one great, sustained work [...] he has never concentrated his scattered rays of intellect into one luminous body, round which the minor efforts of his genius might have revolved in calm and obedient brilliancy'.<sup>154</sup> As far as this reviewer is concerned, he has – like Wordsworth before him – failed in conquering the most 'commonplace arts of bookmaking': that of putting poems in their proper place.<sup>155</sup> The reviewer is most disgruntled by the collection's fugitive aspects, and argues that the poems are marred by brevity and by their erratic publication history. The review conjectures further:

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<sup>151</sup> *LS*, p. 43.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Unsigned review, 'Coleridge's Sibylline Leaves', *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal Enlarged* (January 1819), 24-38 (p. 25).

<sup>154</sup> 'Coleridge's Sibylline Leaves', p. 26.

<sup>155</sup> 'Coleridge's Sibylline Leaves', p. 25.

[H]ad the “Ancient Mariner”, or the “Christabel”, been dilated into metrical romances, first published in quarto, (some two or three hundred copies *at the most*) and then rapidly succeeded by several editions, of four or five hundred each, in octavo [...] or had one *well-seasoned* edition re-appeared, like an old friend [...] wonders might have been worked in this way for Mr Coleridge’s popularity.<sup>156</sup>

The collection thus represents a host of missed opportunities and misshapen ventures, not a book to come but a book undone. Coleridge’s writings – buried, scattered and suffered into being – can neither be properly known nor properly familiar, much unlike our ‘old friend,’ the book: the ‘exotics’ have not been ‘naturalized.’<sup>157</sup> There should have been a greater effort of authorial and commercial restraint, and a fidelity to quarto and octavo over and above a host of unfamiliar scraps and patches. Here, ubiquity and diversity supposedly mitigate against popularity. But there also seems to be something more going on here – a persistent reimagining of the scope and confines of printed volumes – from Coleridge’s ‘History’, ‘alive and swarming with life’, to the ‘well-seasoned edition’ that never was.

William Hazlitt, in a review of *Biographia Literaria* – which Coleridge had initially planned as an introduction to the *Sibylline Leaves*, and which was also published in 1817 – goes further, and identifies a fugitive tendency in Coleridge’s very thinking. *Biographia* is hindered by the ‘combined forces of poetic levity and metaphysic bathos’. He laments that Coleridge himself has been:

Trying to fly, not in the air, but under ground – playing at hawk and buzzard between sense and nonsense, floating or sinking in fine Kantian categories [...] quitting the plain ground of “history and particular facts” for the first butterfly theory, fancy-bred from the maggots of his brain, going up in the air-balloon filled with fetid gas [...] and coming down in a parachute made of the soiled and fashionable leaves of the *Morning Post*.<sup>158</sup>

The invective spans a wide vertical axis, with the chastised poet at once subterranean and vaulting, sinking and suspended. From the vermicular maggot to

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> William Hazlitt, ‘Review of *Biographia Literaria*’, *The Edinburgh Review*, 28 (August 1817), pp. 488-515 (p. 491).

the pretended hawk, Hazlitt's attention to crawling and soaring details embodies precisely the 'crowd and variety' which his review rejects, while his disdain for epistemological flatulence parodies Coleridge's Aeolian sublime. Fugaceous metaphors abound in caricaturing the interplay between 'Sibylline Leaves of Newspaper Essays' and the *Sibylline Leaves* of the book.

In the opening lines of *Sibylline Leaves*' short preface, Coleridge acknowledged the fugitive nature of the book's contents: 'The following collection has been entitled Sibylline Leaves, in allusion to the fragmentary and widely scattered state in which they have been long suffered to remain.'<sup>159</sup> Indeed, many copies of *Sibylline Leaves* defy the 'stubborn commercial uniformity' of the printed book, as Coleridge inscribed 'at least thirty presentation copies with insertions, corrections, comments, and annotations that vary from copy to copy.'<sup>160</sup> Contemporary reviewers expected a publication practice that represented a cumulative growth from quarto to octavo to 'well-seasoned edition, reappeared, like an old friend with a new face, with sundry fresh title-pages'.<sup>161</sup> Instead, the poet:

Compresses matter enough for a handsome volume into a two-penny pamphlet; then he lets a friend bury his jewels in a heap of sand of his own; then he scatters his "Sibylline Leaves" over a half a hundred perishable news-papers and magazines; then he suffers a manuscript poem to be handed about among his friends till all its bloom is brushed off.<sup>162</sup>

The review figures newspaper publication and manuscript circulation among friends as the harbinger of alienation, rather than intimacy or popularity. Published in 1819, the review's depiction of bibliographic sociability directly inverts the eighteenth-century sense of politeness 'owing to Liberty'. A century earlier, Shaftesbury had described sociability as a process by which people 'polish one another, and rub off

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<sup>159</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Sibylline Leaves* (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), i.

<sup>160</sup> Harriet Kramer Linkin, 'The Destabilising Materiality of the Autograph for Blake, Coleridge, and Tighe', in *Material Transgressions: Beyond Romantic Bodies, Genders, Things*, ed. by Kate Singer, Ashley Cross, and Susanne L. Barnett (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 31-53 (p. 39).

<sup>161</sup> Unsigned review, 'Sibylline Leaves, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge', *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal, Enlarged*, 88 (January 1819), 24-38 (p. 25).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

[their] Corners and rough Sides by a sort of *amicable Collision*.<sup>163</sup> By contrast, Coleridge's *Monthly* reviewer depicts a kind of careless erosion of the fugitive text: the further it travels, the more its 'bloom' is dulled. The hermetic and 'well-seasoned edition' is implicitly mature and erudite; it serves a disciplinary function as it organizes and establishes a poet's works within proper bounds. David Simpson considers the reception of Shaftesbury's metaphor in relation to Coleridge's and Southey's 'idealist schemes' for a Pantisocracy: the language of 'amicable collision' had retained a place in articulations of early nineteenth-century sociability, 'but it seems increasingly out of place and out of time, a utopian gesture that is more and more hemmed in by the complexities of dealing with truly strange strangers.'<sup>164</sup> Not quite an 'old friend,' Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves* – his first and only tentatively complete collection – is itself a 'strange stranger,' a slim volume comprised of fugitive texts gathered under the auspices of the enigmatic Sibyl.

The association of 'strange strangers' is a defining aspect of a volume that mixes republished works with those that are in print for the first time, an aspect that is apparent at the level of the book's structure and formally, within individual poems. *Sibylline Leaves* is not without method, as Coleridge's inscriptions in his proof copies attest. Finding his 'Frost at Midnight' mistakenly placed in the section 'Poems Occasioned by Political Events or Feelings Connected with Them' – alongside 'Fears in Solitude' and 'France: An Ode' – Coleridge commented in a note at the top of the page:

How comes this Poem here? What has it to do with the Poems connected with Political Events? – I seem quite confident, that it will not be found in my arranged Catalogue of those sent to you -. It *must*, however, be deferred till it[s] proper place among my domestic & meditative Poems.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 'An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour', *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols (London: 1711), I, pp. 59-150 (p. 64).

<sup>164</sup> David Simpson, *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 8.

<sup>165</sup> Reproduced in Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 55. This edition of the proofs, what Stillinger refers to as 'version 5', is held at Yale (CoS 610). The poem is on pp. 74-7, with the note on p. 74, pages later occupied by 'Fears in Solitude' and 'Recantation'.

The sequence of poems is subject to the organisational direction of the authorial ‘Catalogue’, a mechanism for information management more commonly associated with books in a library or items for auction.<sup>166</sup> There is a slight irony here as, in *Biographia Literaria* (originally intended as an introduction to *Sibylline Leaves*), Coleridge wrote of *Lyrical Ballads* that it was ‘unjust to fix the attention of a few separate and insulted poems with as much aversion, as if they had been so many plague spots on the *whole work*, instead of passing them over in silence, as so much blank paper, or leaves of a booksellers’ catalogue’.<sup>167</sup> Two opposing kinds of ‘catalogue’ shape encounters with poetic collections, variously regulating readers’ attention. ‘Frost at Midnight’ is accordingly moved to its rightful ‘place’ as the closing work in a section entitled ‘Meditative Poems in Blank Verse’, following ‘The Nightingale’. That this is the poem’s ‘proper place’ might not be immediately apparent to readers, but for Coleridge – asserting himself at once as both author and editor – the method determining its placement is paramount.

The first recollection of childhood that occurs in ‘Frost at Midnight’ is marked by the apprehension of another more portentous ‘strange stranger’. The second verse paragraph begins with retrospection:

How oft, at school, with most believing mind,  
 Presageful, have I gaz’d upon the bars,  
 To watch that fluttering *stranger!* [...]
 Save if the door half open’d, and I snatch’d  
 A hasty glance, and still my heart leapt up,  
 For still I hop’d to see the *stranger’s* face,  
 Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,  
 My playmate when we both were cloth’d alike! (ll.23-44)

All versions but the first remove the footnote to line 15, the first instance of the fluttering film at the grate. This aid explained that ‘[i]n all parts of the kingdom these Films are called *strangers*, and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent

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<sup>166</sup> On what ‘Frost at Midnight’ has ‘to do’ with politics, see Paul Magnuson, ‘The Politics of ‘Frost at Midnight’, in *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 67-95; Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation*, pp. 158-60.

<sup>167</sup> *BL*, I, 74.



friend'.<sup>168</sup> The permanent removal of the footnote in all editions but the most scholarly folds the pun in on itself: with the change in idiom this reference is likely to be missed, and the stranger (appropriately enough) never fully recognised. The latter italicised 'stranger' is crowded by familiar, even 'beloved' 'face[s]'. In this line-up which progresses in intimacy by slight degrees (stranger, townsman, aunt, sister, friend) the hope for visitation is also the feeling of recognition, the gradual assimilation of the 'stranger' into a group of those who are well known, even loved. The poem's vertiginous collapsing of space between reality and resemblance – the mountain and the mountain-like cloud – also plays its part in this mingling of the familiar and strange. The fluttering stranger calls upon and orders an assembly of readers just as the collection gathers together the poet's sibylline leaves.

Coleridge's many revised versions and corrective annotations tended to shorten rather than expand 'Frost at Midnight' (it ranged from eighty-three to seventy-five lines in length), eventually cutting the final six lines altogether, an emendation that radically alters the poem's conceptual and emotive trajectory. Where the version from *Sibylline Leaves* onwards ends with 'silent icicles, / Quietly shining to the quiet Moon', the earlier went on:

Like those, my babe! Which, ere to-morrow's warmth  
 Have capp'd their sharp keen points with pendulous drops,  
 Will catch thine eye, and with their novelty  
 Suspend thy little soul; then make thee shout,  
 And stretch and flutter from thy mother's arms  
 As thou would'st fly for very eagerness.<sup>169</sup>

Coleridge noted in a copy of this earlier, longer version that he would 'omit' these last six lines' because 'they destroy the rondo, and return upon itself of the Poem. Poems of this kind & length ought to lie coiled with its tail round its head [sic]' – another iteration of the ouroboros, an ending without a beginning in perpetual circularity.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, when Coleridge sent the longer version of the poem to Southey in 1799 he wrote that it would not be the worse for 'a little Trimming'.<sup>171</sup> This act of

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<sup>168</sup> Stillinger, *Textual Instability*, p.53.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted in Stillinger, p. 54.

<sup>171</sup> *CL*, I, 552.

authorial snipping has been generally well-received, with Humphrey House declaring in his 1952 lectures on Coleridge that ‘the decision to stop at line 74 was one of the best artistic decisions Coleridge ever made’: the poem’s wings are successfully clipped.<sup>172</sup>

The removal of the last lines markedly shifts the poem’s centre of balance, placing an emphasis on the first and final occurrences of the ‘ministry of frost’ (l. 1 and l. 71) which anchor the poem’s ‘extreme silentness’ (l. 10), ‘inaudible as dreams’ (l. 13). Harold Bloom infers a parallel between the ‘secret ministry of frost’, which frames this famous conversation poem, and the ‘secret ministry of memory, for both bind together apparently disparate phenomena in an imaginative unity’.<sup>173</sup> By ‘bind’, Bloom simply means book-end: the secret repeats at the very beginning and the very end and thus produces ‘unity’. But this is a restless calm which ‘disturbs’ (l. 8) and ‘vexes’ (l. 9) more, perhaps, than it unifies. With this revised ending, the ‘unquiet’ ‘film, which flutter’d on the grate’ (l. 15), has become the poem’s most lasting image perhaps because the rather more energetic ‘flutter’ of the child of its original last lines has been altogether removed. Where the original ending remains, the frame widens to place emphasis on the paroxysmic opening ‘cry’ which ‘came loud – and hark, again! Loud as before’ (l. 3), and the recalcitrant, conclusive ‘shout’ (l. 82) quoted above. The invective against the original ending is perhaps a suggestion that the child and the poem alike should ‘lie coiled’ and sit quiet, leaving the resulting soundscape with only barely audible ‘traces of the blast’ (l. 71). Assimilation into the collection necessitates the eclipse of sound and sensation by quiet sense and stillness, a dampening which seems strange in this particular sequence: ‘Frost at Midnight’ is islanded silently between the ‘sounds more sweet than all’ of ‘The Nightingale’, and the bustle of the ‘dramatic’, ‘ballad-tale’ ‘Three Graves’.

After a period of retrospection, the eventually discarded ending voices the stirrings and strivings of a hypothetical future wherein ‘thou would’st fly for very eagerness’ but is held back. The verbal trajectory of the poem’s last lines (‘suspend’, ‘stretch’, ‘flutter’, ‘fly’) casts the child almost as a butterfly, caught on the wheel of

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<sup>172</sup> Humphrey House, *Coleridge: The Clark Lectures, 1951-52* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 82.

<sup>173</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 204-5.

Coleridge's insistent 'rondo'. The scene evokes the prospective logic that Coleridge describes in Chapter XII of *Biographia Literaria*: 'The wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar [...] They know and feel, that the *potential* works *in* them, even as the *actual* works on them.'<sup>174</sup> When these closing lines are removed, any prospective hopefulness is relegated to the poem's earlier recollection of childhood, which presents a tension between a downward-cast eye 'Fix'd with mock study on my swimming book' (l. 38) and a furtive eye which 'snatch'd / A hasty glance' (ll.39-40) beyond his schoolwork. The familiar but ethereal vertigo of the 'swimming book' denotes a book that is both seen and not-seen, a way of figuring a codex form that might incorporate both motion and stillness. Its water seems almost to overflow into the retracted ending to form the 'pendulous drops' which drip onto the eyelids of the 'flutter[ing]' child.

This performance of discontinuous reading – between parts of the poem within and outside of the volume at hand – is apt for a text numbered among *Sibylline Leaves*, recalcitrant fragments that resist interpretation. 'Frost at Midnight', though, seems to offer a corrective to the wild protestations of the sibyl, presenting instead its vision of a text 'unhelped by any wind' (l. 2). Zachary Sng describes 'Frost at Midnight's 'accretion through repetition' as an 'endlessly extensible process' that connects its serpentine sibilance to the reappearance of single words and to the recurrence of an entire phrase, such as in lines 9 and 10 which end, respectively, 'sea, hill, and wood' and 'sea, and hill, and wood'.<sup>175</sup> Sng, however, relegates the imposition of the second 'and' in l.10 which disturbs the exact repetition, to an 'asemantic' twitch that 'signals nothing but the linguistic operation of adding'.<sup>176</sup> To the contrary, Ewan Jones argues that just as the 'and' has significant metrical implications which 'tip the line into excess', so too does it play semantic mischief with the repeated homophone 'sea', promising a sight that the line simultaneously withholds.<sup>177</sup> This particular form of organisation moves beyond

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<sup>174</sup> *BL*, p. 242. On Coleridge's notebooks see Jillian M. Hess, 'Coleridge's Fly-Catchers: Adapting Commonplace-Book Form', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73.3 (2012), 463-483.

<sup>175</sup> Zachary Sng, *The Rhetoric of Error from Locke to Kleist* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 69.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Ewan Jones, "'Less Gross than Bodily": Materiality in Coleridge's Conversation Poem Sequence', *The Review of English Studies*, 64.264 (2012), 1-22 (pp. 9-10).

what Sng reads as endless ‘mirroring’ or ‘doubling’, a ‘purely linguistic duplication of accumulation’ to formally reflect on the poem’s themes and problems.<sup>178</sup>

An unsigned review in the *Literary Gazette* followed close on tail of *Sibylline Leaves*’ publication and set the tone for other responses and for the reception of Coleridge’s sibylline persona in general. This reviewer turned to ‘our Dictionary’ – in this case, Samuel Johnson’s – to gloss ‘Sibylline’ as ‘of or belonging to a prophethess’<sup>179</sup>:

The word cannot therefore, we hope, be appropriated by Mr Coleridge, who is not so humble a poet as to assume, voluntarily, the character of an old woman. But on refreshing our classic memory we grasp the very essence and soul of this mysterious title. The Sibyl wrote her prophecies on leaves; so does Mr. Coleridge his verses – the prophecies of the Sibyl became incomprehensible, if not instantly gathered; so does the sense of Mr. Coleridge’s poetry; the Sibyl asked the same price from Tarquin for her books when in 9, 6 and 3 volumes; so does Mr. Coleridge for his, when scattered over sundry publications, and now as collected into one – as soon as the Sibyl had concluded the bargain she vanished [...] the Sibylline books were preserved by Kings [...] even so does Mr. Coleridge look to delight Monarchs.<sup>179</sup>

For this sardonic reviewer, the title presented a bathetic ‘stumbling block’ at the book’s ‘threshold’, a ‘recondite enigma’ that forced ‘time pressed Critics’ to turn to the classics before they could turn to the poetry. The binary between the whole and the fragmentary is intuitive: coming together facilitates meaning while dispersal has a centrifugal effect that inhibits meaning. Yet, in his plan for an encyclopaedia, Coleridge shapes his sense of method from fragments.

### III. The book as ‘living oracle’

#### i. Bedevilling the encyclopaedia

Coleridge, as we have seen, is restlessly captivated by the potential of encyclopaedism to resolve some of the contradictions at work in the organisation of

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<sup>178</sup> Sng, *The Rhetoric of Error*, p. 69.

<sup>179</sup> ‘Sibylline Leaves’, *The Literary Gazette* (p. 49).

knowledge, namely – how to reconcile the part to the whole, and how to situate readers and authors in relation both to books and to scattered knowledge. His work on the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* represented a departure from convention and an investment in innovation, working to describe an efficacious method grounded in history. Before his intervention, he perceived the word ‘encyclopaedia’ as little more than a ‘mere *proper name*’: ‘It has been retained in title pages, as an old stone, with the arms of a family long extinct, is sometimes, as an ornament or a curiosity, cemented to the wall, or over the doorway of a new building.’<sup>180</sup> Denise Riley identifies ‘lapidary style’ with ‘overtones of dignity, gravitas, reliability and endurance’, but for Coleridge it represented an object of antiquarian fascination, a spoliated fragment that might embellish a structure but which does little to define or support it.<sup>181</sup> Its counterpart is the ‘subtile [sic], cementing, and subterraneous’ power of method – not an ‘ornament or a curiosity’ but the binding agent that holds parts together as a whole.<sup>182</sup> Fragments, in Coleridge’s theory of method, work in a very different way, as constitutive components of the ‘materials of method’. In what follows, I first set out Coleridge’s disagreements with his editors over the structure of the encyclopaedia, locating a conflict between the ambitions of method and the chaos of miscellaneity at the heart of the project’s failure. I then focus on one particular scene of reading at the heart of the Coleridge’s introduction, which connects this project to the poet’s broader interest in sibylline books.

The twists and turns of the *Metropolitana*’s early publication history and its tangled temporality are well represented by the epigraph to its Prospectus, which comprises a spliced excerpt in Ancient Greek – Plato’s *Parmenides* with an interloping phrase from Aristotle marked below in brackets:

Because before the beginning another beginning always appears; and after the end a further end remains; <some things are lacking and some in excess>. The whole must, it seems to me, be broken up into small fractions. Must not things also appear to be in contact with one another and separated, and in every sort of motion and in every sort of rest, and coming into being

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<sup>180</sup> *SWF*, I, 579.

<sup>181</sup> Denise Riley, ‘On the Lapidary Style’, *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 28.1 (2017), 17-36.

<sup>182</sup> *SWF*, I, 630.

and perishing, and neither of the two, if the many exist and the one does not.<sup>183</sup>

This balance between motion and rest, and between the fraction and the whole perfectly illustrates the tensions at the heart of fugitive knowledge. In his introduction to the *Metropolitana*, Coleridge elaborated on this relationship between fragmentation and methodisation by asking:

What is that which first strikes us, and strikes us at once, in a man of education, and which, among educated men, so instantly distinguishes the man of superior mind [...] It is the unpremeditated evidently habitual *arrangement* of his words, flowing spontaneously and necessarily from the clearness of the leading idea; from it they obtain a habit of foreseeing [...] however irregular and desultory the conversation may happen to be, there is *Method* in the fragments.<sup>184</sup>

Coleridge's man of method behaves as a subtle corrective to the sibyl who spreads out her leaves at the opening of her cave, allowing them to fly in disorder. But rather than departing from the fragment, Coleridge's redoubles his investment in scattered knowledge, instinctive foresight and prophetic reach: 'How many such instances occur in history, where the *ideas* of nature (presented to chosen minds by a Higher Power than nature herself) suddenly unfold, as it were, in prophetic succession'.<sup>185</sup> The parenthetical 'as it were' emphasizes the verbal metaphor, undercutting the contingency of events that might seem to 'suddenly unfold' and investing efficacy in the power of a specifically 'prophetic succession'. It is this 'habit of foreseeing' that distinguishes 'prophetic succession' from mere sequence. Coleridge thus recuperates and tames the oracular powers elsewhere associated with the sibyl, shaping spontaneity into succession in order that a 'spontaneous and uncertain production of circumstances' might cohere as a 'manifestation of intellect'.<sup>186</sup>

The interminable temporality of the encyclopaedia, volume after volume, is – to borrow from an essay in the *Monthly Review* – a project that presents a 'thousand

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<sup>183</sup> *SWF*, I, 578. H. N. Fowler's translation and punctuation given here is taken from H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson: the angle brackets indicate the phrase from Aristotle.

<sup>184</sup> *SWF*, 638. On Coleridge's own 'desultory' habit of mind see Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 96; Seamus Perry, 'Coleridge's Desultoriness', *Studies in Romanticism*, 59.1 (2020), 15-34.

<sup>185</sup> *SWF*, I, 639.

<sup>186</sup> *SWF*, I, 630.

little beginnings that tread the heels of the safest conclusion [...] [where] there is no getting at the last of our never-ending, still-beginning language.’<sup>187</sup> Unfortunately for Coleridge, greatly in need of money and frustrated by the interventions of his publisher, his plan for the arrangement of the *Metropolitana* never came to fruition: ‘after the end a further end remains’.<sup>188</sup> The order and arrangement of Coleridge’s proposed plan was a matter of deep contention between the poet and his publishers. Coleridge had intended the work to be comprised of eight ‘divisions’ which were quickly reduced to four by his editors (initially the Reverend Thomas Curtis and philologist John Stoddart) and without his blessing: the ‘pure sciences’, the ‘mixed and applied sciences’, a ‘biographical and historical’ part, and a ‘concluding or miscellaneous part’ which would contain a ‘Philosophical and Etymological Lexicon of the English Language’. Coleridge’s scheme, to the contrary, had intended to resolve the opposition between the material and ideal encyclopaedia, an ends to which poetry and the fine arts were a key means. As Jon Klancher has described, for Coleridge ‘The great role of the “Fine Arts” was to mediate these sides of science, idea-based and practice-based, by acting as both ideal and experiential at once.’<sup>189</sup> Neither the realm of the ideal nor the material could exist by their own ‘insulated character’, rather harmony lie in mutual connection and dependency.

Coleridge had projected the *Metropolitana* would run to twenty-five volumes, but its forty-ninth was completed long after and under new management in 1845. Reverend Smedley, an editor presiding over later editions, maintained that alphabetical organisation would be ‘unphilosophical, and inconvenient’, though his own approach was somewhat haphazard.<sup>190</sup> Smedley suggested that the collaborators should ‘throw upon paper, the names at least, of the subjects upon which [they] are to treat – these, when once obtained, will readily form themselves into *some* classification (or rather into many) – and we may *then* make choice of, if not abstractedly the best, that which practically affords more facilities’.<sup>191</sup> For Coleridge,

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<sup>187</sup> ‘The Last Book: With a Dissertation of Last Things in General’, *Monthly Magazine, or British Register of Literature, Sciences, and the Belles-Lettres* (July-December 1826), 137-144 (p. 137).

<sup>188</sup> *SWF*, I, 578.

<sup>189</sup> Jon Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences*, p. 169.

<sup>190</sup> Reverend Smedley, editor of “The Encyclopaedia *Metropolitana*”: Correspondence with C. Baggage: 1825-1834, BL Add. MS 37,183, f. 306.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

ideas ambivalently thrown together, without the ‘habit of foreseeing’, could not spontaneously organise themselves in this way: this is the difference between the mechanical arrangement of the encyclopaedia and prophetic succession by which ‘truths in the future tense’ might be anticipated and accounted for within the present work. ‘For in all things, we all of us arrange in the same way’, Coleridge wrote pleadingly to his editor, Thomas Curtis, in May 1817: ‘A and the opposite of A (say, B) and that in which A and B co-exist [...] Consequently. Agriculture must follow the Tract on Political Economy, and precede the Manufactures and Handicrafts’: sections of the encyclopaedia must ‘grow naturally’ out from one another.<sup>192</sup> The most significant disagreement was over the absorption of a section on the fine arts into the applied sciences, closely followed by the decision to publish a small part of each division together simultaneously, rather than moving through each section singularly and consecutively as intended. This latter change posed a direct challenge to Coleridge’s sense of progressive development. He had hoped to facilitate reading in a progressive fashion from one topic to another, only referring back to established foundations where necessary, and not flitting confusedly from one section to another only to find the founding principles of the given topic will not be published until the following month. ‘Co-apparent’ publication risked ‘presuppos[ing] a knowledge not yet given’.<sup>193</sup> If the task of the encyclopaedia is to advance by way of a method that inculcates foresight and progression, rather than mere transition, the simultaneous publication of parts of parts would destroy the work. Rest Fenner had initially offered Coleridge £500 per year in exchange for his supervision of the project, on condition of him relocating from Highgate to their press in Camberwell, so that he might work full-time and under their direct management. A long disagreement followed as the two parties bartered: perhaps an eight-month trial, perhaps 4 days per week, perhaps the liquidation of debts in place of a salary. No amicable compromise between the two parties could be reached, and Coleridge’s involvement came to an end after the publication of the ‘Preliminary Treatise’ in January 1818, having completed it in November of 1817: ‘dismissal or withdrawing (call it what you will)’, he wrote bitterly in 1818.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> *CL*, IV, 732.

<sup>193</sup> *CL*, IV, 816; *SWF*, 585.

<sup>194</sup> *CL*, IV, 877.



Coleridge claimed to have ‘destroyed [his] fragmentary foul copies’ in February 1818, republishing the treatise in parts in *The Friend* later that year.<sup>195</sup> This later iteration forms what Coleridge terms his ‘rifacciamento’ [sic], a remaking or recasting.<sup>196</sup> These ‘Essays on Method’ are not an introduction or a plan for a specific encyclopaedia, but a longer work divided into eight essays, islanded between pieces on sophistry and the ‘Third Landing-Place’, an essay on foolishness that Coleridge includes as an interlude or resting-place for the reader. The ‘rifacciamento’ was a necessarily restorative act: as the original text was first printed in the *Metropolitana*, it was ‘so bedevilled, so interpolated, and topsy-turvied’, so ‘egregiously mutilated’, that Coleridge soon denounced the whole project as ‘*an infamous catch-penny*’, ‘most worthless’, ‘most dishonest’.<sup>197</sup> Having felt his manuscript had been ‘extorted’ from him and unfairly attributed to Stoddart, it was eventually returned by his incensed editors ‘cut up into snips so as to make it almost useless’.<sup>198</sup> This fate is accompanied, nevertheless, with Coleridgean delusions of grandeur: ‘Had the *Paradise Lost* been presented to [John Stoddart], he would have given the same opinion, & pulled it piecemeal & rejoined it in the same manner’, fragments shorn of method.<sup>199</sup> Such an offense comes at a considerable cost for the poet, who, in *Biographia Literaria*, is so dedicated to authorial origin and order that he writes ‘it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with one bare hand, than to alter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton’.<sup>200</sup> This fallout was public and far-reaching: in an article published in the *Examiner* on 5 July 1818, Hazlitt sneered: ‘perhaps Dr. [John] Stoddart, who corrects the press for Mr. Coleridge, making a double nonsense of what he writes,

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<sup>195</sup> *CL*, IV, 825.

<sup>196</sup> Reflecting on the relationship between republication, innovation and order, Coleridge wrote: ‘The present volumes are rather a *rifacciamento* than a new edition. The additions forming so large a proportion of the whole world, and the arrangement being altogether new, I might indeed hesitate in bestowing the title of a republication on a world, which can scarcely be said to have ever been published, in the ordinary trade acceptance of the word’, *F*, I, 3. See Paul Hamilton, ‘Coleridge and the “Rifacciamento” of Philosophy: Communicating an Idealist Position in philosophy’, *European Romantic Review*, 14.4 (2003), 417-429; Earl Leslie Griggs, ‘“The Friend”: 1809 and 1818 Editions’, *Modern Philology*, 35.4 (1938), 369-373.

<sup>197</sup> *CL*, IV, 817.

<sup>198</sup> *CL*, IV, 860.

<sup>199</sup> *CL*, IV, 821.

<sup>200</sup> *BL*, I, 23.

may undertake the same friendly office for Mr. Wordsworth.<sup>201</sup> It is surprising, with this in mind, that Coleridge gave his editors the ‘right of *omission* [...] but to no interpolation’.<sup>202</sup> In an attempt to preserve authorial control, Coleridge attempted to guard against the unwanted interventions of the editor or compiler. This force of ‘omission’ runs to its extreme, as Coleridge insists in May 1818: ‘the Encyclopaedia itself I have never even looked at – scarcely looked at the covers – opened it I have never done – It *cannot but* be an imposture’, and later in October of the same year, ‘I have never read a page in it [...] several parts have been read to me of the Introduction, till I requested that the subject might not be spoken of to me any more’.<sup>203</sup> Coleridge’s earlier protestation to Southey in 1803, that encyclopaedias ‘*cannot* [be] read’ thus gains a sharp prophetic edge. What had begun hesitantly, and as it progressed gained in scope and ambition, ends torn and ignored, resolutely unread. The fugitive manuscript’s fate is an embittered literalisation of a recurrent criticism of reference texts, that they facilitate not-reading, skipping, or shortcutting. It is a sorry end for a project which the maligned philosopher ‘valued more than all [his] other prose writings’.<sup>204</sup>

## ii. Invisible alphabets

An immethodical encyclopaedia, Coleridge warned, consists in more or less complete disorganisation of the Sciences and Systematic Arts’.<sup>205</sup> But the ‘imperfection’ does not rest there: ‘The position of those alphabetical fragments into which the whole system of Human Knowledge has been splintered, was but too frequently determined by the caprice or convenience of the compiler.’<sup>206</sup> There was no universal standard, seemingly no logic governing the compiler’s shuffling of pages and plotting of references. While Coleridge reacted against the ‘accident of initial letters’ as a superficial basis on which to organise knowledge, contemporary encyclopaedists such as Abraham Rees found an aleatory opportunism. The

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<sup>201</sup> *CL*, IV, 814n.

<sup>202</sup> *CL*, IV, 816.

<sup>203</sup> *CL*, IV, 857; *CL*, IV, 877.

<sup>204</sup> *CL*, IV, 823.

<sup>205</sup> *SWF*, I, 579.

<sup>206</sup> *SWF*, I, 580.

mechanical connections produced by alphabetical order are far from neutral, instead they sit at the heart of eighteenth and nineteenth-century debates about hierarchy and disciplinarity.<sup>207</sup> For the *Cyclopaedia*, ‘to do justice to a collection, [alphabetisation] has its advantages, where numbers of things are taken precariously together, we sometimes discover relations among them which we should have never have thought of looking for’.<sup>208</sup> For Diderot, on the other hand, any ‘advantage’ is run to the absurd: ‘Often’, he writes, ‘alphabetical order produce[s] burlesque contrasts; an article on theology [is] relegated to the page across from the mechanical arts’.<sup>209</sup> Barthes’ takes up this argument in his essay ‘Literature and Discontinuity’: ‘Formally alphabetical order has another virtue: by breaking, by rejecting the “natural” affinities [...] it obliges the discovery of other relations [...] precisely for this reason, the poetic contiguity is born, the powerful one which obliges an image to leap from Alabama to Alaska’.<sup>210</sup> Such arrangement reveals a ‘strange friction between words and things’ as the alphabet constructs a frame which is at once both ‘precarious’ and ‘precise’. Coleridge is tempted by the possibility for ‘contiguity’ to overcome such contrasts: ‘where the habit of Method is present and effective, things the most remote and diverse in time, place, and outward circumstance, are brought into mental contiguity and succession, the more *striking* as the less expected’.<sup>211</sup> Method works by way of fugitive knowledge to bring disparate parts into order. Paradoxically, ‘mental contiguity’ is founded on ‘*striking*’ contrast.

Coleridge begins section three of his introduction to the *Metropolitana* on the ‘application of the principles of method to the general concatenation and development of studies’ by picturing a scene of reading through which the poet reckons with the relation of the alphabet to the orders of the book. In it, an ‘unlettered African, or rude, but musing Indian’ interacts with a ‘friendly

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<sup>207</sup> Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions*, pp. 25-28.

<sup>208</sup> Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, I, xxv. See Richard Yeo, ‘Reading Encyclopaedias: Science and the Organisation of Knowledge in British Dictionaries of Arts and Sciences, 1730-1850’, *Isis*, 82.1 (1991), 24-49 (p. 28).

<sup>209</sup> Denis Diderot, ‘The Encyclopaedia’, in *Rameau’s Nephew and Other Works*, trans. by Jacques Barzun, Ralph H. Bowen (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2001), pp. 277-309 (p. 280).

<sup>210</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘Literature and Discontinuity’, trans. by Richard Howard, *Salmagundi*, 18 (1972), 82-93 (p. 87).

<sup>211</sup> *SWF*, I, 653: my emphasis.

missionary’, a fleeting ‘chimera’ against ‘life and truth’, sensation against sense.<sup>212</sup> The two figures present mutually exclusive modes of reading, the one guided sense perception and the other by mental initiative. The passage’s brazen colonial prejudice almost entirely eclipses the ‘illuminated manuscript’, later ‘book’, at its centre, provoking questions about how and why we read (and indeed who might constitute that we).<sup>213</sup> Coleridge’s first, nameless reader encounters his recondite ‘volume’ with a ‘vague yet deep impression, that his fates and fortunes are, in some unknown manner, connected with its contents’; the nascent work is supposedly not a text to be read but a ‘talisman of superstition’ to be felt, even feared.<sup>214</sup> With a peculiarly oneiric beauty, this reader soon begins the laborious task of decoding an unfamiliar language with determined acuity: ‘every tint, every group of characters, has its several dream’.<sup>215</sup> The native African’s reading takes the form of compositing: he resorts to a process of ‘sort[ing]’ and ‘classing’ the ‘ciphers [...] marks and points’ (letters) in accordance with their subtly different ‘form[s]’, ‘intentional or accidental’.<sup>216</sup> Coleridge figures the limits of empiricism through this imagined process of reading, materialising the spiritual blindness of thinkers that he describes elsewhere as ‘finger philosophers – snails in intellect, who wear their eyes at the tips of their feelers and cannot even see unless they at the same time touch’.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> *SWF*, I, 672-3. The motif is taken up again in Coleridge’s extended version for *The Friend*, p. 518: ‘and thus break and scattered the one divine and invisible life of nature into the countless idols of sense [...] [he] is himself sensualised, and becomes a slave [...] From the fetisch of the imbruted African to the soul-debasing errors of the proud fact-hunting materialist we may trace the various ceremonials of the same idolatry’: *F*, I, 518. Stephen Bygrave glosses the theological resonance of this passage in *Coleridge and the Self: Romantic Egotism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), pp. 122-123; David Simpson glosses its political resonances in *Romanticism, Nationalism and the Revolt against Theory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 60-63. On literacy and the missionary project more broadly see Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missions Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011); Peter Kitson, *Romantic Literature, Race, and Colonial Encounter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2007), pp. 1-51.

<sup>213</sup> *SWF*, I, 672.

<sup>214</sup> *SWF*, I, 673.

<sup>215</sup> *SWF*, I, 672.

<sup>216</sup> On Coleridge’s ‘imaginary alphabet’ and the problem of transcription, by contrast, see Yohei Igarashi, *The Connected Condition: Romanticism and the Dream of Communication* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 37-73.

<sup>217</sup> *Omniana*, in *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Henry Nelson Coleridge, 2 vols (London: William Pickering, 1836), I, 308. By contrast, in her study of

The implication is that this mode of reading is of a kind with the encyclopaedists and lexicographers who produce ‘enormous nomenclature[s]’ or ‘huge catalogues’ founded on ‘dead, arbitrary arrangement’, mere material things in place of idealised conceptions.<sup>218</sup> By this perpetual sorting, it is not long before his ‘learned and systematic ignorance’, or ‘orderliness without method’, is overcome by an alphabet ‘twenty-fold more numerous’ than a reader literate in the language could conceive of.<sup>219</sup> This scene of reading is characterised by exponential growth, rather than rational comprehension and paraphrase: each letter becomes an infinite abundance of possible letters and speed of refraction is halted only when ‘the friendly missionary arrives!’.<sup>220</sup>

The newly read, evanescent text, at once ‘manuscript’, ‘volume’ and ‘book’, is present only in negative terms (*unfolded*; *unsealed*). Only at this point is the reader able to ‘commune with the *spirit* of the volume, as with a living oracle’.<sup>221</sup> Comprehension manifests itself as a curious moment of not-reading (or, at least, not-seeing). Despite the initial proliferation, the subsequent process of ‘expla[n]ation’ and ‘translat[ion]’ – where words are transformed first into ‘native sounds’ and then into ‘thoughts’ – comprises not only a gradual abstraction, but a corrective, perhaps even punitive, deconstruction. Initially ‘thoughts’ are ‘unfolded into consciousness’, ‘the book is unsealed’, then ‘words become transparent’, and in a final moment of productive atrophy and revelation the text is ‘mentally devour[ed]’.<sup>222</sup> The process is one for which Coleridge was infamous: Hazlitt writes of his work on Berkeley that ‘[Coleridge] made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words’.<sup>223</sup> The newly literate African-Indian ‘*sees* [the words] as though he *saw*

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blindness and imagination, Heather Tilley argues that ‘the possibility of reading by touch emphasised how central the material form of writing was to textual meaning’: Heather Tilley, *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 69.

<sup>218</sup> *SWF*, I, 630.

<sup>219</sup> *SWF*, I, 673.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *SWF*, I, 673.

<sup>222</sup> *SWF*, I, 673. On revelation, unsealing and the ‘formal technics of the book’ see Steven Goldsmith, *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 28-29.

<sup>223</sup> William Hazlitt, ‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’, in *Literary Remains of the Late William Hazlitt*, ed. by E. L. Bulwer (London: Saunders and Otley, 1836), p. 284.

them not'.<sup>224</sup> In the paragraph that follows, 'previous attempt[s]' to 'bind together the whole Body of Science' – such as Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* – are described as 'worse than immethodical'.<sup>225</sup> 'Seeing through' is not simply a rational corrective, but an imaginative one which, to borrow from Mary Poovey, 'efface[s] the details of the physical word through a process of imaginative vision that surpasses and subsume[s] the literal act of seeing'.<sup>226</sup> When the formative, material 'connect[ion]' between reader and text is so quickly disparaged as suspicion and suspicious, and when 'bind[ing]' is 'confessedly deficient', readers are left wondering what it is that holds this tendentious scene together.

Coleridge returns to this 'little allegory' the following year in the concluding remarks to his twelfth Lecture on the History of Philosophy. Here it is employed as a means of elaborating on the recurrent opposition 'between the materialist who would have nothing but what proceeded from his senses, and the philosopher who thought it not beneath him to look at the other part of his nature, namely, his mind'.<sup>227</sup> In the lecture's manuscript draft, emphasis on the 'recurrence and interchange of a limited number of ciphers, letters, marks' is undercut as Coleridge omits to write out the passage in full, leaving large blank spaces on the page to be supplemented by later editors with text from the previously published version: a reader sees it though sees it not.<sup>228</sup> Coleridge continues to a much greater extreme than he did in his introduction to the *Metropolitana*: 'then will the other great Bible of God, the book of nature become transparent to us when we regard the forms of matter as words, as symbols [...] an unrolled but yet a glorious fragment'.<sup>229</sup> There is a tension here

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<sup>224</sup> *SWF*, I, 673.

<sup>225</sup> *SWF*, I, 673.

<sup>226</sup> Mary Poovey, 'The Model System of Contemporary Literary Criticism', *Critical Inquiry*, 23.7 (2001), 408-38 (pp. 420-1). For more on the relationship between early nineteenth-century encyclopaedism, visibility, and subordination, see Simon Schaffer, 'Indiscipline and Interdisciplines: Some Exotic Genealogies of Modern Knowledge' (2010)

<[http://www.fif.tu-darmstadt.de/media/fif\\_forum\\_interdisziplinaere\\_forschung/sonstigetexte/externe/simonschaffner.pdf](http://www.fif.tu-darmstadt.de/media/fif_forum_interdisziplinaere_forschung/sonstigetexte/externe/simonschaffner.pdf)> [accessed: 02.12.16]

<sup>227</sup> *LHP*, pp. 540-1.

<sup>228</sup> BL Add MS 47,523 ff. 73-6.

<sup>229</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, ed. by J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), II, 541. On the workings of symbolism throughout this lecture, see Jadwiga Swiatecka, *The Idea of the Symbolism*:

between divine transparency and textual materiality. W. T. J Mitchell, writing on Blake, describes this mapping of the book onto nature as ‘pantextualism’ and contrasts the mechanical reproduction of the book to the emblematic openness of the scroll.<sup>230</sup> In ‘unrolling’ the fragment, Coleridge makes recourse to a dynamic ‘pantextual’ economy in which meaning shifts between fragment, scroll and book. This remediation takes place even as he appears to disavow the book, dissolving its alphabet into a fine transparency.

The book has the dual character of perspicuity and perspicacity – that which is seen through and that which offers insight. So too is it subject to perpetual undoings, here an ‘unrolled’ part or ‘fragment’. As the book assimilates all of nature into its compass, its particular form and matter is occluded. In this passage we find a rare moment of affinity with Chambers’ preface to his *Cyclopaedia*:

There is something arbitrary and artificial in all writings: they are a kind of draughts, or pictures, where the aspect, attitude and light, which the objects are taken in, though merely arbitrary, yet sway and direct the whole representation. Books are, as it were, plans or prospects of ideas artfully arranged and exhibited, not to the eye, but to the imagination; [...] it is necessary we be able to *unravel* or *undo* what is artificial in them, resolve them to their former state, and extricate what has been added to them in the representation.<sup>231</sup>

The homophone ‘draught’ has conflicting resonances: it signals both of the act of drawing or pulling forward (draught), and back to the initial, provisional composition (draft). To recall Barthes, both of the texts discussed here, the one preliminary and the other prefatory, act as ‘aperitifs’ which extend beyond the purview of their own material, paratextual bounds to incorporate what has been (the ‘former state’) and what could be (the ‘plans or prospects’; the books to come).<sup>232</sup>

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*Some Nineteenth Century Comparisons with Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 56-63.

<sup>230</sup> W. T. J. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 133.

<sup>231</sup> Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, I, xvi.

<sup>232</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘Textual Analysis: Poe’s *Valdemar*’, *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (Harlow: Longman, 1988), p. 176, quoted in David Duff, ‘The Book to Come: Literary Advertising and the Poetics of the Prospectus’, in *Forms, Formats, and the Circulation of Knowledge: British Printscapes’ Innovations, 1688-1832*, ed. by Louisane Ferlier and Bénédicte Miyamoto (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 229-253 (p. 247).

Just as Coleridge's reader sees as though he saw not, Rees sets out a similarly transparent text 'exhibited *not* to the eye'. As Coleridge's 'book' is unfolded and unsealed, later unrolled, Rees's is 'unravel[ed]', 'undo[ne]'. Encyclopaedism has a quietly dissembling nature which unpicks the bindings and focuses on the 'glorious fragment' and the 'living oracle'. Thus what was, in the *Statesman's Manual*, a sibylline 'Multiscience without method', is rehabilitated here by way of divine order.

iii. 'So many scraps and sibylline leaves'

As Coleridge's career progressed, he became increasingly aware of the relationship between composition and his 'Manifold Many-Scraps on Many Scrips in [his] own Manuscript, alias Manuscrawl'.<sup>233</sup> His engagement with sibylline materiality became more performative as time went on. In 1820 he wrote to Thomas Allsop:

To the completion of these four Works [on Shakespeare, and the histories of literature, philosophy and theology] I have literally nothing more to do, than *to transcribe*; but, as I before hinted, from so many scraps & *sibylline* leaves, including Margins of Books & blank Pages, that unfortunately I must be my own scribe - & not done by myself, they will be all but lost - or perhaps (as has been too often the case already) furnish the feathers in the caps of others.<sup>234</sup>

In 1825, he sent his nephew Edward a 'bag of single scraps', instructing him to 'read [...] *dramatically* - ie. As the portrait and impress of the mood and the moment - birds of passages - or Bubbles'.<sup>235</sup> The ephemerality of these 'scraps' is characterised by flight, effervescence and fugacity. In the summer of 1826, Coleridge began a letter to Edward with an animated scene of composition and reclamation that lilts from discovery to departure and from permissiveness to yearning as it transcribes a fugitive piece too fragile to withstand the post (it materialised in print as part of 'On the Constitution of the Church and State' in 1829):

In emptying a Drawer of under-stockings, Rose-leaf Bags, old (but too many of them!) unopened Letters, and Paper-scraps or Brain Fritters, I had my

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<sup>233</sup> *CL*, VI, 676.

<sup>234</sup> *CL*, V, 18.

<sup>235</sup> *CL*, V, 493.



attention directed to a sere and ragged half-sheet by a gust of wind, which had separated it from its companions and whisked it out of the window into the Garden. Not that I went after it. I have too much respect for the numerous tribe to which it belonged, to lay any restraint on their movements, or to put the vagrant act in force against them. [...] I had been meditating a letter to you - & as I ran my eye over this fly-away Tag-rag and Bob-tail, and bethought me that it was a By-blow of my own, I felt a sort of fatherly remorse and yearning towards it.<sup>236</sup>

This scene of composition is not one of consolidation or synthesis but of aleatory resignation; it fizzles with the romance of the idea that almost got away, and the affected nonchalance of the great poet who sequesters his 'Brain-Fritters' with his 'under-stockings'. By the end of his career, the fugitive galvanised Coleridge's composition as much as his compilation practices. By 1833, just a year before his death, Coleridge found himself 'heartless' amidst his '*wilderness* of Scraps, and Booklets little better, or less volatile & fugitive'.<sup>237</sup> These scraps were efficacious and ebullient. And so it was that this 'scrapster' would refer to his notebooks as 'Fly-Catchers', and, in 1827, title Notebook 56 'Volatilia or Day-book for bird-liming ~~stray~~ small Thoughts, impounding Stray thoughts, and holding Trial for doubtful Thoughts', figuring the process of note-taking as a mode of bibliographic apprehension.<sup>238</sup> *Sibylline Leaves* was a public gesture towards the fugacious materialities of manuscripts, miscellanies and periodicals, a textual condition materialised under the auspices of the sibyl.

This chapter has located the sibyl at various junctures in Coleridge's career, exploring her changing relationship to the conditions of miscellaneity and method. Coleridge's attraction to the sibyl – variously figured in affinity and in opposition – presents certain methodological complexities and contradictions. Fugitive knowledge exacerbates a problem posed by prophetic writing to historicist literary criticism more generally: these modes are '*critically* disruptive [...] and so closely linked to questions of historical organisation, legitimisation, canonization and commentary, that the very methods and genres of reading taken up to think through

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<sup>236</sup> *CL*, VI, 593.

<sup>237</sup> *CL*, VI, 970.

<sup>238</sup> *N*, V, xlix. See Jillian M. Hess, 'Coleridge's Fly-Catchers'.

[them] reflexively shape (rather than passively display) that same phenomena.<sup>239</sup> To read in this way – between finished, bound books and partial, often abortive manuscripts – is to replicate a sibylline hermeneutic. To this end, Neil Fraistat has argued that ‘to piece together the scattered leaves of the Sibyl is to discover the contents of a prophecy ... to build a poetic whole from disparate “fragments” ... a kind of “unity from multiteity”.’<sup>240</sup> In the sibyl’s literary legacies – and in Coleridge’s efforts at compilation – this paradigmatic relation between the part and the whole is complicated by a fractious relationship to time that disturbs an otherwise intuitive *telos* from scattered to gathered, provisional to authoritative, partial to complete, preferring instead a carefully wrought dialectic between scattered materials and universalizing method.

Coleridge’s own bibliographic imagination, liting between the possibilities of the composite book and the flying leaf, has long set the tone for approaches to his works. It resurfaced, for example, when Kathleen Coburn described a disbound leaf from Coleridge’s Notebook 3 as a ‘true sibylline’, a loose sheet that had found its way outside of the bound book.<sup>241</sup> Scattered pieces such as this introduce the dual threats of loss and disorder to literary compilations, creating new possibilities for meaning through dispersal and juxtaposition. The notebook described by Coburn is held at the British Library, while the missing leaf is pasted onto the back cover of the *Wallensteins Tod* manuscript prepared for Coleridge by Friedrich Schiller and now stored at Harvard. The assimilation of this displaced fragment within Coburn’s definitive, chronological edition exists in tension with a more contingent method by which Coleridge himself ranged across media that, by the end of his career, he would describe as a ‘Wilderness of scraps [...] volatile and fugitive’.<sup>242</sup> Fugitive knowledge arises from the interface between the orders of the book and the ‘wilderness of

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<sup>239</sup> Christopher Bundock, “‘And Thence from Jerusalem’s Ruins’: Romantic Prophecy and the End(s) of History”, *Literature Compass*, 10.11 (2013), 836-845 (p. 840). On prophetic hermeneutics and reading processes see James P. Rasmussen, ‘Reading the Prophets Prophetically’, *European Romantic Review*, 19.4 (2008), 403-420.

<sup>240</sup> Neil Fraistat, *The Poem and the Book: Interpreting Collections of Romantic Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>241</sup> N, I, xxiii. The “missing” leaf is f. 59. See Walter Grossman, ‘The Gilman-Harvard Manuscript of Schiller’s *Wallensteins Tod*’, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 11 (1957): 319-345. On the legacy of the sibyl in the bibliographic imagination see Luisa Calè and Marianne Brooker, ‘Introduction: Sibylline Leaves’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 59.1 (2020), 1-13.

<sup>242</sup> *CL*, VI, 970.

scraps', the chaos of fragments, excerpts and loose sheets moving in and out of order. This chapter has mapped Coleridge's attempts to collect and combine the scattered pieces of his own poetic oeuvre – and indeed his occasional ambivalence to that effort – onto his overarching and never-completed encyclopaedic project, a compulsion to organise *all* scattered knowledge and to develop a single method by which all disciplines and domains of practice might be unified. The recalcitrant sibyl's flying leaves and the ideal of the 'living oracle' of the book stand as authorising figures for the particular anxieties, ideals and temporalities of Romantic compilation, for which order, mediation and posterity are key problems.

2.

*Inserenda:*

Elementary materials and Jeremy Bentham's Waste-Books

- I. 'The primordial Bentham, the Bentham of the manuscripts'
- i. Marginal contenting: 'The greatest possible quantity of matter presents itself at a view'

Jeremy Bentham's manuscripts combine carefully tabulated pages of marginal contents and heavily revised text with disjointed observations and fragmentary musings, illustrating a tension between disparate materials and an overarching method. As Janet Semple has observed, the manuscripts are rich storehouses that contain a plurality of imaginative possibilities not often associated with the austere utilitarian: 'It is as though he was compelled to write down every fugitive thought lest it escape.'<sup>243</sup> Plate I, for example, shows the first page of 'Introduction. Imports of JUSTICE and UTILITY contrasted', part of Bentham's first major work on jurisprudence, composed between 1771 and 1776 and eventually published as *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1782.<sup>244</sup> Typically, its margins contain revisions and references to points of comparison elsewhere in the manuscript, but they also offer a reflective space just beyond the parameters of the main body of text for authorial reflection, as a section in the bottom left quadrant headed 'Loose Hints' demonstrates. At the very outset of Bentham's introduction, this passage laments the 'Difficulty of stating these matters clearly –':

Noth advance made this while in building  
only in clearing away.  
In regard to ideas so slippery [+ fugitive] & whose in their  
limits ill-defined as these are, they who are practiced

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<sup>243</sup> Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 286

<sup>244</sup> On composition and publication history see H. L. A. Hart, 'Bentham's *Of Laws in General*', *Cambrian Review*, 24.2 (1971), 24-34.

in these speculations know how difficult it is to keep steady while they are serving.<sup>245</sup>

The word ‘Fugitive’ sits in the margin as a textual emendation, but also, incidentally, as marginal heading, signposting the space as a refuge for ‘loose hints’ that, in this case, describe an authorial anxiety about the difficulties of adequate articulation, standardisation and categorisation. This anxiety is also evident in the chain of circuitous and contradictory definitions of justice with which Bentham wrestles in the main body of the text. Truly a ‘Loose Hint’, this passage does not make its way into the edition of the work published in Bentham’s lifetime nor the scholarly edition published in 1970 as part of the *Collected Works*. Mobility, marginality and precarity are defining features of the material textual condition that mediates the ‘metaphysical maze’ in which Bentham found himself ‘entangled’.<sup>246</sup> His complete system arises from the generation, recombination and destruction of loose hints and detached pieces, and from a process in which ‘clearing away’ is as important as ‘building’.

Bentham’s manuscripts have received increased scholarly attention over recent years, salvaging his notes and drafts from what one Victorian editor described as a ‘not unjust oblivion’.<sup>247</sup> Considerable editorial efforts have exposed a tension between order and disorder that has sat unresolved at the heart of Bentham scholarship for over a century:

The primordial Bentham, the Bentham of the manuscripts, is a veritable chaos of uncompleted and often undifferentiated works, alternative drafts that give no indication of preference or finality, appendices that overwhelm the text and marginalia that are undistinguished from it, outlines that were

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<sup>245</sup> Transcribe Bentham, Box 70 fol. 018, ‘Introduction. Imports of Justice and Utility Contrasted.’

<sup>246</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. by J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970; repr. 2005), p. 1.

<sup>247</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *A Fragment on Government*, ed. by F. C. Montague (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), p. v. Since 1968, thirty-four volumes of an anticipated eighty volumes of Bentham’s new collected works have been published, with the most recent – the second volume of *Writings on Political Economy* – completed in 2019. The University College London’s ‘Transcribe Bentham’ project has used crowd-sourced transcriptions of their vast archive of Bentham’s manuscripts in the preparation of the more recent volumes of *Collected Works*, and five of twelve volumes of his correspondence are available open access.

not followed, and an elaborate numbering system varying from one draft to another.<sup>248</sup>

This ‘primordial’ textual condition focusses our attention on the elementary or prior forms of knowledge production, an implicitly inchoate and jumbled yet generative working-out or working towards a state of settled, focussed maturity. This chapter explores the relationship between ‘the Bentham of the manuscripts’ and the various and often contradictory iterations of his ‘elaborate [...] system[s]’, suggesting that even by the time his systems have been committed to print, Bentham’s methods for organising knowledge and, by extension, for organising institutions, retain their investment in ‘veritable chaos’ and in multivalent interpretations of elementary knowledge.

In what follows, I will describe how elementary materials shape the contours of the managerial and organisational systems set out in Bentham’s writings. I begin by setting out a short history of double entry bookkeeping, suggesting that Bentham’s method for organising his manuscripts shaped his much larger comparative systems for organising knowledge and institutions, culminating in what Jacques-Allain Miller has described as a looming system of ‘planetary bookkeeping, the comparison of everything with everything, all of mankind entered into a ledger’.<sup>249</sup> I situate the waste-book – redefined by Bentham as the elementary book – as a key point of contention for Bentham as he works to reformulate the Italian bookkeeping system, expanding and adapting it at intervals throughout his career. Books and papers come to the fore in this analysis as dynamic mediators between the chaos of everyday experience jotted down in manuscript and the ordered worlds of the ledger and printed book. In sections two and three I discuss Bentham’s schemes for poor house management (*Pauper Management Improved*, 1795-7) and educational reform and encyclopaedism (*Chrestomathia*, 1815-17) in turn. These projects support Jon Klancher’s observation that ‘the key question of the modern “arts and sciences” had been [since the 1790s] fundamentally shifting from *classifying* to a more complex sense of *organizing*’.<sup>250</sup> For Bentham, this shift occurs

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<sup>248</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb, ‘Bentham Scholarship and the Bentham “Problem”’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 41.2 (1969), 189-206 (p. 190).

<sup>249</sup> Jacques-Allain Miller, Richard Miller, ‘Jeremy Bentham’s Panoptic Device’, trans. by *October*, 41 (1987), 3-29 (p. 19).

<sup>250</sup> Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences*, p. 165.

in conjunction with the practical work of *managing* – imagining, building and regulating institutions that could encompass the full scope of knowledge production and transmission. I argue that certain managerial tools – particularly bookkeeping – played an important role in the shift from classifying to organising by offering a set of transferable principles and practices that could be employed in the methodization of knowledge. In particular, I focus on the way in which the transferral of information between notebooks and ledgers conditioned a particular way of thinking about the relationship between manuscripts and books which Bentham further explores in his published writings and printed tables. The material and conceptual scope of waste is evident in Bentham’s notebooks and his development of elementary knowledge, but also retained in the particular structures of Chrestomathic learning. In *Chrestomathia*, Bentham sets out a vision for a restructured tree of knowledge based on new words and new principles, a reconfigured field in which ‘*art and science are gaining upon the above-mentioned waste – the field of unartificial practice and unscientific knowledge*’, the field that lies open and unmanaged, prior and anterior to the disciplines of art and science, a field to be mined, hewn and regulated in much the same way as the accountant might approach the waste-book.<sup>251</sup> The relationship of Bentham’s Chrestomathic method to waste, scattered materials and fugitive knowledge develops from his early compilation practices into a full programme of management, with a new nomenclature and renewed emphasis on visibility and bringing ideas to light. In concluding, I make a return to William Hazlitt’s accusation that Bentham was ‘a kind of manuscript author’.<sup>252</sup> Hazlitt’s claim condescendingly obscures the fact that to be a ‘Manuscript author’ meant many things, and for Bentham it meant the convergence of methods derived from commonplacing and bookkeeping practices specifically designed to regulate and order knowledge: this mode of authorship was the basis rather than the negation of order.

Borrowing from Lilly Gurton-Wachter, this chapter ‘pivots on the possibility that *how* we watch [and read] might alter *what* we notice’ by focussing on the

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<sup>251</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Chrestomathia*, ed. by M. J. Smith and W. H. Burston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983; repr. 2015), p. 60. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *C* in footnotes.

<sup>252</sup> William Hazlitt, ‘Jeremy Bentham’, in *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Henry Colburn, 1825), I, 1-29 (p. 25).

particular interactions between Bentham's paper tools, notably manuscripts, books, and printed tables.<sup>253</sup> In my readings of Bentham's manuscripts, books and printed tables I draw out threads of the phenomenology of reading that develops over the course of his career, focussed at each turn on the material terrains of paper – layout, type, turned pages or shuffled papers. The tabulated pages of Bentham's manuscripts and his evolving use of printed tables surface as a primary means of representing vast classificatory or managerial systems on the page, offering up every sinew of a system to view in an instant. But the table does not exist for Bentham as the mediation of an ideal system in this way; rather, it is a paper tool for use in gathering as well as displaying knowledge, and a tool that only ever exists in relation to a source book – an explanatory letter in a periodical or reams of explanatory notes in a treatise. The printed table exists as the interface between materials and method.

Bentham's plans for poor houses and school-houses utilise the panopticon principle of construction most strongly associated with his work on prisons (*Panopticon, or the Inspection House*, 1791) – for Foucault, a system of permanent inspection and observation. Following key departures from Foucault's reading of Bentham's universal 'panopticism' – particularly by Anne Brunon-Ernst, Philip Schofield and Janet Semple – my focus here is on the dialectic between materials and method. I emphasise the iterative evolution of Bentham's projects, within which the governing idea of the panopticon manifests differently across different projects and through different media.<sup>254</sup> I argue that Bentham's view of encyclopaedism is rooted in reciprocity and interrelation, rather than universal, unidirectional observation. The shortcomings of Foucault's critique of Bentham lie in his departure from the material specificity of each project, focussing almost exclusively on earlier iterations from the 1790s: 'Foucault's panopticism does not consider the Panopticon as a multifarious and reversible structure, which could operate [by the 1830's] as a means for the few to supervise the man as well as for the many to supervise the few; for the governor to supervise the inmates as well as for the citizens to monitor

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<sup>253</sup> Lily Gurton-Wachter, *Watchwords: Romanticism and the Poetics of Attention* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>254</sup> Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Panopticism into the Plural Panopticons', in *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*, ed. by Anne Brunon-Ernst (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 17-43; Philip Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009).



governments.<sup>255</sup> In rooting my analysis in Bentham's bookkeeping and bookmaking – from accounting systems to typefaces – the emphasis on visuality also encompasses an emphasis on relationality that arises directly from the materials themselves, and is excluded in Foucault's abstracted 'dream building [...] the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form.'<sup>256</sup> The dream diagram obscures the workings of the diagrams on paper, technologies of representation in which the dialectic between known and unknown, visibility and darkness, plays out in different ways.

Bentham's reflections on the movement of ideas within and between different manuscript notebooks and ledgers and, eventually, into print, reveal a mutual dependence between compositional methods, paper technologies and epistemological principles. This imbrication is clear from the very beginning of Bentham's career, and comes to the fore in an exchange between him and his brother Samuel Bentham (SB) in the winter of 1780 in which they discuss the method of marginal contenting. SB, an engineer and naval architect, wrote to his brother from Russia concerning various 'methods in writing and arranging papers' or 'Inserenda', pages of marginalia positioned in narrow columns.<sup>257</sup> In his letter, he described the writing practices of a 'Dr or Professor Pallas', who 'writes everything on pieces /scraps/ of paper and on one side only. He has different boxes or pidgeon [sic] holes for as many subdivisions of his subject as he finds commodious into which he flings each scrap as he writes it'.<sup>258</sup> In this scene, composition resembles a kind of authorial compositing as manuscripts are moved between boxes and pigeonholes.<sup>259</sup> The

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<sup>255</sup> Anne Brunon-Ernst, 'Deconstructing Pantopticism', p. 30.

<sup>256</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 205.

<sup>257</sup> *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: Volume II*, ed. by Timothy L. S. Sprigge (London: UCL Press, 2017), pp. 507-513 (p. 511). All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *CJB* in footnotes.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* Bentham refers to the German naturalist Peter Simon Pallas (1741-1811). In an earlier letter dated 28 May 1780 Samuel Bentham described Pallas as 'a man of the strictest veracity and of a most universal knowledge' but quickly clarified: 'The pursuit of knowledge etc. is all mighty well, but the turning it to account, the getting money in short that is a matter we have to attend to': *CJB*, II, 366; 467.

<sup>259</sup> On the importance of furniture to organising knowledge see Noel Malcolm, 'Thomas Harrison and his "Ark of Studies": An Episode in the History of the Organisation of Knowledge', *The Seventeenth Century*, 19 (2004) 196-232. Similar cabinets were also used

pigeonholes preferred by Dr Pallas had been in use since at least the seventeenth century, when John Locke first made reference to alphabetised compartments in a letter to Edward Clarke in 1688.<sup>260</sup> ‘Pigeonhole’ was also a typographic term that referred to an excessive white space between two words, decried by Joseph Moxon as ‘wide *Whites*’ and a sign of bad workmanship in justifying the type, particularly for marginal notes in print.<sup>261</sup> Still a relatively new apparatus, pigeon holes carried the dual connotations of efficiency and wastage. SB followed a similar process as Dr Pallas, but tended more towards a kind of scrapbooking: he ruled his paper with a margin, ‘wrote only on one side and when done that [sic] I wanted to arrange the matter I cut all pieces separate and shuffled them at pleasure’.<sup>262</sup> But the process resulted in a ‘monolith’ ‘in which every thing is swallowed up and forgotten and cannot be brought to light without being copied’.<sup>263</sup> Amid this sorting, drafting and cutting, writing is figured a continual process of manuscript reassemblage that lilt between playfulness (‘at pleasure’) and frustration (‘swallowed up’). The codex was not enough to accommodate the range and mobility of scraps, so each practice – Dr Pallas’s and Samuel Bentham’s – relied on detached pieces and ‘commodious’ organisational tools that permitted compartmentalisation, disaggregation and mobility. Both, though, presented a problem: how might ideas easily and reliably be ‘brought to light’ amid this chaotic ‘monolith’?

For Jeremy Bentham, the cut-and-shuffle method described by his brother had resulted in a cumbersome ‘*Babel*’ and with the persistent fear of unintended scraps ‘intermixing with the rest’.<sup>264</sup> In its stead he favoured a method by which he might laboriously avoid intermixture while ensuring that all ideas remain visible: his papers were folded or ‘doubled in the ordinary way’, in a method that he called ‘marginal contenting’, and which enabled him to ‘confront [almost] any thing with any thing

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by botanists, see: A. Rupert Hall, *From Galileo to Newton* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), p. 178.

<sup>260</sup> *The Correspondence of John Lock and Edward Clarke*, ed. by Benjamin Rand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 245.

<sup>261</sup> Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises: Or, the Doctrine of Handy-Works Applied to the Art of Printing*, 2 vols (London: Joseph Moxon, 1683), II, 215.

<sup>262</sup> *CJB*, II, 511.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

else', but which minimised the risk of accidental omission or misplacement.<sup>265</sup> Marginal contenting facilitated a shift from a material textual condition in which 'every thing' might be lost to a method of organising in which 'any thing' is possible. This ideal of textual confrontation modernised a metaphor common in the language of seventeenth-century commonplacing, in which the word 'adversaria' was used to refer to disordered notes taken down chronologically.<sup>266</sup> Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* makes a direct connection between the traditions of commonplacing and of codified, standardised methods of bookkeeping: 'Adversaria, among the antients [sic], was used for a Book of Accounts, like our Journal or Day-Book [...] Adversaria is sometimes also used among us for a Common-place-Book'.<sup>267</sup> Bentham's method of marginal contenting combines the miscellaneous, adversarial logic associated with commonplaces, and the meticulous methods that governed the 'Book of Accounts'. Thus, a seemingly 'primordial' tendency is in fact part of a long and combinatorial tradition that roots composition in compilation.

Bentham did not simply employ 'marginal contenting' as an apparatus for information retrieval (such as in a conventional index), but an apparatus for information generation and the creation of new ideas: he wrote that 'the very operation of "marginal contenting" would set the articles a *generating*'.<sup>268</sup> In this way, the 'heads' or topic words do not only provide an ordering and finding aid, but interact with and galvanise the content gathered under their auspices, ensuring that all information is captured, retained and made visible: thus, 'articles generate one another most amazingly. While I am writing a chapter, <...> loose hints that I am afraid to lose go down immediately upon one of these open sheets <...> they are ruled in narrow columns [so that] not an inch <of> room is lost; so that the greatest

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<sup>265</sup> *CJB*, II, 511. On Bentham's uses of the margin and the practical function of inserenda, see the editorial introduction in Jeremy Bentham, *Rights, Representation and Reform*, ed. Philip Schofield, Catherine Pease-Watkin, and Cyprian Blamires (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. lxi.

<sup>266</sup> Ann Blair, 'Note-taking as an Art of Transmission', *Critical Inquiry*, 31.1 (2004) 85-107 (p. 87).

<sup>267</sup> 'Adversaria', in Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, I, 37. On the interchangeability of these terms in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 16-17.

<sup>268</sup> *CJB*, II, 512.

possible quantity of matter presents itself at a view'.<sup>269</sup> In this scene, Bentham's fecund materials therefore tread a thin line between what it means to be loose and to be lost, a tension that sits at the heart of his later critique of Enlightenment encyclopaedism.<sup>270</sup> Unlike printers' pigeon holes – wasted space – Bentham's margins are crammed to their limits; all manner of 'hints' are taken down to be preserved and compared with others. Bentham's preferred *mise-en-page* enables him to highlight connections between one part of a text and another, noting in the margins where one part of a manuscript might be directly compared to another. Marginal contenting adapted conventional, static rubrics and finding aids to the maximised potential of mobile paper tools that could be shuffled, cut and stuck in the most efficient manner. Unlike the index, intended as a permanent key to a preceding and completed work, Bentham's manuscripts were designed to facilitate a generative textual economy, but they were also precarious. The letter to his brother quoted above also describes how he often struck his notes through with 'a great gash', and threw them 'into the fire' sheet by sheet.<sup>271</sup> Odd sheets that retained some still-useful notes were 'pinned' to other unused columns.

Bentham's corpus of 'inserenda' from 1770-80 has been described as a 'philosophical commonplace book' by Douglas G. Long and Philip Schofield.<sup>272</sup> It comprises a body of knowledge in which 'a paragraph or set of paragraphs on one subject-matter is followed by another paragraph or set of paragraphs on a different subject-matter, and so on until an earlier subject-matter is resumed, sometimes being rewritten, sometimes being approached from a different perspective, and sometimes being added to or exemplified'.<sup>273</sup> Commonplace books facilitated the ordering,

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Michael Quinn describes a fragment from an unidentified French archive headed 'Book-keeping. Loss, modifications of', dated 10 Feb 1798, which contains 'a series of heads for an analysis of the concept of loss, in which Bentham begins by distinguishing between positive and comparative loss': Michael Quinn, 'Editorial Introduction', in Jeremy Bentham, *Writings on Poor Laws*, ed. by Michael Quinn, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), I, xi-lvi (p. xxxix n9).

<sup>271</sup> *CBJ*, II, 512.

<sup>272</sup> Douglas G. Long and Philip Schofield, 'Editorial Introduction', in Jeremy Bentham, *Preparatory Principles*, ed. by Douglas G. Long and Philip Schofield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xi-xxviii (p. xi). All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *PP* in footnotes.

<sup>273</sup> *PP*, xi.

imitating and memorising of excerpts, but Bentham's system of 'marginal contenting' mirrors and exceeds the reproductive capacity of the commonplace book by enabling the generation of new ideas. The inserenda comprise a storehouse of 600 manuscript pages, divided into 1313 numbered paragraphs that were written chronologically: published as *Preparatory Principles*, they are 'preparatory' in both form and function, as documents which are themselves a preparation towards a complete work, and as texts that propose the foundational principles of a future philosophy of law. These working documents were not intended for publication in and of themselves, but as a mine of raw materials from which Bentham could draw and upon which he could build as he developed his jurisprudential ideas.

Bentham's notetaking practice demonstrates the interaction between two modes of knowledge production: the strictly regulated work of the ledger and the aleatory orders of the waste book. The 'primordial Bentham' is a figure that has slipped out of view even as literary scholars confront the difficulties of reconciling his particular brand of political economy with his complex entanglements in romantic culture, but this is not the case across disciplines.<sup>274</sup> In the field of critical accounting, which explores the interface between accounting processes and society, Jim Haslam and Sonja Gallhofer's work on Bentham in *Accounting and Emancipation*, L. J. Hume's work on Bentham's contribution to the development of 'industrial accounting', and Louis Goldberg's work on Bentham as a critic of 'accounting method' combine to focus readers' attention on Bentham's particular methodological, technical and lexical choices and their continued influence on education.<sup>275</sup> Writing on Bacon, Angus Vine has described the material textual relationship between early modern bookkeeping, excerption and the organisation of knowledge as 'commercial commonplacing', a method for ordering literary and

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<sup>274</sup> See Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 188-233; Bart Schultz, *The Happiness Philosophers: The Lives and Works of the Great Utilitarians* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>275</sup> Sonia Gallhofer and Jim Haslam, 'Accounting and the Bentham's – or Accounting's Potentialities', *Accounting, Business and Financial History*, 4.3 (1994), 431-460 (p. 441); L. J. Hume, 'The Development of Industrial Accounting: The Bentham's Contribution', *Journal of Accounting Research*, 8.1 (1970), 21-33 (p. 27); Louis Goldberg, 'Jeremy Bentham, Critic of Accounting Method', in *Accounting Research, 1948-1958: Selected Articles on Accounting Theory*, ed. by David Solomons and Stephen A. Zeff (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), pp. 168-201 (pp. 180-185).

scholarly materials that was shaped by mercantile accounting.<sup>276</sup> This chapter bridges the gap between critical accounting and the organisation of knowledge, and argues that the materialities of composition and compilation shape Bentham's epistemology and his eventual investment in the mutual dependence between arts and sciences, practice and theory.

ii. 'Bookkeeping at large'

This section charts the emergence of double entry through the eighteenth century, in order to provide a point of departure for Bentham's own interventions and his own utilization of interconnected books and papers. The mercantile system of double entry bookkeeping was developed in fifteenth-century Italy in response to a tightening of ecclesiastical control on commerce and a ban on usury. It entailed the upkeep of an interconnected series of ledgers and the recording of each transaction as both a credit and a debit, enabling self-scrutiny and probity. Mary Poovey has argued that double-entry bookkeeping was 'an amalgamation of theological claims, rhetorical strategies, and numerical language designed to express the honesty and moral rectitude of merchants by equating these virtues with the exactness of numerical facts.'<sup>277</sup> This amalgam also has its roots in fifteenth-century domestic archives: in the home, 'written accounts [...] belonged to a heterogeneous miscellany of documents and precious things [...] probably housed in locked strongboxes or chests along with bills of sale, IOU's, and family heirlooms; and they most likely consisted of interrelated financial and genealogical records, interspersed with commonplace sayings, prayers and reminders that would have resembled modern

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<sup>276</sup> Angus Vine, 'Commercial Commonplacing: Francis Bacon, the Waste-Book, and the Ledger', in *Manuscript Miscellanies, 1450-1700*, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: British Library, 2011), pp. 197-218.

<sup>277</sup> Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 80. See also James A. Aho, 'Rhetoric and the Invention of Double Entry Bookkeeping', *Rhetorica*, 3 (1985), 21-43; Grahame Thompson, 'Early Double-Entry Bookkeeping and the Rhetoric of Accounting Calculation', in Anthony G. Hopwood and Peter Miller eds, *Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 40-66.

diary entries more closely than accounting ledgers.<sup>278</sup> Systems that developed to regulate and codify the keeping of personal and mercantile accounts existed at this interface between public and private spheres, and directed the gradual refinement of these ‘interrelated’ and jumbled records. The first double-entry bookkeeping manual to be written originally in English was published in 1534 and many more followed. As early as 1718, Alexander Malcolm could lament in the preface to his *Treatise of Arithmetic and Bookkeeping* that ‘a cloud of authors’ stood in his way.<sup>279</sup> And he was right: the eighteenth century saw a glut of specialised handbooks that *Methodized* (1736), *Modernized* (1768), and superlatively *Epitomized* (1794) systems of commercial and domestic accounts.<sup>280</sup> There is evidence that Jeremy Bentham himself completed the bookkeeping exercises in Robert Hamilton’s *Introduction to Merchandise* (1788).<sup>281</sup>

Double entry relied on a series of interconnected journals, the first of which was called a ‘waste-book’. The waste-book was a chronological account of all transactions; its contents would be transferred into a more organised ledger each day. These interconnected notebooks mediate fixed and fluid information by increments – material settles and flows as eighteenth-century writers push at the boundaries of systems set out in primers and handbooks and as writers from different disciplines look to adapt these methods to their own materials and purposes. An entry on ‘Bookkeeping’ in Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia* insisted that “the *Wast-Book* [sic], or Memorandum-book is the first, and most essential: in this, all kinds of Matters are, as it were, mix’d and jumbled together; to be afterwards separated and transferr’d into the others: so that this may be call’d the elements of all the rest.”<sup>282</sup> Accounting

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<sup>278</sup> Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 34.

<sup>279</sup> Quoted in Sandra Sherman, *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 132.

<sup>280</sup> On the earlier handbooks of the seventeenth century, see Osamu Kojima, ‘Accounting Textbooks in Seventeenth-Century England’, *The Accounting Historian’s Journal*, 4.1 (1977), 69-78; Basil Yamey, ‘Some Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Double-Entry Ledgers’, *The Accounting Review*, 34.4 (1959), 534-546.

<sup>281</sup> Louis Goldberg, ‘Jeremy Bentham, Critic of Accounting Method’, in *Accounting Research, 1948-1958*, ed. by David Solomons and Stephen A. Zeff (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), pp. 168-201 (pp. 180-185); see also Galhoffer and Haslam, ‘Accounting and the Benthams’, (p. 441).

<sup>282</sup> ‘Bookkeeping’, in Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, I, 117-118 (p. 117).

was just as much about balancing debt and credit as it was about negotiating between these two modes of record: the ‘mix’d and jumbled’ account, characterised by immediacy and simultaneity, and the ledger, often alphabetised and indexed.

The physicist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799) kept fifteen notebooks of aphorisms and fragments, which he referred to as *Sudelbücher* or waste-books, between 1765 to his death in 1799, which first appeared in print from 1800 to 1806.<sup>283</sup> Lichtenberg described his method of notetaking as *sudeln* – to scrawl, to make a mess.<sup>284</sup> Exploring the epistemic consequences of Lichtenberg’s particular notational procedure, Petra McGillen describes the ways in which Lichtenberg’s waste-books fused ‘learned’ (technical, bureaucratic) and ‘experimental’ forms of bookkeeping, treading a line between the discontinuous compilation of isolated aphorisms and more networked bodies of discrete parts, such as the encyclopaedia.<sup>285</sup> Accordingly, in Notebook E, compiled between 1775 and 1776 (contemporary with Bentham’s *Preparatory Principles inserenda*), he wrote:

Merchants and traders have a waste book (*Sudelbuch, Klitterbuch* in German I believe) in which they enter daily everything they purchase and sell, messily, without order. From this, it is transferred to their journal, where everything appears more systematic, and finally to a ledger, in double entry after the Italian manner of bookkeeping, where one settles accounts with each man, once as debtor and then as creditor. This deserves to be imitated by scholars. First it should be entered in a book in which I record everything as I see it or as it is given to me in my thoughts; then it may be entered in another book in which the material is more separated and ordered, and the ledger might then contain, in an ordered expression, the connections and explanations of the material that flow from it.<sup>286</sup>

This iterative, networked process of distillation predicates ‘order’ on ‘mess’. Wastebooks mirror the ‘fissured and fragmented’ nature of the personal documentary archive, ‘not differentiating clearly between public and private

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<sup>283</sup> Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Sudelbücher II: Materialhefte, Tagebücher*, ed. by Wolfgang Promies, 4 vols (Munich: Hanser, 1971).

<sup>284</sup> Petra McGillen, ‘Wit, Bookishness, and the Epistemic Impact of Note-taking: Lichtenberg’s *Sudelbücher* as Intellectual Tools’, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 90 (2016), 501-528 (p. 503).

<sup>285</sup> McGillen, ‘Wit, Bookishness’, p. 512.

<sup>286</sup> Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Steven Tester (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), p. 67. Italics and parenthesis from the original.



histories and not troubling to create narrative logic to give meaning to the succession of events [...] [T]hey are always in process, made in the movement of materials from one record to another'.<sup>287</sup> Lichtenberg's call for a scholarly imitation of bookkeeping practices suggests a potential in accounting practice that far exceeds the specific task of scrutinizing incomes and expenditures, and provide a more generalised means of organising the transfer of information and managing affairs of all kinds.

From the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth, the particular processes associated with bookkeeping were being distilled into more foundational and transferable principles; a systematic manner was rising up from the jumbled materials of personal and commercial life. The second edition of the *Cyclopaedia* demonstrates a shift in perceptions about the role of waste-books. In Chambers' first edition, the article on bookkeeping begins on page 117 of volume one and ends on 118; in Abraham Rees's much expanded second edition, completed in 1819, the article is the first to appear in volume five and takes up 27 pages, including a collection of templates. In the earlier version, Chambers entered straight into the particularities of single and double entry, while the later version supplemented the original text's opening with a more general claim about the nature of reading associated with accounting: it begins, 'Book-Keeping is the art of recording mercantile transactions in a regular and systematic manner'; such an art is characterised by accuracy and convenience.<sup>288</sup> But Rees's version also demonstrates the increasing specialisation and professionalization of accounting practice by excluding some of the more ambiguous terms present in the first edition and by dispensing with the waste book. For example, Chambers had elaborated: there was often a third book, a 'Great Book; call'd also *Post-book, Book of Extracts, &c.*, is a huge Volume [...] This is the Wast-book still further digested'. This commodious 'Great Book' offered a storehouse for the heterogenous miscellany of documents and commonplaces with which domestic accounts had previously been bundled. The second edition took a different approach, demonstrating that even with the increasing

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<sup>287</sup> Jason Scott-Warren, 'Early Modern bookkeeping and Life-Writing Revisited: Accounting for Richard Stonley', *Past & Present*, 230.11 (2016), 151-170 (p. 154).

<sup>288</sup> 'Bookkeeping', in *Cyclopaedia; or the Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, ed. by Abraham Rees, 39 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1819), V, unpaginated.

variety of new accounting methods the waste-book had an indistinct and chiefly pedagogical function:

Where subsidiary books are kept for every kind of business, a waste book like the following may be dispensed with: though such will be found highly useful, both an index and a day book. But, in teaching, a book of this kind is essentially necessary, not only as connecting the other books, and giving a ready reference to each, but as affording a regular history of the business [...] It is perhaps this want of this knowledge that renders the theory of book-keeping so much more obscure than the practice.<sup>289</sup>

This description situates the waste-book as a mediating text, a ‘connecting’ link between books, and as the regulatory basis for an otherwise convoluted and extensive process. In its comprehensive jumble, the waste-book preserves a ‘regular history’; even as commentators highlight the expendability of such a book, the principles of probity and accuracy for which the whole process strives begins here, in the waste.

The precise nature and function of the waste-book was a key contention for Bentham. L. J. Hume notes that Bentham relied on the article on bookkeeping from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, though he found many of its terms to be confusing. One of Bentham’s key departures from the Italian method is outlined in a manuscript draft of writings on annuity, composed around 1800, in which he argued that the double entry system had become a site of conflict between mercantile and vernacular registers, a system notable only for its ‘obscurity, and inutility [sic] and incompetency’ that constituted ‘a language composed entirely of fictions, and understood by nobody but the higher clan of merchants and their clerks’ (Plate II).<sup>290</sup> Describing his preferred system, he argued that the ‘technical nomenclature’ associated with bookkeeping was a ‘perpetual source of confusion’, and in every case only intelligible when ‘the explanation of it [is] subjoined in common language’.<sup>291</sup> He focussed on the misnomer ‘waste-book’ – ‘Waste-Book [is] better termed the Chronological Book Ledger [...]’ – before complaining that it is:

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Jeremy Bentham, ‘Annuity Notes’, c.1800 from *Transcribe Bentham*, JB/002/389/002 <<http://www.transcribe-bentham.da.ulcc.ac.uk/td/JB/002/389/002>> [accessed: 17.05.18].

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

delusive absurdity to give the name of Waste to a memorial which  
is the foundation of all the rest, and the original matter  
of which all the rest is but a copy

[...]

According to the proposed plan the matter of the Waste Book  
would be methodized in the first instance by the Elementary  
Books – afterwards collected together and exhibited in  
different masses and different points of view and in different  
masses by the Aggregate Books.<sup>292</sup>

Bentham's dissatisfaction with 'delusive absurdity' of the word 'waste' was typical of his persistent interest in the clarity and felicity of language. The deleted word 'memorial' indicates a longstanding discomfort with the way in which the term 'waste' disrupts the regimented chronology of accounting practice. As early as 1680, Thomas Browne had referred to 'the MEMORIAL vulgarly called a Waste-Book'.<sup>293</sup> Bentham's fragment reveals a temporal crux at the heart of the waste-book's operations, and more broadly a confusion over the relationship of notetaking to time: at first Bentham rejected the term waste on the basis that this 'matter' is a 'memorial' – preserving something that has passed – before striking the phrase through and referring to the waste as 'original matter', novel beginnings. This pivot activates a tension between the irreducible and the hybrid present within the term 'elementary' itself, for which the operative definition 'points at once to contradictory meanings: to constitute a foundational part or first principle and to compound from these same parts in such a way as to unleash their combinatorial potential'.<sup>294</sup> The elementary is both the ultimate first principle, distilled from an abundance of data, and the roughly-hewn first record, the first point of mediation as a transaction is inscribed into a codified system. Ascribing the term elementary to the waste-book is perhaps an attempt on Bentham's part to elide its otherwise ephemeral status to focus instead on its foundational importance. This revision also represents a turn away from term's bibliographic association with recycled 'papers that were once part of a published text [...] or sheets that were once used in the book production process'

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Thomas Browne, *The Infallible, Most Accurate, and Most Concise Method of Merchant's Accompts* (London: A. G. and J. P., 1680).

<sup>294</sup> Call for Proposals, *Romantic Elements* (NASSR: Chicago, 2019) <  
<https://nassrchicago2019.wordpress.com/cfp/>> [accessed: 1.08.18]

which were then employed in the physical composition of a new book.<sup>295</sup> If printers' waste such as this represents the material incorporation of one (or some) parts of books within another, Bentham's shift from the waste-book to the elementary book represents an attempted delineation and separation of one book from another. Bentham's writings in print, either side of the turn of the century, demonstrate not only his departures from the Italian system, but the ways in which the principles of continual comparison and oversight and the strict regulation of knowledge transfer could be stretched and amplified to form the basis of a universal scheme for institutional management.

Double-entry bookkeeping in its more conventional usage sits at the heart of Celeste Langan's analysis of the 'collusion of form and substance' that shapes poetic depictions of vagrancy and vagrant poetics in the early nineteenth century.<sup>296</sup> In Langan's analysis, the logic of the waste-book corresponds to that of the wastelands or commons. Langan's sense of a poetry out of place and out of time is central to my theorisation of fugitive texts. Langan writes: 'Insofar as circulation of capital entails infinite expansion, its movements correspond with the vagrant's, whose comings and goings are similarly without end'.<sup>297</sup> To what extent, then, are romantic writers' composition practices and their thinking about the expansion and utilization of knowledge shaped by the conventions of bookkeeping? How far does bookkeeping (not the circulation of capital in itself but the record of its movements) shape and condition manuscript drafting and compilation?

## II. Pauper management: 'Every thing is comparative'

### i. 'Nothing within knowledge that is not within reach'

For Bentham, there was much more than money at stake in accurate accounts. 'Good bookkeeping is the hinge on which good management will turn', he wrote in his plan

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<sup>295</sup> Adam Smyth, *Material Texts in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 137.

<sup>296</sup> Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 60.

<sup>297</sup> Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy*, p. 62.

for ‘Pauper Management’.<sup>298</sup> Pecuniary economy, ‘usually regarded as the sole object of book-keeping, will here be but as one out a number; for the system of book-keeping will be neither more nor less than the history of the system of management in all its points,’ he wrote.<sup>299</sup> His own ideas on the appropriate practice and nomenclature for bookkeeping were continually revised, notably in his writings on poorhouse and schoolhouse management (1795-7 and 1815-17 respectively), and in his late writings on public accounting in the 1830s. These new administrative frameworks were designed to separate and regulate people as items in a wider process of accounting and organisation, predicated on new methods of classification and information gathering. Bentham worked to formulate a means by which printed periodicals and books might enable the same degree of visibility and comparability as his manuscripts, turning to the printed table as a means of gathering, organising and representing as wide a range of materials as possible.

In late eighteenth-century England, the administration of poor relief had long been devolved to local parishes, resulting in an unregulated and inconsistent system that vested power in annually appointed Poor Overseers, unpaid and amateur wardens who worked by irregular methods largely regarded to be haphazard at best and fraudulent at worst.<sup>300</sup> By 1795, the price of wheat was soaring and the ‘double panic of famine and revolution’ setting in.<sup>301</sup> It became clear that ‘*the pay of the day-labourer is not adequate to his necessities*’ and that a new plan for centralised relief was greatly needed.<sup>302</sup> Bentham’s plans for a profit-making, joint-stock National

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<sup>298</sup> Jeremy Bentham, ‘Outlines of a Work Entitled Pauper Management Improved’, in Michael Quinn ed., *Writings on the Poor Laws*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), II, 488-694 (p. 541). All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *OPMI* in footnotes.

<sup>299</sup> *OPMI*, p. 542.

<sup>300</sup> For a detailed survey of the reform of accounting practices in relation to poor relief see Verna Care, ‘The significance of a “correct and uniform system of accounts” to the administration of the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834’, *Accounting History Review*, 21.2 (2011), 121-142.

<sup>301</sup> On the food riots see John Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England, c. 1550-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 165-261; Shani D’Cruze and Louise A. Jackson, *Women, Crime and Justice in England since 1660* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 86-89.

<sup>302</sup> David Davies, ‘Dedication to the Honourable Board of Agriculture’, in *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered in Three Parts* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1795), p. 6. See Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 30.

Charity Company, a completely separate and self-sufficient ‘pauper kingdom’, would provide relief from indigence and idleness for England’s poor, uniting the country’s ‘straggling’ and ‘unconnected’ poor houses in one totalising institution, ‘a single administrative entity pursuing common principles’.<sup>303</sup>

In 1797, at the request of Sir John Sinclair, President of the Board of Agriculture, Bentham produced a series of ‘extracts’ of his work on pauper management for publication in the *Annals of Agriculture*, including a blank ‘Pauper Population Table’ and ‘Table of Cases Calling for Relief’ (Plate III).<sup>304</sup> This was no usual publication of a completed essay, but itself a call for readers’ participation in his research, and one particularly suited to the form of the periodical *Annals*. Bentham’s ‘extracts’ were prefaced by a letter from the author addressed to Arthur Young that deals almost exclusively with the printing of these two tables and the particular circulation and reputation of the *Annals* themselves. Bentham flatters his readers, writing in admiration of the ‘treasure of information’ that the publication represents, and recounting the ways in which his ownership of the ‘complete’ series had been disrupted by lending some ‘twenty-five or thirty numbers’ to a friend, who lent it to another friend.<sup>305</sup> Since losing track of these initial volumes, Bentham reassures his audience that ‘not a number of the *Annals* shall ever be wanting to [his] shelves’.<sup>306</sup> He also utilises the typographical trope of the elongated dash in an oblique reference to ‘——— —’, or William Pitt, then Prime Minister; ‘(blanks are better here than words)’.<sup>307</sup> This typographical ambiguity draws attention to the material form of the *Annals* themselves and introduces the conceptual problem of visibility in material textual terms: how should the tables be printed, and indeed should they be printed at all? Bentham’s anecdote about the circulation of the *Annals* and his wry favouring of ‘blanks’ in the letterpress are a strategic set-up: regarding the inclusion of a blank population table – a means of statistical data collection that he intends to be circulated, completed and returned, with a view to making more informed financial projections – Bentham asks:

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<sup>303</sup> *OPMI*, p. 488. See Charles Bahmueller, *The National Charity Company: Jeremy Bentham’s Silent Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 5.

<sup>304</sup> *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: Volume V*, ed. by Alexander Taylor Milne (London: UCL Press, 2017), pp. 369-371.

<sup>305</sup> *OPMI*, p. 464.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

Knowing so well your zeal for zeal-worthy objects, and mindful of your often-experienced kindness, I cannot on this occasion harbour a doubt of your assistance. But in what shape will it be most convenient and eligible for you to give it me? Will you reprint the *heads* alone, upon the plan of common letter-press, and without the form of a table? Or will you accept of an impression, of the same number as that of the *Annals*, for the purpose of annexing a copy to each copy of your next number?<sup>308</sup>

This reflective questioning of the particular ‘shape’ of the page and the preference for textual ‘annexation’ over the implicit limitations of ‘common letter-press’ shows Bentham pushing at the limits of bibliographic convention and replicating in print the comparative mobility of manuscript papers with marginal headings. His correspondence with Young reveals that the editor had been responsive to Bentham’s requests for data on at least three occasions, but the tables represent another kind of effort in reader participation en masse.<sup>309</sup> Here, an aim and effect of the printed codex is the ‘incitement to writing by hand’.<sup>310</sup> The book, therefore, is not a singular and static repository, but a vehicle for papers that would be taken out, filled out, and further circulated.

The turn to statistical analysis ‘encouraged more systematic investigation of social consequences and of probabilities’ and ‘a fact-based approach to reforming the Poor Laws’, shifts that would eventually lead to the organisation of the first census in 1801.<sup>311</sup> The proposed survey grounded a comparative system of management in paper tools and print distribution – for Bentham, an ‘indiscriminate kind of circulation’ – in much the same way as his own personal drafting processes, favouring constant oversight and comparison.<sup>312</sup> This was part of a much broader

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<sup>308</sup> Jeremy Bentham, ‘Situation and Relief of the Poor’, in *Writings on the Poor Laws*, II, 467-486 (p. 468). All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *SRP* in footnotes.

<sup>309</sup> *CJB*, V, pp. 85-90.

<sup>310</sup> Peter Stallybrass, ‘Printing and the Manuscript Revolution’, in *Explorations in Communication and History*, ed. by Barbie Zelizer (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 111-18 (p. 111).

<sup>311</sup> Jeremy Black, *Geographies of Imperial Power: The British World, 1688-1815* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), p. 269.

<sup>312</sup> *SRP*, p. 468. Indeed, the print publication of the tables of cases was one means by which the author himself could obtain copies. He wrote to Arthur Young on 8 September 1797: ‘If you print any of these Papers, especially the Table of Cases calling for Relief, do me the favour to apprise me of your determination as soon as formed, that I may apply to your Printer to print off some extra-copies for me to give away. What you do not print return to

trend in the development of statistical research and the collation of experiential knowledge: the newly founded Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, for example, was engaged in turning ‘inquiry into all that concerns the poor, and promotes their happiness, [into] a SCIENCE’, with members submitting reports on their work.<sup>313</sup> Bentham’s tables and these wider efforts in statistical research entailed a Baconian emphasis on empirical observation and a continuation of the mid-century work by a group of researchers that Joanna Innes has described as ‘economic antiquarians’, pioneers in economic history who produced wide-ranging compilations and annals, and who developed new research methods and classification systems.<sup>314</sup> This shared stock of methods utilised across multiple intersecting domains of practice will be invaluable to Bentham later in his career as he works to reformulate the encyclopaedic tree of knowledge, arguing the necessary interdependence and mutuality between theory and practice.

Bentham’s ‘Table of Cases Calling for Relief’ or ‘general Map of *Pauper-Land*, with all the *Roads* to it’ (Plate III) represents a further nod towards the kinds of tabular presentation associated with naturalists and encyclopaedists.<sup>315</sup> In it, Bentham divides the ‘indigent’ classes into two main groups or ‘heads’, those for whom poverty has an ‘internal’ cause and those for whom the cause is ‘external’. The first grouping contains four subgroups, each subdivided, while the latter contains three, subdivided into seventeen. Bentham writes that the table is a ‘close-packed specimen, already you behold it in all its shapes’, further alluding to the collecting and classification practices of antiquarians and natural historians, and the dynamic mutability of the paper table (‘all its shapes’).<sup>316</sup> Bentham explains that, while the first table is intended as a mode of data collection, the latter table is totalising and generic, comprised of:

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me. The Table of Cases etc. I am in continual want of and have no correct copy of.’ *CJB*, V, p. 375n1.

<sup>313</sup> *Reports of the Society of Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, 7 vols (London: 1798-1817), I, xii. See Joanna Innes, *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 159.

<sup>314</sup> Innes, *Inferior Politics*, p. 143.

<sup>315</sup> Bentham refers in his published letter to a manuscript version of the table, though it does not survive. Manuscripts relating to the ‘Table of Cases Calling for Relief’ can be found in UCL Box 2 f. 491, Box 133 f.91-2, and Box 153 f. 155.

<sup>316</sup> *SRP*, p. 470.



every class, and every individual that can ever enter into the composition of the general mass: - the *coming-and-going* stock, as well as the *permanent*: - the *able-bodied*, as well as the *infirm*: - those who, under the existing order of things, come in but for *casual relief*; as well as those who, under the system of *community-maintenance*, are *constantly* in the *House*; and those who, under the system of *home-maintenance*, are *constantly*, upon the list of *pensioners*.<sup>317</sup>

By way of the table, the whole spectrum of ‘indigence’ might be beheld at ‘a single glance.’

The comprehensive table replicates the visual field of Bentham’s famed panopticon penitentiary, to which he had alluded earlier in his introductory letter for the *Annals*. At the time of writing, Bentham’s contract, granted to him by the 1794 Penitentiary for Convicts Act, had not yielded a site upon which to erect the panopticon, despite Bentham’s considerable financial outlay. By the logic of the panopticon, Bentham had written in 1791, the ‘Gordion knot of the Poor Laws’ would not be ‘cut’ but ‘untied – All by a simple idea in Architecture’.<sup>318</sup> This ‘idea’ was based on a totalising apprehension for which everything is held in place and up to view, a principle that underwrites the whole panopticon project, but also the ‘close-packed specimen’ of the printed table, and the crammed margins of the manuscript by which ‘the greatest possible quantity of matter presents itself at a view’.<sup>319</sup> In each case – whether in the building or on the page – Bentham was working towards a system of management predicated on the total and instantaneous comprehension of all possible data.

It was this totalising visibility that Bentham sought to replicate in his adaptation of double entry bookkeeping. Together, the two tables described above were preparatory materials working towards the draft of two interconnected volumes, *Pauper Systems Compared* and *Pauper Management Improved*.<sup>320</sup> In the latter work, Bentham outlines a new system comprised of 250 workhouses financed

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<sup>317</sup> *SRP*, p. 477.

<sup>318</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon: or, The Inspection House* (Dublin: Thomas Byrne, 1791), p. iii.

<sup>319</sup> *SRP*, 470; *CJB*, II, 512.

<sup>320</sup> For a full publication history of variant editions see Michael Quinn, ‘Editorial Introduction’, *Writings on the Poor Laws*, I, xi-xvi, xvii-xxiv.

by private investment, for which facilities would be purpose-built. Describing his plan in *Pauper Management Improved*, Bentham dedicates chapter ten to bookkeeping, and to the outline of a new system based on ‘Compactness and simultaneous transparency’, whereby there will be ‘no false musters – no running to and fro – no mislayings and huntings – no crossings and justlings, for the purpose and survey or registration: - every person, and every thing, within view and within reach at the same instant.’<sup>321</sup> This method of ‘*comparative* or *tabular* bookkeeping’ is designed around the apprehension and assimilation of information, forgoing the chaos of the waste-book and privileging instead ‘a book of the *methodical* kind’.<sup>322</sup> Here, in a method reminiscent of marginal contenting, ‘the *heads* – as in management, the *principles* of the system – will be governed by the *objects* or *ends* which it has in view’.<sup>323</sup> These heads, generative topic words, have a dual reach: in Bentham’s words, their function is ‘*preservative* or saving’ as much as it is ‘*productive* or *augmentative*’; that is, this system is as much concerned with making as it is in saving across a variety of spheres: ‘*Health – comfort – industry – morality – discipline* – and *pecuniary economy*’.<sup>324</sup> Maintaining growth and efficiency is predicated on a form of management that foregrounds a dual focus on what ‘*has been*, in order that it may, in no *future* period, be suffered to grow *worse*, but in every future period be made to grow *better and better* in as high degree as may be’.<sup>325</sup> This trajectory, looking back in order to move forward, cannot regard any aspect of management as ‘single and insulated’, but rather ‘every thing [sic] is comparative; under every head, the management in each house presents an object of comparison to the management of every other’.<sup>326</sup> This expansive and restlessly comparative reach mirrors the workings of marginal contenting, by which anything can be placed in conversation with anything else, revealing a continuity between materials and method, and the aggregate system’s dependence on the continual separation, transferal and aggregation of knowledge.

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<sup>321</sup> *OPMI*, p. 393.

<sup>322</sup> *OPMI*, p. 392; 393.

<sup>323</sup> *OPMI*, p. 542.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

The account books envisioned for Bentham's workhouses did not only record transactions, but were tools that facilitated reprimanding inmates for their transgressions (recorded in a black book, a register of instances of 'high delinquency'), and rewarding them for good behaviour as they worked off their debts and demonstrated '*uncalled-for*, and unexpected manifestations of merit', recorded in a red book.<sup>327</sup> In this context, Bentham provided his most detailed explanation of how books mediate the binary between two forms of knowledge, elementary and aggregate. He wrote that these terms indicate 'the natural and fundamental distinctions between book and book, in a set of books [...] – and they apply, not only to books in which *pecuniary economy* is concerned, but to all the several books that bear relation to *other* heads of management.'<sup>328</sup> Intuitively, chronological accounting is governed by the march of '*time* merely', while elementary 'entries are first written into the chronological book and then copied out into the aggregate book, since 'elementary entries are of course the foundation of the aggregate'.<sup>329</sup>

Bookkeeping in the workhouse was not relegated to a solely administrative sphere, but present at all levels of operation as a key mechanism for regulating knowledge transfer and mediating experience. Bentham stipulated that within the poorhouse each inmate would keep an elementary book in which, like a diary, they would record their own health, meals, and activities including the 'subject-matter worked upon', 'utensils worked with', 'quantity of work done', 'places of work'.<sup>330</sup> Unlike the miscellaneous waste book, these diaries comprised a microcosm of an institutional architecture that structured life within the workhouse on the basis of a continual process of 'Separation and Aggregation', categorisations and divisions designed to regulate the transfer of information and control purportedly transgressive desires.<sup>331</sup> Divisions between people, for example, are based on 'sex and sex', between the '*indigenous* and *quasi-indigenous* stock' of the 'non-adult class' and the more dangerous '*coming-and-going* stock, who might excite hankerings after emancipation, by flattering pictures of the world at large'.<sup>332</sup> In this way, the poles of

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<sup>327</sup> *OPMI*, p. 549.

<sup>328</sup> *OPMI*, p. 545.

<sup>329</sup> *OPMI*, p. 546.

<sup>330</sup> Quoted in L. J. Hume, 'The Development of Industrial Accounting: The Bentham's Contribution', *Journal of Accounting Research*, 8.1 (1970), 21-33 (p. 27).

<sup>331</sup> *OPMI*, p. 514.

<sup>332</sup> *OMPI*, p. 531; p. 535

luxury and poverty are flattened into a more regular sufficiency, and ‘separation’ is leveraged as a means of narrowing the scope of what it is possible to know. To these ends, concluding his chapter on the on the various comforts enjoyed by apprentices, Bentham described their diet, wherein there will be:

No unsatisfied longings, no repinings: - nothing within knowledge that is not within reach [...] the enjoyment of him who has never known any sort by one, though it were the most insipid sort, does not yield in anything to that of the most luxurious feeder [...] in this way all the efforts of art are but a vain struggle to pass the limits set to enjoyment by the hand of nature.<sup>333</sup>

The relationship between empirical knowledge and desire was such that Bentham determined one could not want what one did not know, and that restricting knowledge in this way would provide ‘comfort’ at a time of mass unrest in relation to the availability and price of food.

The regulation of ‘longings’ and ‘repinings’ constituted one mechanism of disciplinary power as Bentham worked to maximise usefulness. Diet was a key contention in writings on the condition of England’s poor. In *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry*, addressing those who accused the poor of mismanaging their funds, David Davis wrote of the distinction between sufficiency and luxury in relation to diet:

Still you exclaim, *Tea is a luxury*. If you mean fine hyson tea, sweetened with refined sugar, and softened with cream, I readily admit it be so. But *this* is not the tea of the poor. Spring water, just coloured with a few leaves of the lowest-priced tea, and sweetened with the brownest sugar, is the luxury for which you reproach them [...] Instead therefore of grudging them so small an enjoyment as a morsel of good bread with their miserable tea, instead of attempting to shew how it may yet be possible for them to live *worse* than they do; it well becomes the wisdom and humanity of the present age to devise a means how they may be better accommodated.<sup>334</sup>

The price of hops and keeping cows put small beer and milk out of reach for many, and so, as Davies notes, people turned to tea, ‘the cause, but not the consequence of the distress of the poor’.<sup>335</sup> Writing on Bentham’s reading of Davies, Charles

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<sup>333</sup> *OMPI*, p. 659.

<sup>334</sup> Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

Bahmeuller notes that he underlined Davies' words on the matter and wrote in the margin, 'hydrophobia': implicitly, 'let them drink water.'<sup>336</sup> The logic of 'nothing within knowledge that is not within reach' can function to two fundamentally different ends: on the one hand by way of the table, by which 'the greatest possible quantity of matter presents itself at a view' – everything within reach and thus everything known – and on the other hand by way of these 'limits' to enjoyment, the idea that limiting knowledge and experience can in turn limit 'longing.' Bentham is thus concerned not only with bringing the whole to view but with mediating and regulating, with a kind of classifying that also restrains and obscures, and with striking a balance between the diffusion and the restriction of knowledge. This interplay between what is brought to light and what remains in the dark will surface again in *Chrestomathia*, as Bentham develops an educational programme founded on the panopticon principle, and a new encyclopaedical nomenclature.

ii. 'Useful knowledge augmented and disseminated'

Bentham's writings on poorhouse management connect infrastructural, mechanistic detail with broader, deeper epistemological problems. At their heart, they seek to translate fugitive materials, unconnected experiences and scattered observations into a coherent method, a managerial system for regulating experience and for ordering knowledge. Box 149 in the Bentham archive at University College London contains 367 pages of miscellaneous and fragmentary manuscript material: plans, drafts of prose writings spanning 1775 to 1831, manuscript advertisements and title pages, and 'Miscellaneous collectanea' in hands other than Bentham's. Among these, is the 'brouillon' or rough sketch of a section titled 'Useful Knowledge augmented and diffused' (Plate IV). This outline shows how, by way of an augmented bookkeeping process, 'apprentices' at the National Charity Company could contribute to the improvement of various branches of science, from medicine to meteorology.<sup>337</sup> The sketch formed the basis of chapter twelve of Bentham's *Outline*, published in the

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<sup>336</sup> Bahmueller, *The National Charity Company*, p. 37.

<sup>337</sup> On Bentham and the diffusion of knowledge see James Burns, 'From "Polite Learning: to "Useful Knowledge"', *History Today*, 36.4 (1986).

<<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/polite-learning-useful-knowledge>> [Accessed: 03.08.20].

*Annals of Agriculture*, in which he begins by elaborating on the relationship between knowledge and experience:

Observation and experiment compose the basis of all knowledge. This basis, in proportion as it spreads in extent, swells in solidity and value. Hitherto the stock of relative *data*, or known facts, the materials of which this basis is composed, has been in almost every line, and more especially in the most useful lines, scanty, accidental, irregular, incomplete, both as to time and place, – the scattered fruit of the uncombined exertions of unconnected individuals.<sup>338</sup>

Bentham's distribution of the blank population tables seeks to redress both this dependence on 'scattered' knowledge, building in its stead a 'solid' basis for management, and this lack of connection between individuals. Bentham's proposed National Charity Company was designed to order and cement the relations between people and between different divisions of knowledge, forming not only an institution but an 'epoch'.<sup>339</sup> Chapter twelve further utilises comparative bookkeeping and the circulation of blank tables to contribute to and codify the sciences. Discipline by discipline the chapter outlines the gradual recording and ordering of information through a series of '*mess books*' designed upon the principles of the waste-book (immediate, chronological, miscellaneous) and more orderly books specific to particular types of information (the '*fuel book*', '*house-lighting book*' and '*manufacturing-consumption books*', for example).<sup>340</sup>

Bentham outlines two mechanisms by which knowledge might be advanced: the first by '*extension or augmentation*', the second by '*propagation or dissemination*'.<sup>341</sup> By extension, more can be known, discovered or understood; by propagation, more of that knowledge can be diffused among a great proportion of the population. For example, in the field of medicine, if each industry-house kept a proper stock of '*sick and ailing books*' according to an established and universally applied plan, 'with proper abstracts, periodically made and published', the information thus recorded can be used to extend what is known to the field of medicine by increasing its points of reference by 'upwards' of a million new

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<sup>338</sup> *OMPI*, p. 624.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> *OMPI*, p. 626-7.

<sup>341</sup> *OMPI*, p. 624.

informants.<sup>342</sup> For a method of organising such books, Bentham refers back to chapter ten, on bookkeeping, and offers more detail on the particular headings to be used for each book. He also makes reference to ‘a table of symptoms, already constructed for this purpose, with columns, sixteen in number, [which] may be seen in a paper by Dr. *George Fordyce*, published in the *Transactions of the Medical Society* – London, 1793 – under the title of “*An attempt to improve the evidence of medicine*”.’<sup>343</sup> Fordyce’s article contains ‘Blank Schemes for Taking Cases’, and augments the routine publication of case notes by ‘placing the progress of each particular symptom by itself, and shewing its connection with, and the relation it bears to, the other symptoms of the disease’, synthesising a variety of evidence in order to form firm diagnoses.<sup>344</sup> In order to better classify the resulting findings, Fordyce (known to Bentham as his brother’s father-in-law) also offers a proposed classification of the population, recorded in the table, and running from the ‘first class’ or ‘those living on their paternal fortune’ through various kinds of merchants, clergy, tradesmen, various classes of professionals (physicians, attorneys etc), down to ‘the last class’, ‘labourers of all denominations’.<sup>345</sup> This class comprises the ‘most disorderly, profligate, debauched set of human beings perhaps in the whole earth’.<sup>346</sup> Fordyce’s tables enable physicians to cross reference the symptoms of one patient with those from a similar class, and also, for example, those recorded during particular weather conditions or in particular geographical areas. In Bentham’s terms, Fordyce’s tables facilitate the ‘extension’ and the ‘dissemination’ of knowledge, leveraging paper instruments such as interconnected books and blank tables to shift emphasis away from what might be regarded as merely book learning from abstract precepts and towards empirical research. Fordyce’s blank tables thus offer a template for medical monitoring and the advancement of knowledge from within Bentham’s Company.

On Bentham’s plan, apprentices within the National Charity Company would not only gain in their own acquisition of knowledge through monitorial teachings,

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<sup>342</sup> *OPMI*, p. 624-5.

<sup>343</sup> *OMPI*, p. 625.

<sup>344</sup> George Fordyce, ‘An Attempt to Improve the Evidence of Medicine’, *Transactions of a Society for the Improvement of Medical and Chirurgical Knowledge* (1793), 243-93 (p. 243).

<sup>345</sup> Fordyce, ‘Evidence of Medicine’, p. 255.

<sup>346</sup> Fordyce, ‘Evidence of Medicine’, p. 260.

but would become themselves the materials of knowledge production, recording all aspects of their daily experiences in order to provide a vast storehouse of information. The ‘industry-house system’ represents what Bentham characterises as a ‘*Polychrest – an instrument of many uses*’.<sup>347</sup> This is the second reference in Bentham’s *Outline* to the polychrest, the first appears in chapter four, ‘Management Rules’, where it is glossed as an instrument with diverse uses, commonly associated with chemistry and with its usage by Bacon.<sup>348</sup> Bentham’s instrumentalization of the industry house in the production, organisation and dissemination of knowledge, and in service to ‘several scientific societies – medical, philosophical and economical’ – is one aspect of a much broader, indeed lifelong, project of codification, by which the disorderly classes of people (‘indigents’, among others) and disorderly classes of materials (the ‘*mess book*’) might be regulated.<sup>349</sup> As a reference to Baconian empiricism and to cross-disciplinary uses of instruments that might be put to a range of purposes, the polychrest serves as an apt symbol for this project, and was perhaps in Bentham’s mind when he further developed the principles outlined here in his later work on school-house management, *Chrestomathia*.

### III. *Chrestomathia*: Reading ‘table-wise’

#### i. ‘*Dark spots*’ and dead languages

*Chrestomathia* (1815-7) presents a proposed curriculum and set of teaching methods for use in a monitorial day school for children of the middle classes, designed on ‘the *Panopticon* principle’.<sup>350</sup> In the monitorial model, more advanced children teach

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<sup>347</sup> *OMPI*, p. 632.

<sup>348</sup> *OPMI*, p. 135. Seventeenth-century Swiss chemist Christophe Glaser gave the name *sel polychreste* to potassium sulphate, for the preparation of which his recipe was widely used: see *The Compleat Chymist, or, a New Treatise of Chymistry* (London: John Starkey, 1677), pp. 159–60.

<sup>349</sup> *OMPI*, p. 632.

<sup>350</sup> *C*, p. 13. On the wider context of educational reform in the early nineteenth century and the development of the monitorial system by Lancaster and Bell, see Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 92-96, and Simon Schaffer, ‘How Disciplines Look’, in *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, ed. by Andrew Barry and Georgina Born (New York, 2013), pp. 57-81 (p. 66-68).



their younger peers, so that pupils ‘do not merely become auditors and observers’ but – like the workers within the National Charity Company – ‘become part of the circuit of evaluation’.<sup>351</sup> The workhouse and schoolhouse alike are sites in which knowledge is continually produced, consumed and reproduced. This section positions *Chrestomathia* as the next stage in Bentham’s development of a comparative method and a phenomenology of reading. His utilisation of printed tables in *Chrestomathia* functions in quite a different way to the ‘indiscriminate circulation’ of tables in the *Annals*: between these two projects, Bentham’s attention has shifted from the pursuit of knowledge to its comprehensive display. I focus on the interplay between expansive paper media and the metaphors used to navigate, regulate and account for knowledge on the page. Bentham leverages concepts such as ‘joint-tenancy’ and ‘debateable lands’ [sic], and the corollary work of husbandry, botany and natural history, to fashion a disciplinary system through encyclopaedic tables.<sup>352</sup> In what follows, I explore what Simon Schaffer has described as ‘the topography of disciplinary systems’ in the spaces and contours of Bentham’s reworked encyclopaedism.<sup>353</sup> In this formulation, the page is a kind of material terrain that is worked upon in various ways by the reader. Through his new nomenclature and its associated tables, Bentham explores the relationships between productive space and the waste, or that which is unmapped or unmappable, resulting in a method that is rooted firmly in the relationship between disparate materials.

A manuscript title page for *Chrestomathia* (Plate V), Bentham’s only published work on education, emphasises the volume’s unstable status as a ‘collection of papers’, a compiled text with a staggered publication history. Appropriately perhaps, no definitive, complete edition of *Chrestomathia* was published in Bentham’s lifetime; the full text was not brought together until the publication of his collected works in 1843. The project’s first part had been published anonymously in 1815 and reprinted in 1816. Part II, with pagination continuing from the 1816 volume, appeared in 1817 and consisted solely of a fifth appendix, ‘Essay on Nomenclature and Classification, or On the Construction of

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<sup>351</sup> Frances Ferguson, ‘Educational Rationalisation / Sublime Reason’, *Romantic Circles Praxis* (2010) <[https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/sublime\\_education/index.html](https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/sublime_education/index.html)>. [accessed: 12.09.20].

<sup>352</sup> *C*, p. 59; p. 217.

<sup>353</sup> Simon Schaffer, ‘How Disciplines Look’, p. 65.

Encyclopaedical Trees’. This volume remaps the encyclopaedia, redefining intellectual disciplines and the relationships between them, and offering this new system of classification as the basis for a new pedagogy. The ‘Essay on Nomenclature’ also sets out a justification for Bentham’s ‘greek-sprung’ language, a linguistic turn that is apparent from that first manuscript title page.<sup>354</sup> Bentham glossed this new term on the first page of his preface: it is a ‘word, formed from two Greek words, signifying *conducive to useful learning*. After it was framed, it was found employed in a book of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and would probably be to be [sic] found in other books’.<sup>355</sup> Bentham’s provenance and etymology – *khrestos* (useful) and *manthanein* (to learn) – recalls the polychrest described in *Pauper Management Improved* and suggests a thread of continuity between the two panoptic projects and their relationship to useful knowledge.

The word ‘Chrestomathia’ also invokes multiple practices of compilation and canonicity. Bentham engages with the figurative language associated with anthologies in two contrasting ways in *Chrestomathia*, first by invoking the trope of the collection as a gathering of flowers, and second by deriding variety as a distracting ornament unbefitting a place of learning: even the book requires its ‘distraction preventing principle[s]’.<sup>356</sup> Bentham characterises the present work as a particularly fecund gathering, recalling the anthology’s Greek roots as a garland of flowers:<sup>357</sup>

Thus it is that weeds of all sorts, even the most poisonous, are the natural produce of the vacant mind. For the exclusion of these weeds, no species of husbandry is so effectual, as the filling the soil with flowers, such as the particular nature of the soil is best adapted to produce. What those flowers are can only be known from experiment; and the greater the variety that can be introduced, the greater the chance that the experiment will be attended with success.<sup>358</sup>

Weeds represent knowledge that has neither beauty nor use, nuisances that populate the liminal wastelands of cracks and verges. As Sara Ahmed writes, commenting on

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<sup>354</sup> C, p. 207.

<sup>355</sup> C, p. 1.

<sup>356</sup> C, p. 113.

<sup>357</sup> See Dahlia Porter, ‘Specimen Poetics: Botany, Reanimation, and the Romantic Collection’, *Representations*, 139 (2017), 60-94 (p. 61).

<sup>358</sup> C, p. 24-25.

Alexander Bell's use of the same metaphor in his writings on educational reform, 'weeds could be defined as "plants out of place"', following on from Mary Douglas's reuse of an "old definition" of dirt as "matter out of place".<sup>359</sup> Figuring reading first as husbandry and second as a kind of empirical botany foregrounds both a consistent work ethic and the importance of observation and experience in shaping knowledge, or finding a proper 'place' for each specimen, object or person. Bentham described the 'experimental course of the book' in its preface, making reference both to its propositional contents ('*Experience, observation, experiment* – in these three words may be seen the sources of all our knowledge') and its material textual form.<sup>360</sup> Bentham's alternate name for an inspection house was '*Elaboratory*' – eliding the spaces dedicated to experiment and the process of articulation.<sup>361</sup> 'Variety' is a contentious force though, both in the '*Elaboratory*' and in the classroom.

*Chrestomathia* resists the implicitly trifling and ornamental logics associated with the anthology. Comparing the extent to which classical as opposed to Chrestomathic learning might prepare a student for a political career, Bentham wrote:

The classic scholar may be better qualified for decorating his speech with rhetorical flowers; but the chrestomathic scholar, after a familiar and thorough acquaintance has been contracted with things, with things of all sorts, will be, in a much more useful and efficient way, qualified for the general course of parliamentary business.<sup>362</sup>

Bentham is careful to mount a defence of his 'collection of papers' by turning its variety to good use. But he is also careful to sidestep the accusation of frivolous scattering and partiality often ascribed to anthologies. Bentham's metaphorical use of flora is part of a wider ecology of metaphors in which the relationship between disciplines and their representation in paper form is expressed. The 'polychrest' is

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<sup>359</sup> Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use: On the Uses of Use* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019). For a critique of Douglas's influential definition, see Joshua Reno, 'Toward a New Theory of Waste: From "Matter out of Place: to Signs of Life"', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 31.3 (2014), 3-27.

<sup>360</sup> C, (1816), p. 13

<sup>361</sup> *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: Volume III: 1781-1788*, ed. by Ian R. Christie (London: UCL Press, 2017), p. 509.

<sup>362</sup> C, p. 40.

soon put to work in the wider ‘field’ of arts and sciences as Bentham sketches out a tool for the cultivation of knowledge.

The word ‘Chrestomathia’ and its nature as a ‘collection of papers’ also invokes the work of didactic compilation and the problems of organisation, visibility and language learning. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the French *chrestomathie* was used to denote a collection of literary passages often for use in language-learning. The linguist Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) compiled the didactic *Chrestomathie arabe* (1806) from manuscripts, for example gathering together a corpus of classical Arabic poetry long before the genre gained ground in British publishing in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Edward Said made a direct comparison between chrestomathic compilation, Sacy’s orientalism, and Bentham’s panoptic principles of organisation:

[Sacy] speaks of his own work as having *uncovered, brought to light, rescued* a vast amount of obscure matter. Why? In order *to place it* together. Knowledge was essentially the *making visible* of material, and the aim of a tableau was the construction of a sort of Benthamite panopticon. Scholarly discipline was therefore a specific technology of disciplinary power: it gained for its user (and his students) tools and knowledge which (if he was a historian) has hitherto been lost.<sup>363</sup>

Said framed Sacy’s *Chrestomathie* as an effort in textual appropriation by which the compiler wrested materials from the presumed brink of loss or waste, and ‘annotated, codified, and arranged them’ into a series of exemplary precepts.<sup>364</sup> These compilations of literature were written in the languages of the middle and far East and intended as a tool by which European students learned Arabic. Bentham’s *Chrestomathia* operates as a ‘technology of disciplinary power’ in a rather different way to Sacy’s compilation, but there is a shared investment in arrangement and ‘*making visible*’, as well as a shared emphasis on language learning. For Bentham, Chrestomathic teaching would allow a pupil to become ‘acquainted with the *structure* of language in general, and that of his *own* language in particular’ by way of transformative grammatical exercises.<sup>365</sup> In this way, ‘*hard words*’ will be made

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<sup>363</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 127.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid. See also Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2006), pp. 142-143.

<sup>365</sup> C, p. 74.

‘smooth and easy’, ‘familiar’ as any other; ‘dead languages’ would be understood as though they were ‘living’.<sup>366</sup>

Beyond the classroom, the Chrestomathic rehabilitation of ‘hard’, ‘dead’ and ‘foreign’ words underpins Bentham’s remapping of the encyclopaedic tree. The ‘unaptness’ of existing systems of classification stems from their misuse of language, a problem that Bentham expresses through the lens of visibility and disciplinary power:

True it is that, as there has often been occasion to observe, a *hard word* – a word belonging to a family of words, of which no other member is yet known, constitutes in every field over which it hangs, a *dark spot*: a spot to which no eye, among those in which it excites the mention which that word is employed to express, can turn itself, without giving entrance to sentiments of humiliation and disgust.<sup>367</sup>

Bentham’s proposed new encyclopaedical tree is designed precisely to eliminate the possibility of ‘dark spots’: there will be ‘No parts in it, from which [...] ideas, more or less clear, and *complete*, are not radiated to the surveying eye: in a word, no absolutely *dark spots*: no words that do not contribute their share towards the production of so desirable an effect, as that of substituting the exhilarating perception of mental strength, to the humiliating consciousness of ignorance and weakness’.<sup>368</sup> Darkness thus functions very differently in the Chrestomathic system than it does in the prison panopticon, in which the ‘dark spot’ at the centre houses the all-seeing eye of the inspector. In the prison, power emanates from the darkness at the institution’s centre, while all around the parameter of the building is flooded with light; in the ‘field’ of knowledge, the relation between the centre and the periphery is completely renegotiated.<sup>369</sup>

Bentham defines the ‘field’ in opposition to other, perhaps more familiar spatial domains. His criticism of D’Alembert’s encyclopaedical map begins with a footnote on the imperfection of the very idea of a ‘circle of learning’ suggested by

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<sup>366</sup> C, p. 140.

<sup>367</sup> C, 141.

<sup>368</sup> C, 219.

<sup>369</sup> On the seeming contradiction between these two instantiations of darkness see Miran Bozovic, *An Utterly Dark Spot: Gaze and Body in Early Modern Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 95-120 (p. 120).

the word ‘encyclopaedia’: ‘Moving continually in a circle is no way to get on’ because no real ‘advancement’ can be made.<sup>370</sup> In its stead Bentham proposed the ‘image of a field’, an expanse in which ‘no limitation whatsoever is presented’.<sup>371</sup> This vision of the field eliminates the possibility of ‘dark spots’ by ensuring that all constituent elements held within it are working in mutual conjunction. Bentham’s articulation of the field as a conceptual paradigm worked in tandem with his development of the table as a material textual instrument or ‘polychrest’ for representing the relations between disciplines. Thus *Chrestomathia* consists of tables and notes, visual and textual fields that combine to represent all of knowledge in all its relationality and usefulness. In her own methodological reflections on the nature and scope of the multivalent field of literary studies, Marjorie Levinson turns to biology, and draws on a definition from Brian Goodwin, to define its limits: ‘A field, that is, a spatial domain in which every part has a separate structure determined by the state of the neighbouring parts so that the whole has a specific relational structure.’<sup>372</sup> Within this relational structure, a totalising view works not by shedding universal light, but by a tightly woven interdependence between insight and darkness that is present too in Bentham’s avowed eradication of ‘dark spots’, spaces in which fugitive knowledge – outside of the system – might cultivate misunderstanding and, ultimately, weakness. Levinson writes: ‘textual fields do not merely contain blind spots, they come into being in relation to some particular blindness, peculiar not to a particular person but to [...] a situation (or, a conjuncture). Paradoxically, the existence of this blind spot (this seeing from a certain position that can itself never be fully seen, or not until one vacates the position) is the condition of seeing at all.’<sup>373</sup> Though Bentham works to completely eradicate ‘dark spots’ from his system – ‘to the original darkness, light will, in every instance, have been made to succeed’ – Levinson’s ‘paradox’ lingers.<sup>374</sup> In what ways, then, might light and darkness work together through *Chrestomathia*’s new method and through its collection and use of

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<sup>370</sup> C, 159n1.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Quoted in Marjorie Levinson, *Thinking Through Poetry: Field Reports on Romantic Lyric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 7n19.

<sup>373</sup> Marjorie Levinson, *Thinking Through Poetry*, p. 9.

<sup>374</sup> C, p. 141.

papers? What kinds of fugitive materials, wastelands or ‘dark spots’ are exposed in this new ‘field’ of knowledge?

ii. ‘The topography of disciplinary systems’

The mechanism of ‘joint-tenancy’ by which the arts and sciences, theory and practice are conjoined is central to Bentham’s answer to his own question: ‘What are the uses of advantages derivable from a *tabular* sketch, exhibiting in one view a number, more or less considerable, of the branches of art and science?’<sup>375</sup> Bentham uses an organic metaphor to illustrate the table’s particular usefulness. The diagram, Bentham argues, facilitates ‘conception, retention, combination, generalisation, analysis, distribution, comparison, methodization, invention’:

For all or any of these purposes, with an Encyclopaedical tree in his hand, suited to the particular object which he has in view, skipping backwards and forwards, with the rapidity of thought, from twig to twig, hunting out and pursuing whatsoever analogies it appears to afford, the eye of the artist or of the man of science may, at pleasure, make profit, of the labour expended in the field.<sup>376</sup>

Expressing information ‘Table-wise’ lends the book the mobility and velocity associated with manuscripts and with a labour by which anything can be compared with anything else. Elsewhere in *Chrestomathia*, Bentham elaborates on the process of reading ‘from twig to twig’, noting that the ‘universal trunk’ from which branches extend appears at the top, rather than the bottom of the page, in an ‘apparent contradiction’ from the tree that grows up from the earth. Yet, he explains:

*Roots*, as well as *trunks*, have their *branches*: an in the instance of a numerous tribe of plants, - in a word, in that of *trees* in general, - by so simple a cause as a change in the surrounding medium, - branches being buried in the earth, while roots exposed to the air, - not only under the hand

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<sup>375</sup> C, 206,

<sup>376</sup> C, 216. On the position of poetry in Diderot’s ‘Detailed System of Human Knowledge’ and its reception by Wordsworth and Coleridge, see Robin Valenza, *Literature, Language, and the Rise of the Intellectual Disciplines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 139-172.

of the artist, but even under the hand of Nature, roots are found convertible into branches as well as branches into roots.

Joint-tenancy is expressed through the very conversion of root into branch, through ‘skipping backwards and forwards’ or up and down. The tabular sketch is one method of cultivating and demarcating the field of knowledge. With this tool – the table – in hand, ‘each laborious and inventive adventurer proceeds on in the wilderness, as far as his inclination and the force of his mind will carry him.’<sup>377</sup> And thus the ‘channel’ is transformed; the traveller ‘makes a road’ of a path, a road that is ‘made gradually smoother and smoother’ which each labour, a road constantly ‘gaining upon the waste’, taming the wilderness of uncharted territories.<sup>378</sup>

In Bentham’s plan, all roads lead to *Eudæmonia*, human wellbeing or flourishing.<sup>379</sup> In his final paragraph in the section on the uses of the encyclopaedical table, Bentham’s economic-topographic metaphor takes a geo-historical turn, ‘borrow[ed] [...] from Scottish history’.<sup>380</sup> Musing on possible flaws in his vision of full ‘joint-tenancy’, Bentham admits that ‘in this sketch, may here and there be found (it is true) a small portion of *debateable land* [sic], concerning which it may be dubious, to which of two contiguous districts it may with most propriety be said to belong’.<sup>381</sup> Writing around 1815, Bentham would have been acutely conscious of ‘debatable lands’, contentious border areas between nations, such as that between England and Scotland and such as those disputed during the contemporary Congress of Vienna.<sup>382</sup> As Claire Lamont and Michael Rossington have described, ‘a

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<sup>377</sup> Chambers used a similar metaphor a century earlier, writing that the ‘whole Land of Knowledge’ that the cross-referenced encyclopaedia seeks to open up to the reader ‘appears indeed with the face of a Wilderness, but ‘tis a Wilderness thro’ which the Reader may pursue his Journey as securely, tho not so expeditiously and easily, as thro’ a regular Parterre.’ Quoted in Seth Rudy, “‘The Whole Set to View’: Modelling the Reference Network of Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia*’, unpublished paper delivered at Queen Mary University of London Postgraduate Research Seminar, May 2019.

<sup>378</sup> *C*, p. 217.

<sup>379</sup> On Eudaemonia, Baconian experiment and poetry see Robert Mitchell, ‘Romanticism and the Experience of Experiment’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 46.3 (2015), 132-142.

<sup>380</sup> *C*, p. 217.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> Later, in 1828, historian and Whig politician Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote: ‘The province of literature is a debatable land. It lies on the confines of two distinct territories. It is under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers; and, like other districts similarly situated, it is ill defined, ill cultivated, and ill regulated. Instead of being equally shared between its two



debatable land [...] sets up a contrast between the sources of authority on either side and the unpoliced society which emerges in a territory where government is both disputed and probably distant and seldom effective'.<sup>383</sup> These borderlands were politically and culturally charged spaces for the negotiation of identity, power and culture. Their invocation in *Chrestomathia* lends the project of disciplinary mapping a sense of urgency and wide-ranging importance. Bentham quickly resolves the apprehension, claiming that in the case of the encyclopaedic table any disputed territory 'may with equal propriety, be said to belong to either or to both', shoring up his sense of mutuality, 'joint-tenancy' and 'gaining upon the waste'.<sup>384</sup> *Eudæmonics* presides over the intertwined 'twigs' of the arts and sciences, accommodating all within a '*Common Hall, or central place of meeting, of all the arts and sciences: - change the metaphor, every art, with its correspondence science, is a branch of Eudæmonics.*' Here, Bentham draws attention both to the conviviality of his venture – a brief moment in which the strictly regulated panopticon gives way to the '*Common Hall*', an ideal and implicitly commodious and undifferentiated meeting space. In a rare moment of formal self-reflection ('change the metaphor') Bentham also emphasises to the rich figurative landscape through which he travels, foregrounding the literary – even poetic – nature of the discursive domain in which he participates.

Bentham's foldout tables and extensive notes refashioned the enlightenment 'tree' of knowledge as a table, drawing explicitly on the panoptic principles articulated in earlier works and applying them to the constitution, division and apprehension of disciplines. The table behaved as a practical polychrest or tool, offering a framework that could be transposed and utilised in a number of different projects. For the Multigraph Collective, *Chrestomathia* is indicative of a 'constitutive problem of reading' in the nineteenth century, of a tension, that is, 'between the synoptic identity of the foldout and the serial identity of the book [...]' The foldout became the material means of making possible that which the book

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rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it falls alternately under the sole and absolute dominion of each.' Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Henry Neele, *The Romance of History*', *The Edinburgh Review*, 47 (May 1828), 331-367 (p. 331).

<sup>383</sup> Claire Lamont and Michael Rossington, 'Introduction', in *Romanticism's Debatable Lands*, ed. by Claire Lamont and Michael Rossington (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1-13 (p. 5)

<sup>384</sup> C, p. 217.

could not.<sup>385</sup> That is the case insofar as *Chrestomathia*'s foldout tables expand the book's parameters, making a greater density of relations visible in an instant. But this characterisation eclipses the extent to which the table and the book work in tandem, the one supporting the other either by expansion or by elucidation. This sense of reciprocity between the table and the notes, and between the parameters of the book and the uncharted spaces into which the foldout extends, materialises the key Chrestomathic concept of 'joint-tenancy' and related spatial metaphors such as 'debatable lands', roads and fields.

As the third instantiation of Bentham's four panopticon projects, *Chrestomathia* emphasises the importance of constant visibility and regulation at all levels. In the concluding paragraphs of the work's second preface, Bentham describes the two forms that the ensuing work will take, the one '*Table-Wise*', the other '*Book-Wise*'.<sup>386</sup> Bentham draws his readers' attention to the volume's textual construction and the reading practices that he hoped it would facilitate:

On casting upon the ensuing pages a concluding glance, the eye of the Author cannot but sympathize with that of the reader, in being struck with the singularity of a work which, from the *running titles* to the pages, appears to consist of nothing but *Notes*. Had the whole together – Text and Notes – been printed in the ordinarily *folded* or *book* form, this singularity would have been avoided. But in the view taken of the matter by the Author, it being impossible to form any tolerably adequate judgement on, or even conception of, the whole, without the means of carrying the eye, with unlimited velocity, over every part of the field, - and thus at pleasure ringing the changes upon the different orders, in which the several parts were capable of being surveyed and confronted, - hence presenting them all together upon one and the same plane – or, in one word *Table-wise* – became in this view a matter of necessity.<sup>387</sup>

This process of surveillance and confrontation further materialises principles that readers of Bentham's manuscripts will recognise from his writing on and with marginal contents. Writing 'table-wise' enables the confrontation, at a glance and at speed, of one idea with another that, in a 'Book-wise' format, one might not encounter for several pages (or, in Bentham's case, several hundred). If the blank

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<sup>385</sup> The Multigraph Collective, *Interacting with Print*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>386</sup> C, p. 15.

<sup>387</sup> C, p. 14-15.

table required the ‘indiscriminate’ proliferation of the periodical, the populated table of the encyclopaedic sketch required the expanse of the foldout and the elucidation of the notes.

Replicating the architecture of the book in the architecture of the building, mapping structures of power onto configurations of space, and training students’ attention to roam the expanded field of knowledge in the most efficient way, Bentham cautiously utilised nonlinear, ‘Table-wise’ reading in his instructions for classroom design: ‘Whatever part of the interior of the building is exposed to the view of the Scholars, keep it covered with *the matter of instruction*, in some shape or other: viz, in the shape of *verbal didactic discourse* in print, *or graphical imitations*, or, in some instances, the *things themselves*’.<sup>388</sup> In the visual economy of the panoptic classroom, no space should be wasted, and yet décor of a ‘more *attractive*, and thence *distractive*, occupation, stand *excluded*’.<sup>389</sup> The classroom walls ensure that even free time is likely spent in service to the ‘all-comprehensive’ task of learning. Phillip Connell has argued that Bentham ‘identified the visual realm of print and the written word as the ideal medium for the exercise of political power [...] For Bentham, it was the interiority of acts of reading and writing, their reliance upon visual perception rather than the collective aural experience exploited by the demagogue, that guaranteed their essential rationality.’<sup>390</sup> Relationality is achieved then at the level of the ‘visual realm of print’ in which all connections are immediately visible, and in the classroom in which each student is carefully corralled as an individual rational unit, cut off from ‘collective [...] experience’.<sup>391</sup> There remains, however, the faint possibility of a lapse into waste, as ‘some *fragments of time*’ remain in which no particular exercises have been ‘prescribed’.<sup>392</sup> These are merely the ‘intervening’ moments between the students’ entrance into the classroom and the commencement of a lesson, or between the conclusion of a lesson and the students’ departure. Bentham acknowledged that every schedule and table is shot through with this liminal possibility that a student might, for a moment, think outside

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<sup>388</sup> C, p. 12; p. 20.

<sup>389</sup> C, p. 12; p. 20.

<sup>390</sup> Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 83.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> C, p. 113.

of what is prescribed and fall prey to wasting time. Covering the walls with charts and tables is one preventative method – ‘a distraction preventing principle’ – by which this free time might still be focussed. A further measure is situating the window so that nothing outside of the classroom can be visible, save some necessary light.

iii. Mediating ‘joint tenancy’

*Chrestomathia* worked to discern an order capable of keeping pace with the speed of innovation, the proliferation and expansion of new fields of knowledge, and the concomitant dispersal of materials, to organise ‘an immense mass of art and science, all *new* within these few years’.<sup>393</sup> Thus, as for Coleridge, the development of a new ‘method’ became for Bentham ‘an invaluable tool for expediting and disciplining further knowledge production in a Chrestomathic learning project that aimed ultimately to educate the many.’<sup>394</sup> Bentham’s table, notes and appendixes offered a stubborn corrective to Enlightenment methods for representing and organising knowledge, particularly of the *Encyclopédie*, which, to Bentham’s eye, was ‘groundless’, ‘incomplete’, ‘repetitious’, ‘irregular’, too dependent on human faculties rather than on the nature of disciplinary domains themselves.<sup>395</sup> D’Alembert’s tabular sketch, Bentham writes, bears ‘much the same sort of relation, as a stock of bricks, mortar and timber, deposited by the side of each other, bears to a house. Thus, instead of a structure, ready put together for use, the reader, out of the materials thus shot down before him, is left to make one for himself as well as he is able’.<sup>396</sup> This ‘stock’ provided the ‘loose materials for thinking, out of which the best thoughts that could have been made would, probably, have been, most, if not all of them, foolish ones’.<sup>397</sup> Bentham’s ‘collection of papers’, to the contrary, would demonstrate the deep interconnectedness of all branches of knowledge and, in turn, between knowledge and practice. Bentham thus proposed his new scheme in which

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<sup>393</sup> C, p. 60.

<sup>394</sup> Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences*, p. 164.

<sup>395</sup> C, p. 160.

<sup>396</sup> C, p. 177.

<sup>397</sup> C, p. 178.

all thought and action would be directed towards *Eudæmonics* or wellbeing, happiness that arises from reciprocity and mutual connection.

*Chrestomathia* emphasises the relation between disciplines, rather than their consolidation as discrete entities. In a period during which ‘the boundaries of different disciplines became a more entrenched feature of the production of knowledge [accompanied by] defining practices and regulated borders’, Bentham emphasised a nascent interdisciplinarity.<sup>398</sup> Schaffer identifies a contradiction between this interdisciplinarity, the textual condition of Bentham’s writings and his totalising ambitions: ‘the obviously hybrid and heterogenous character of Bentham’s projects reinforces the claim that any story of primordial disciplinary unity and hegemony is entirely misleading.’<sup>399</sup> But there is a productive tension between the fugitive character of Bentham’s writing – ‘hybrid and heterogenous’ – and the unity that it seeks to convey. A return to the fugitive materials from which Bentham’s overarching method is forged offers a different sense of ‘unity’.

In describing how to represent the ‘common ties’ that bind disparate disciplines within a great web of encyclopaedical knowledge, Bentham sets out a phenomenology of reading that roots the table firmly in relation to the book at hand. The ‘emblematic’ encyclopaedical sketch (interchangably referred to as a table or diagram) can only be fully understood in relation to the ‘continued discourse’ of the notes, ‘expressed in the forms of ordinary language’.<sup>400</sup> The explanatory notes are unrestricted in their level of detail – especially so for the prolix utilitarian – but impeded in ‘the constantly repeated trouble and embarrassment of turning backwards and forwards, leaf after leaf, or that of constant strain on the memory, or both. – no comparison of part to part can be made’.<sup>401</sup> Surrounded by his manuscripts, marginal contents, pigeonholes and ledgers, Bentham works to lend the book the mobility and comparability of loose papers – enabling ‘uninterrupted and universal comparison’ –

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<sup>398</sup> Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 67.

<sup>399</sup> Schaffer, ‘How Disciplines Look’, p. 65. On the ‘unfamiliar contours of objects, practices, and identities that resist or escape current disciplinary mapping’ see Luisa Calè and Adriana Craciun, ‘The Disorder of Things’, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 45.1 (2011), 1-13.

<sup>400</sup> C, p. 232.

<sup>401</sup> C, p. 214.

while at the same time holding each part together in a common union:<sup>402</sup> the branches of knowledge, from twig to twig, risk being lost to a strained memory when buried within the book, ‘leaf after leaf’. Words, Bentham goes on to write, behave in much the same manner as pigeon holes or ‘ready *receptacles*, as it were, or *boxes*, in which the *individual ideas*, - in proportion as they are drawn forth from the *individual objects* which are their *sources*, - may be lodged and deposited, in such manner as to take hold of the memory, and there to remain, in readiness to be, at any time, called upon for use’.<sup>403</sup> While these repositories run the risk of representing the shape of knowledge without its substance – ‘a nut-shell without a kernel, or a skull without brains’ – they also strike a ground somewhere between the loose page and the bound book, ‘lodged and deposited’, later ‘called upon for use’.<sup>404</sup> The metaphors with which Bentham envisions knowledge are rooted in his own experience of materialising ideas in motion, and his own schemes for establishing connections between loose materials.

In scoping out the ‘field’ of the arts and sciences Bentham employs another, more discrete material textual metaphor by mapping the language of nature onto the language of bookkeeping, modelling the workings of the printed Chrestomathic tables on the workings of manuscripts, and emphasising the importance of relationality and interdependence:

As between *art* and *science*, in the whole field of *thought* and *action*, no one spot will be found belonging to either, to the exclusion of the other. In whatsoever spot a portion of the other has been found, a portion of the other will be found likewise. Whatsoever spot it occupied by either is occupied by both: it is occupied by them in *joint-tenancy*. Whatsoever spot is thus occupied, is so much taken out of *the waste*: but neither is there any determinate part of the whole waste, that is liable to be thus occupied.<sup>405</sup>

In this formulation, art and science – respectively practice and knowledge, or action and thought – are defined by their mutual imbrication. Jon Klancher characterises this ‘waste’ as ‘*outside* of the system, where everyday practices swarm in a disorganised and ‘inartificial’ whirl – something perhaps comparable to William

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> C, p. 215n11.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> C, p. 9.

James's "blooming buzzing confusion" of everyday life, or to Niklas Luhmann's incomprehensibly complex "environment" that remains swarming between, and inaccessible to, any more highly organised but less complex space'.<sup>406</sup> Klancher's critical comparison reaches beyond Bentham to James' work on infant cognition and Luhmann's later systems theory to emphasise a stark distinction between codified and chaotic knowledge. However, turning back to identify the discourses and practices with which Bentham himself was intimately familiar shifts the emphasis slightly, from that stark distinction to a process of transmission and exchange between the 'field' and the 'waste'. If one reads 'taking out the waste' as a metaphor rooted in the language of bookkeeping and bookmaking, we see 'joint-tenancy' in action: intersecting fields of practice and knowledge resulting in a common nomenclature and a system of disciplinary enclosure that is constantly 'gaining on', rationalising and codifying fugitive knowledge or 'waste'.

This 'joint-tenancy' or transparency between the domains of theory and practice is central to Bentham's critique of enlightenment encyclopaedism and his reinvestment in '*ordinary practice* and *ordinary knowledge*' within the teaching of the arts and sciences, and vice versa.<sup>407</sup> Glossing the word 'Technology' immediately before 'Bookkeeping' in his 'Notes to the Stages of Instruction', Bentham writes that 'it will be necessary [...] to apply the *Tactics* (the art of arrangement) of the *Naturalist* to the contents of the field of the *Technologist*: – to bring together, and class the several sorts of *tools* and other *implements*, – and *that*, in such a manner as to shew how they agree with, and differ from, each other.'<sup>408</sup> Thus, in Bentham's topographic imaginary, the school is transformed from a mere 'place' into a '*source*' and a '*channel*, through the several sorts of artists might receive from one another, instruction in relation to points of practice'.<sup>409</sup> In this way, as Klancher has argued, *Chrestomathia* is not simply a treatise on educational reform but a print technology itself, one which 'could also be said to have effectively scaled up the mechanical-arts genre into a new kind of discourse providing a familiarity with the range of English occupations, from joiners and millwrights to philosophers and encyclopaedists, which enabled Bentham to try to reconfigure the modern

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<sup>406</sup> Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences*, p. 168.

<sup>407</sup> *C*, p. 86.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

system of knowledges.’<sup>410</sup> This new system coheres under the egalitarian banner of ‘*art-and-science* learning [...] the whole field of useful instruction [in which] there will be no *dark spots*’.<sup>411</sup>

Following ‘Technology’, ‘Bookkeeping’ appears as the next stage in instruction. Bentham acknowledges the multitude of books that have been printed on the subject and develops his earlier criticisms of accounting nomenclature. He refers specifically to the ‘correspondence’ between the broader practices of ‘*Book-Keeping at large*’, ‘*Abridgement-making*’ and ‘*Note-taking*’.<sup>412</sup> Bookkeeping will be taught as part of the Chrestomathic curriculum to every pupil who partakes in the management of the school, which will, eventually, be every student who passes through its doors. Bentham is careful to distinguish between his own, favoured method and the commercial system:

Unfortunately, old-established as it is, the *obscurity* of this method [of double-entry] is still more conspicuous than its *utility*: and, in consequence *generation*, instead of *correction* of Error, is but too frequent a result. This obscurity has for its sole cause, the *fictitiousness*, - and thence the *inexpressiveness*, - of the language.<sup>413</sup>

Bentham’s own system, by contrast, provides the ‘perfect specimen’ for an alternative. Commercial bookkeeping, he argued, is but one specific application of ‘book-keeping at large’, which he takes to mean ‘the art of *Registration* – of *Recordation* – the art of securing and perpetuating evidence’.<sup>414</sup> Characteristically, Bentham’s rejection of the double-entry system in particular is partly rooted in his belief that the terminology associated with this form of accounting belies the true significance of its subject: ‘In direct opposition to an incontestable *principle of*

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<sup>410</sup> Jon Klancher, ‘Scale and Skill in British Print Culture: Reading the Technologies, 1680-1820’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 47 (2018), 89-106 (101).

<sup>411</sup> C, p. 86.

<sup>412</sup> C, p. 86-7

<sup>413</sup> C, p. 88. On Bentham’s theory of fictions in relation to language see Charles Kay Ogden, *Bentham’s Theory of Fictions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1932, repr. 2001); Nomi Maya Stolzenberg, ‘Bentham’s Theory of Fictions: A “Curious Double Language”’, *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 11.2 (1999), 223-261; Tim Milnes, ‘Darkening Knowledge: Hazlitt and Bentham on the Limits of Empiricism’, in *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. by Uttara Natarajan, Tom Paulin and Duncan Wu (London: Routledge: 2005), pp. 125-137.

<sup>414</sup> C, p. 86.



*evidence*, – the original *Record-book* – the basis of all other books – is branded with a note of worthlessness, under the name of the *Waste-Book*.<sup>415</sup> Working against this ‘fictitious denomination’, Bentham reconceives of note-taking as itself a ‘species of composition, and, as such, in some sort, a product of invention’, and the ‘waste-book’ as a font of elementary knowledge and as a proto-encyclopaedia, ‘the basis of all the other books’.<sup>416</sup>

#### IV. Bentham re-viewed: the ‘Manuscript author’ and the ‘nature of the material’

In his critique of D’Alembert’s imperfect disciplinary divisions Bentham practices what he preaches, narrating his own ‘table-wise’ reading of the Map of the System of Human Knowledge, printed and pasted into *Chrestomathia* along with his own revised system. Following Bentham’s gaze from trunk to branch to twig, the story takes an unusual turn when it comes to poetry. Here, Bentham renders the typographic *mise-en-page* of the maligned philosophe’s tree of knowledge:

*Poetry*, with its nearest branches, in vast capitals, and those next to them still in great and upright ones, - after *Poetry*, *Music*, *Painting*, *Sculpture*, *Civil Architecture*, and *Engraving*, - these, and no others are, by D’Alembert, huddled together in a corner and, - as if standing in awe of *Poetry*, and should they presume to place themselves on a line with her, fearing the lash of one of her daughters, viz. *Satire*, – are dressed – in capitals, indeed, but *those leaning ones*, - and, in comparison of those which are not refused to *Madrigal*, *Epigram*, or *Romance*, scarcely visible. These too are altogether placed under the head of *imagination*; as if, in the first place, the exercise of imaginative faculty were necessary, – and as if, in the next place, it were not so to any of the *others*.<sup>417</sup>

Bentham’s attention here is trained on the shape and structure of the printed page as he proffers his own satirical ‘lash’; his criticism of D’Alembert’s method is borne out in a parody of the material text. D’Alembert’s grouping under the head of the imaginative faculty seems to Bentham to be contradictory, cramming all

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<sup>415</sup> C, p. 88.

<sup>416</sup> C, p. 88.

<sup>417</sup> C, p. 167.

‘*imaginative methodizer[s]*’ into a corner, preferring an incongruous jumble over intuitive association.<sup>418</sup> Casting his eye elsewhere over the tree and moving from imagination to memory, Bentham traces the lines from history (the main trunk) to natural history, then to the uses of nature, and then to arts, crafts and manufacture, at once finding himself lost among seemingly astounding ‘dislocation[s]’.<sup>419</sup> Searching for an explanation, Bentham explains the connections thus:

By every exercise given to *Art*, some production of *Nature* is put to use [...] [Therefore] might not *Poetry* be ranked under the head of *Natural History*? [...] For, the *brain*, by which it was dictated, as well as the *pen* by which it was written, – not to speak of the *gall nuts*, the *sulphate of iron*, and the *water*, by which the pen was enabled to give permanence to the marks traced by it, - what are they – any of them – but so many works of *Nature*?<sup>420</sup>

Once again, Bentham turns a satirical eye to the elementary materials of poetry in their truest form. But for the utilitarian for whom relationality and ‘Joint-tenancy’ is paramount, there is a sincere question nestled amid the irony: what *is* the relation of the gall nut to the pen to the page and to the system of knowledge, or, more concisely, what is the relation of materials to method and how might that be represented? Does poetry have a place in the ‘Common Hall’? Turning to *Chrestomathia*’s reception by literary critics, themselves reading ‘table-wise’ through Bentham’s own volumes, offers further insight.

An unforgiving review of *Chrestomathia*, published in October 1819, suggests that what the anthology represents to individual poems – gathered flowers – *Chrestomathia* represents to single disciplines: Bentham’s impenetrable nomenclature blasts the unifying tree of knowledge into ‘a wood of outlandish terms’, a wilderness in which fragments of words are grafted together into unrecognisable forms.<sup>421</sup> This ‘new world of words’ is resolutely composite, with hybrid terms derived from Ancient Greek glossed with bloated compounds in English: for example, *aneunomotheticoscopic* translates as ‘government-other-wise-

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<sup>418</sup> C, p. 178-8.

<sup>419</sup> C, p. 171.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> ‘Bentham’s *Chrestomathia*’, *Monthly Review; or Literary Journal*, September, 1819, 197-202 (p. 200).

than-by-legislation-regarding.<sup>422</sup> Perhaps recalling Bentham’s own misgivings about the strain that encyclopaedic texts place on readers’ memories, the reviewer articulates a paradox at the heart of Bentham’s Chrestomathic project, a ‘system that would compel us not only to learn a new but to unlearn an old language’, and thus, ‘a tax at once both on our memory and our forgetfulness.’<sup>423</sup> *Chrestomathia* instrumentalises a fugitive language comprised of words out of place and out of time, a language in which ‘terms quite strange and new’ are composed of the parsed and recombined fragments of an ancient tongue. For the reviewer, Bentham’s idiosyncratic brand of ‘enlightened understanding’, like his nomenclature, exists so far ‘beyond the ordinary boundary in which he lives, that much of what is found in his various productions is unsuited to our own circumstances and times.’<sup>424</sup> Rather than making knowledge visible, the Chrestomathic table reaches a step too far – ‘beyond the ordinary boundary’ – and thus surrenders ‘immediate use’ and ‘present attainment’ to the redundant conjectures of ‘remote hope.’<sup>425</sup>

Taking a leaf from Bentham’s book and ‘chang[ing] the metaphor’, the reviewer draws on the poetical canon to equate Bentham’s fugitive language with detached pieces and dark forms:

The second part of *Chrestomathia* is principally composed of an essay on nomenclature and classification. – Mr Bentham has long been a daring innovator in the use of words; and he scatters his new terms over his page “thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallombrosa.” The license which Horace gives to authors for introducing new words, sparingly borrowed from the Greek, would by no means be sufficient for the more innovating temerity of Mr. Bentham; and, instead of drawing up new phrases from the ample well of Grecian erudition in pint mugs, he would not be satisfied without extracting at least a hogshead at a time, so as to deluge the surface of our language with myriads of Anglicized Greecisms.<sup>426</sup>

This passage centres on two key allusions, the first to a centuries-long debate on the creation of new words, signalled here by the reference to Horace’s ‘license[d]’ borrowings from Greek and the implicit nod towards the superiority of Latinate

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> ‘Bentham’s Chrestomathia’, p. 197.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> ‘Bentham’s Chrestomathia’, p. 200.

terms.<sup>427</sup> The second, to Milton's famous passage on Vallombrosa, or the valley of shadows in *Paradise Lost* (I, 299-313). The quotation associates Bentham – always at pains to bring knowledge to light – with Satan's 'Angel Forms', and with Milton's dramatization of 'the deteriorating power of the pagan deities, inexorably opposed to the will of God and thus inexorably destined to "destruction sacred and devote."<sup>428</sup> Not only does the reviewer equate Bentham's expansive system and his 'ambiguously secularised theology of light and illumination' with scattered leaves, but with a whole age of antiquated and ephemeral knowledge, and implicitly with darkness, abjection and faded grandeur – a world away from the Miltonic Eden's light, bright 'vernal airs' (IV, 264).<sup>429</sup> John X. Evans describes Milton's Vallombrosa simile as 'multi-correspondent', bringing the reader into conversation with the poet and his antecedents, and combining classical and biblical imagery.<sup>430</sup> The appearance of these 'autumn leaves' on the pages of *The Monthly Review* introduces Bentham, an unlikely interlocutor for the poets, into this conversation, and prompts questions about the relationship between poetry and philosophy, and between scattered leaves and books.

In the winter of 1819, around the time that *The Monthly Review* published its antagonistic take on *Chrestomathia*, Bentham evicted William Hazlitt from his property at 19 York Street, once the home of Milton himself.<sup>431</sup> That his home had been the 'cradle of Paradise Lost' was of little meaning to Bentham, who had attempted to create a 'a thoroughfare [...] for the idle rabble of Westminster' through its garden.<sup>432</sup> Hazlitt, writing later in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), reflected on the contradictions at the heart of Bentham's method, focussing particularly on his nomenclature, a 'barbarous philosophical jargon'.<sup>433</sup> Commenting on Hazlitt's essay, Tim Milnes has argued that Bentham's use of language betrayed a paradox at the

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<sup>427</sup> See Basil Duffalo, 'Words Born and Made: Horace's Defence of Neologisms and the Cultural Politics of Latin', *Arethusa*, 38.1 (2005), 89-101 (p. 92).

<sup>428</sup> John X. Evans, 'The Leaves of Vallombrosa: Milton's Great-Rooted Simile', *English Studies*, 71.5 (2008), 395-409 (p. 395).

<sup>429</sup> Schaffer, 'How Disciplines Look', p. 65.

<sup>430</sup> Evans, 'The Leaves of Vallombrosa', p. 400.

<sup>431</sup> A. C. Grayling, *The Quarrel of the Age: The Life and Times of William Hazlitt* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2000), pp. 157-6; p. 252.

<sup>432</sup> William Hazlitt, 'Jeremy Bentham', in *The Spirit of the Age: or Contemporary Portraits* (London: Henry Colburn, 1825), pp. 1-29 (p. 6).

<sup>433</sup> Hazlitt, 'Jeremy Bentham', p. 26; p. 10.

heart of his method: ‘by striving for transparency, it achieves only technocratic opacity.’<sup>434</sup> Bentham’s sense of the whole is overwhelmed by the chaos of its parts, resulting in a frenzy that suggests a failure to adequately express the relationship between the elements accounted for and the ideas at stake.

Hazlitt mixes and recycles his own ‘multi-correspondent metaphors’ to illustrate tensions between Bentham’s materials and his method, wrangling with the idea of the book in relation to Bentham’s corpus. For Hazlitt, Bentham’s ‘scattered leaves’ variously resemble a work of reference, an inventory, a map, a manuscript:

Mr Bentham’s forte is arrangement [...] He has methodized, collated and condensed all the materials prepared to his hand on the subjects of which he treats [...] His writings are, therefore, chiefly valuable as books of reference, as bringing down the account of intellectual inquiry to the present period, and disposing the results in a compendious, connected and tangible shape.<sup>435</sup>

Despite his concerted efforts, Bentham’s books are more useful, then, in the acquisition of existing knowledge rather than in the application of new ideas or the anticipation of future forms. They have an encyclopaedic quality, but their compendiousness is not animated by the spark of imagination. As Hazlitt continues his generosity wanes, and the perceived scope of Bentham’s works of reference dwindles to the status of list or ledger:

Mr Bentham’s method of reasoning [...] is rather like an inventory, than a valuation of different arguments. [...] By attending to the minute, we overlook the great; and in summing up an account, it will not do merely to insist on the number of items without considering their amount. Our author’s page presents a very nicely dovetailed mosaic pavement of legal commonplaces. We slip and slide over its even surface without being arrested anywhere. Or his view of the human mind resembles a map, rather than a picture: the outline, the disposition is correct, but it wants colouring and relief. [...] He writes in a language of his own that *darkens knowledge*. [...] He is a kind of Manuscript author – he writes a cypher-hand, which the vulgar have no key to.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Tim Milnes, “‘Is it true? ... what is the meaning of it?’: Bentham, Romanticism and the Fictions of Reason”, in *Bentham and the Arts*, ed. by Anthony Julius, Malcolm Quinn and Philip Schofield (London: UCL Press, 2020), pp. 140-160 (p. 164).

<sup>435</sup> Hazlitt, ‘Jeremy Bentham’, p. 9.

<sup>436</sup> Hazlitt, ‘Jeremy Bentham’, p. 25.

The absence of metaphorical ‘colour’ adorning Bentham’s ‘page’ signals a scarcity of internal differentiation. Trapped between the poles of total darkness and total illumination, Bentham’s method lacks depth, relationality and feeling, and privileges aggregation over synthesis, quantity over quality. In Hazlitt’s description, the legacy of accounting practice to Bentham’s broader epistemology and authorial imagination (or lack thereof) is clear, but so too is the imbrication of accounting and other forms of inscription such as commonplace books and manuscripts. For Hazlitt, Bentham’s books are shapeshifters, at once tomes and titbits. This undulating sense of scale from the whole circle of knowledge to knowledge in fragments is a key characteristic of the Benthamite table or map, by which everything might be beheld at a glance, but which might only really be understood when hundreds of pages of notes and appendices (the key) are readily to hand.

Perhaps taking a lead from the writer of the earlier *Monthly Review* piece, Hazlitt made a return to Milton to describe the calcifying density that characterises Bentham’s method, a programme that seeks ultimately to arrest and contain fugitive knowledge:

It is not that you can be said to see [Bentham’s] favourite doctrine of Utility glittering everywhere through his system, like a vein of rich, shining ore (that is not the nature of the material) – but it might be plausibly objected that he had struck the whole mass of fancy, prejudice, passion, sense, whim, with his petrific, leaden mace, that he had “bound volatile Hermes,” and reduced the theory and practice of human life to a *caput mortuum* of reason and dull, plodding, technical calculation.<sup>437</sup>

Bentham’s reference to the binding of ‘volatile Hermes’ invokes a passage in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (III, 591-605), and to the Philosopher’s Stone, the composition of which escapes even those alchemists able to fix mercurial forms. As Lyndy Abraham describes, the binding of ‘Volatile Hermes’ refers to ‘the name of the alchemical *prima materia*, or basic substance from which all things in the universe were thought to have been made. This volatile, elusive *materia* had to be captured and bound by the alchemist so that he could make the Stone.’<sup>438</sup> For Hazlitt, ‘technical calculation’ reduces this protean substance – in Bentham’s terms, a kind

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<sup>437</sup> Hazlitt, ‘Jeremy Bentham’, p. 10.

<sup>438</sup> Lyndy Abraham, ‘Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and “the sounding alchymie”’, *Renaissance Studies*, 12.2 (1998), 261-276 (p. 267).

of elementary knowledge – to a ‘*caput mortuum*’, a phrase that translates as dead head or dead end, but also denotes a bituminous brown pigment. There is a quiet distinction, then, between the poetic ‘colour and relief’ that Hazlitt finds wanting in Bentham’s writing, and the weight and lifelessness of material colour and the ‘*caput mortuum*.’ To read across Bentham’s writing and its critical reception in this way might seem counterintuitive, bringing poetry to bear on the infamously least-poetic of encyclopaedic thinkers. Yet the interplay between the review and its poetical sources, between the fields of chemistry and visual arts, and between ideas and/in practice models Bentham’s sense of ‘joint-tenancy’, illuminates the dialectic between materials and method illuminated by a constellated web of interconnected domains.

Bentham’s paragraphs dealing with ‘Joint-Tenancy’ between the arts and sciences appear in print once again in *The Rationale of Reward*, translated into English from French in 1825, the same year in which Hazlitt released his account of Bentham in *The Spirit of the Age*.<sup>439</sup> An excerpt from *Chrestomathia* introduces Book III of the *Rationale*, which famously discusses the arts and sciences of amusement in opposition to the arts and sciences of utility, comparing poetry with innocent gaming: ‘Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push pin furnish [sic] more pleasure, it is more valuable than either. Everybody can play at push-pin: poetry and music are relished only by a few.’<sup>440</sup> For Bentham, all activities are valuable only in so far as they yield pleasure and moral virtue. Poetry, unlike push-pin, is a ‘magic art’ and a ‘mischief’; ‘the poet must see everything through coloured media, and strive to make every one else do the same.’<sup>441</sup> Neither bringing to light nor obscuring in a ‘dark spot’, poets hand their readers the proverbial rose-tinted spectacles of imagination, altering the hue and quality of the world around them and placing emphasis on the transformative potential of mediation.

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<sup>439</sup> The text was derived from manuscripts written in the 1770-80s, first published in French as *Théorie des peines et des récompenses* in 1811. See Emmanuelle de Champs, *Enlightenment and Utility: Bentham in French, Bentham in France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2015).

<sup>440</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *The Rationale of Reward* (London: John and H. L. Hunt, 1825), p. 206. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the abbreviated form *RR* in footnotes.

<sup>441</sup> *RR*, p. 206.

The push-pin passage has, since Mill, been quoted and re-quoted almost beyond redemption, giving ground to the assumption that Bentham is the arch Romantic philistine. Read in its context within the wider argument of the *Rationale* and in light of *Chrestomathia*, we see Bentham taking his argument further. Just a few pages on in the *Rationale*, Bentham chides Addison's *Spectator* for its ridicule of poetry written in 'bad taste', that is, popular poems, push-pin poems, fugitive poems:

Acrostics, conundrums, pantomimes, puppet-shows, *bouts-rimes*, stanzas in the shape of eggs, of wings, burlesque poetry of every description [...] [Addison,] proud of having established his empire above the ruins of these literary trifles, regards himself as the legislator of Parnassus! What, however, was the effect of his new laws? They deprived those who submitted to them of many sources of pleasure [...] How much better was [a] minister occupied, than if, with the Iliad in his hand, he had stirred up within his heart the seeds of those ferocious passions which can only be gratified with tears and blood.<sup>442</sup>

Just as Hazlitt had figured Bentham as binding volatile Hermes with a 'petrific leadean mace', Bentham himself describes how 'innocent amusements fall crushed under the strokes of [Addison's] club.'<sup>443</sup> But perhaps Bentham treads more lightly than Hazlitt would have readers think. He advocates for the wider diffusion of poetic play, swapping the contemptuous and hyperbolic poetic canon for light amusements. The 'coloured media' of poetry then is not, by virtue of being poetic, to be dismissed out of hand; but the poetry of antiquity, seemingly bereft of virtue, is too remote to be of immediate use. If bathetically, the *Rationale* democratises *Chrestomathia's* dialectic of materials and method, arguing that a 'child who is building houses of cards is happier than Louis XIV when building Versailles. Architect and mason at once, master of his situation and his materials, he alters and overturns at will'.<sup>444</sup>

'*Methodization*', Bentham argues in *Chrestomathia*, is the art of arrangement, but might better be described as 'the *tactic* faculty' and defined more specifically as that which gives 'facility to *comparison*, objects are *imagined* to lie in a certain

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<sup>442</sup> *RR*, p. 209.

<sup>443</sup> *RR*, p. 210.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*.



order; for example, *above*, *below*, or *by the side of* one another.<sup>445</sup> Even the ‘minutest twig’ extending from the encyclopaedic tree ‘must have given exercise to the *inventive* faculty’ to the capacity to imagine and, by implication, to the materials that this faculty works upon, whether they are playing cards or poems, *inserenda* or printed books. It was through the collection of papers at hand, by which any idea might be compared with any other, that Bentham developed the principles that underpinned his new system of encyclopaedic knowledge and the panoptic institutions designed to manage the transmission and circulation of that knowledge. For this ‘manuscript author’, the question of the ‘nature of the material’ was intimately tied to the question of the relation between materials, the system of ‘joint-tenancy’ and the space of the ‘*Common Hall*’ that unites all branches of arts and science learning. In this way, ‘taking out of the waste’ signifies a method that makes a turn back towards the primordial, elementary and fugitive materials, from waste-books to collections of papers to playing cards and eventually even to poems.

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<sup>445</sup> C, p. 160n1.

3.

*Materia Pictoria:*

Experiment, intermediality and flying colours

I. 'Monstrous FICTIONS': Reading colour theory

i. Colour in the archive

'For no one really knows what colour is, where it is, even whether it is [...] The encyclopaedia does not help'.<sup>446</sup>

The questions of 'what', 'where' and indeed 'whether' colour *is* were the subject of countless experiments, treatises and handbooks over the course of the long eighteenth century, posing as much of a challenge to the encyclopaedist as they did to the physicist and painter. Grappling with the first of these questions, Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* offers two contrasting definitions of 'Colour': first, and at greatest length, the article defines colour within the field of 'philosophy', where it denotes 'a property inherent in light'; second, the article describes material colour and its meaning in 'painting, [which] is applied both to the drugs, and to the things produced by those drugs, variously mixed and applied'.<sup>447</sup> Further subfields follow: dying, wine, heraldry, law, and customs. Contending with the second question – 'where' – we find multiple domains coalesce under a single headword, with the encyclopaedic network of cross references stretching out at once in the direction of theory ('light', 'sensation', 'quality') and practice ('fresco', 'painting', 'enamelling'). The encyclopaedia gathers multiple intersecting fields under its auspices, referring both to the aerial transience of prismatic colour and its mediation by scientific instruments and paper tools, as well as to chemical innovations in mixing and compounding of pigments comprising the *materia pictoria*, 'or the nature, use, preparation, and composition of all the various substances employed in painting'.<sup>448</sup> And yet, eighteenth-century painters find the existing literature wanting:

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<sup>446</sup> Maggie Nelson, *Bluets* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009), p. 15.

<sup>447</sup> Chambers, 'Colour', in *Cyclopaedia*, I, 258-262 (p. 258; p. 261).

<sup>448</sup> Robert Dossie, *The Handmaid to the Arts* (London: J. Nourse, 1758), title page.

*'The pretensions of the ostentatious works, the Cyclopaedias, and Encyclopaedias, and other such Dictionaries, have not been, however, much more made good than those of the School of Arts: for indeed it is surprising how shamefully silent these books, which profess to comprehend every thing relating to subjects of this kind are with respect to the most essential articles'*: in other words, 'the encyclopaedia does not help.'<sup>449</sup> This dearth of accurate and up-to-date information was keenly felt by painters working with complex combinations of pigments, binding agents, waxes and varnishes, for whom the threat of colour 'FLYING or FLYING OFF' was acute.<sup>450</sup> Paradoxically, colour's only constant is its tendency toward transience, whether one is observing the quality of a painted hue darken over time or white light refracted through a prism onto the creased margins of a chromatometer, a paper tool developed for reproducing an accurate colour spectrum. The question of 'whether' colour is accordingly complex: it is a substance the very substantiality of which is under scrutiny. For this reason, and as this chapter will describe, concerted efforts to define, fix and organise colour have troubled the minds of all manner of writers, thinkers and practitioners working at the interface between materials and method.

Colour oscillates between the proverbial ground of matter (paint, paper, leaves and ink), the upper echelons of idealism, and flashes of light in the rainbow, combining geometric abstraction with the unctuous materiality of paint. In this chapter I explore a media ecology of colour, moving on the wings of flying colours of paint and the flying leaves of the periodical press, incorporating the mixing of natural gums and waxes used to bind and varnish paints, and exploring the composite bodies pieced together to form ideal painterly subjects and monstrous poetic assemblages. The theorisation of a 'media ecology' has opened up new avenues in Romantic book history, with Thora Brylowe making use of Michael Goddard's distinction between '*environments* – which are the phenomenologically particular ways a medium delivers content – and *media ecologies*, the contingent

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<sup>449</sup> Dossie, *The Handmaid to the Arts*, pp. xii-xiii. George Field, discussed below, repeats the claim that 'most of our encyclopaedias and books of painting treat cursorily this branch of the art', that is, a 'just knowledge of colours and pigments', in *Chromatography; or, A Treatise on Colours and Pigments and their Powers in Painting* (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1835), pp. ix-x. Italics in original.

<sup>450</sup> Dossie, *The Handmaid to the Arts*, p. 4.

interactions between various forms of media and their makers and consumers.<sup>451</sup> In what follows, intermediality refers to the imbricated worlds of printed and painted, textual and visual, and natural and artificial objects.<sup>452</sup> Organising colour exposes the densely intermedial relations that structure early nineteenth-century textual production. If intertextuality is a key element of organising poetry – in which familiar verse is quoted, compiled and recycled – intermediality is a key element of organising colour, as books shift between different disciplines, combine different elements and wrestles with the problems of fugitive knowledge.

Fugitive or flying colour – a material hue that darkens, fades or cracks with time – gestures outwards to the to the tangled nexus of disciplines that hold the problem of colour in common. This entanglement can be illustrated through two letters from Coleridge. In the first, he contends with apparent irreconcilability of mathematical analysis and poetic imagination. In March 1801 Coleridge complained to William Godwin of a certain ‘*exsiccation*’ or illness provoked by a sudden and overwhelming interest in ‘Pure Mathematics’. The metaphor figures the poet’s intellect in material terms as itself a fading colour: as had long been known, and as a later chemistry manual attests, ‘the colouring matter of most flowers is extremely fugitive, and is generally much changed by exsiccation’, or drying out.<sup>453</sup> In this condition, Coleridge felt compelled to reduce every summit and stellar wonder to angles and lines: ‘I look at the Mountains only for the curves of their outlines; the Stars, as I behold them, form themselves into Triangles – and my hands are scarred with scratches from a Cat, whose back I was rubbing in the Dark in order to see whether the sparks from it were refrangible in a prism’.<sup>454</sup> The letter parodies a newfound ardour, lamenting its irreconcilability to poetry with frenetic exaggeration

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<sup>451</sup> Thora Brylowe, *Romantic Art in Practice: Cultural Work and the Sister Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 27-29 (p. 29).

<sup>452</sup> See ‘The Intermedial Eighteenth Century: Textual and Visual Arts, 1660-1832’, 14-18 September 2020 <<https://www.intermedialeighteenthcentury.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Intermedial-Eighteenth-Century-Programme-2020-v.4.pdf>> [accessed: 30.09.20]; The Multigraph Collective, *Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 6-7; Scarborough King, ‘Introduction: The Multimedia Eighteenth Century’, pp. 1-24.

<sup>453</sup> William Thomas Brande, *A Manual of Chemistry: Containing the principal facts of the science, arranged in the order in which they are discussed and illustrated in the lectures at the Royal Institution of Great Britain* (New York: George Long, 1821), p. 513.

<sup>454</sup> *CL*, II, 390.

and, at the last, despair: in all this domestic experimentation Coleridge has ‘*forgotten* how to make a rhyme’.<sup>455</sup> Apprehending mathematics is figured in strangely physical terms: Coleridge’s letter describes how he ascended the tree of knowledge ‘by pure adhesive strength’, gripping and grappling, before falling into a lament in which the body of the poet takes on a bibliographic form:

The poet is dead in me – [...] I was once a Volume of Gold Leaf, rising and riding on every breath of Fancy – but I have beaten myself back into weight and density, & now I sink in quick-silver, yea, remain squat and square on earth amid the hurricane, that makes Oaks and Straws join in one Dance, fifty yards high in the Element.<sup>456</sup>

Coleridge’s metaphor represents the poet reduced to a dead weight, and the failure of flight even as the aeolian breeze swells to a mighty gale. But the metaphor also works double time, mingling bibliographic and metallurgic elements. The ‘Volume of Gold Leaf’ conjures the image of an adorned book taking flight, curiously weightless. But it also summons the image of the gold leaf electroscope.<sup>457</sup> For Coleridge, the highly sensitive electroscope, an instrument designed for ascertaining electrical charge, invented in 1786, was an apt image for finely tuned poetic sensibility (or, in this case, the absence of such).<sup>458</sup> Later, in 1806, this elemental transition between states of levity and density resurfaced in similar terms, as the poet found himself a mere ‘Delver in the unwholesome quick-silver mines of abstruse Metaphysics.’<sup>459</sup> This interaction between poetic sensibility and scientific knowledge

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> *CL*, II, 214.

<sup>457</sup> ‘Two slips of leaf-gold were suspended in the glass, and the peg and tube holding them touched the outer cap. Two pieces of tin foil were fastened on opposite sides of the internal surface of the glass’: See Paul Elliott, ‘Abraham Bennet, F.R.S. (1749-1799): A Provincial Electrician in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 53.1 (1999), 59-78 (p. 62).

<sup>458</sup> Coleridge uses the same metaphor elsewhere in his letters, writing that Dorothy Wordsworth’s taste is ‘a perfect electrometer – it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults’ in 1797 (*CL*, I, 331); that Thelwall’s ‘nerves are exquisite electrometers of Taste’ also in 1797 (*CL*, I, 307); and describing Thomas Wedgwood as a ‘perfect electrometer’ in 1802 (*CL*, II, 877).

<sup>459</sup> *CL*, II, 1178. See Richard Sha’s discussion of Shelley’s mercurial poetics in *Imagination and Science in Romanticism* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), p. 69-70.

is rooted in the dynamic and protean nature of matter, figuring the poet as a fugitive from poetry and ‘binding volatile Hermes’.<sup>460</sup>

Later, in July 1817 and in the midst of planning the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, Coleridge wrote a letter to the German poet Ludwig Tieck concerning Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Zur Farbenlehre* (1810) or *Theory of Colours*.<sup>461</sup> The polemical treatise comprised a series of easily replicable experiments that worked in vain to disprove Isaac Newton’s theory of the composite nature of white light.<sup>462</sup> For Goethe, as for Coleridge, white light was a fundamentally important emblem of ideal harmony, the integrity of which was undermined by Newtonian optics. In a stark switch of allegiances from the letter quoted above, Coleridge’s letter to Tieck foregrounds a tension between two divergent approaches to understanding colour. In Coleridge’s view, Newton’s prismatic optics was a branch of physics akin to ‘abstruse Metaphysics’, while Goethe attempted a hybrid practice that fused prismatic experiment with an attention to the perceptual, phenomenological and affective qualities of colour. Coleridge was vexed by the way in which his contemporaries reacted against this latter venture: ‘I am anxious to learn the specific Objections of the Mathematicians to Goethe’s *Farbenlehre*, as far as it is an attack on the *assumptions* of Newton’, before itemising those ‘assumptions’ in a typically serpentine frenzy that is itself difficult to parse:

To me, I confess, Newton’s positions, first of a *Ray* of Light, as a physical synodical Individuum, secondly, that 7 specific individua are co-existent (by what copula?) in this complex yet divisible Ray; thirdly, that the Prism is mere mechanic Dissector of this Ray; and lastly, that Light, as the common result is = confusion; have always, and years before I ever heard of Goethe, appeared monstrous FICTIONS! - and in this conviction I became perfectly indifferent to the forms of their geometrical Picturability.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> See Chapter 2, IV.

<sup>461</sup> On their exchange, see Frederick Burwick, ‘Goethe’s *Entoptische Farben* and the Problem of Polarity’, in *Goethe and the Sciences: A Reappraisal*, ed. by Frederick Amrine, Francis J. Zucker, Harvey Wheeler (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 29-45 (pp. 29-30).

<sup>462</sup> See Dennis Sepper, ‘Goethe, Colour, and the Science of Seeing’, in *Romanticism and the Sciences*, ed. by Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Dennis Sepper, *Goethe Contra Newton: Polemics and the Project of New Science of Colour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Dennis Sepper, ‘Goethe and the Poetics of Science’, *Janus Head*, 8.1 (2005), 207-227.

<sup>463</sup> *CL*, IV, 1067.

The language of Coleridge's letter to Tieck draws together ecclesiastical ('synodical'), grammatical ('copula'), and scientific ('Dissector') fields in an uneasy tumult that quickly descends into a tangle. Four familiar problems sit at the heart of this confusion: physicality, combination, mechanism, and confusion. These were just the same issues that sat at the heart of Coleridge's frustrated encyclopaedic project: the heterogeneity of parts threatens the cohesion of the whole; mechanical and material interventions disrupt organic and transcendent harmony. The relationships between 'individua', 'copula' and 'ray' are central to Newton and Goethe's divergent approaches to colour theory, but they have wider epistemological ramifications too: the prism – as it breaks, bends, and scatters light – figures the 'complex yet divisible' nature of knowledge, its 'physical' basis, and its vulnerability to disorder. Goethe's theory of colours is predicated on a disciplinary division of labour: 'the theory of colours, in strictness, may be investigated quite independently of optics', just as astronomers, who observe and enumerate the stars, are 'a distinct class from those who calculate the orbits, consider the universe in its connexion, and more accurately define its laws. The history of the doctrine of colours will often lead us back to these considerations'.<sup>464</sup> In Goethe's view Newton had joined the dots, but it was up to a new class of romantic scientists to deduce meaning from the whole picture.

This chapter explores the 'monstrous FICTIONS' of early nineteenth-century colour theory as rich ground for considering the intersections between materials and methods. Colour's 'Picturability' – its reducibility to lines and diagrams, its organisation into circles and tables – was contested, and pressed at the limits of processes such as painting, hand-colouring and printing. The texts discussed below tested the 'assumed authority of print', demonstrating the limits and instabilities of fugitive materials: 'The concept of printing is not necessarily one of fixity, or textual rest or (still less) of stability, but actually implies a process liable and subject to change as a result both of its own mechanisms and of the assumptions and expectations of those who exploit its technological possibilities.'<sup>465</sup> The books discussed in this chapter stage a shifting dialectic between universal theories of

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<sup>464</sup> *Goethe's Theory of Colours*, p. 287; p. 289.

<sup>465</sup> David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 3-4.

harmony and the materiality of embodied experience and material expression; put differently, it is a dialectic between materials and method. As colour theorists, artists and naturalists worked to standardise material colour through diagrams and nomenclatures that would support the development of a universal system of natural historical knowledge, they simultaneously reshaped the printed page and wrestled with the problem of reconciling their methods to the volatility of pigments and papers. The solution was to attempt to standardise the materials at hand, and thus colour itself was ‘named and tinted, numbered and measured’, subject to similar methods of codification as the natural objects it described.<sup>466</sup>

These innovative organisational systems and new nomenclatures often engaged directly with the legacy of Newtonian optics and pushed bibliographical representation to and beyond its bounds, raising questions about the capacity of the book to contain and represent all possible colours and combinations. As Theresa M. Kelley has argued, ‘debates about whether colour is material, fugitive, and visible wrestle with the incommensurability that also troubles Romantic archives: what are they, do or can they survive, are they not also material and fugitive? Material colours and archival objects are mutually implicated in the entangled constellations of Romantic historicity.’<sup>467</sup> One might go further and replace the ‘and’ for ‘as’ – how do material colours *as* archival objects stand the test of time, or not? Building on Kelley’s analogous coupling of archival objects and material colour, this chapter locates colour within a broader context of composite texts and organisational genres, paying particular attention to the nomenclatures and conventions of natural history as they shaped attempts to reconcile the rainbow to the page.

In this chapter’s second section I turn to Joshua Reynolds to offer a definition of fugitive colour as it relates to eighteenth-century cultures of experiment. The readings offered here connect Reynolds’s infamously ephemeral pigments to their corollary in the flying leaves of the press, and to the doubly fugitive nature of composite paintings and painterly subjects out of place. From Reynolds’s experimental canvas, the chapter’s third and fourth sections move on to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century nomenclatures and natural histories of

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<sup>466</sup> Elaine Ayers, ‘Coded Colours: Botanical Histories of Colour Standardisation’, *Site Magazine* (2020), 24-39 (p. 28).

<sup>467</sup> Theresa M. Kelley, ‘Archival Objects and Material Colour’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 57.1 (2018), 143-168 (p. 162).



colour that seek to standardise and universalise the relationship between hues. I present a corpus of romantic-period colour books that interact with artistic practice, optics and visualising knowledge in contrasting ways, moving through works by Moses Harris, Mary Gartside, James Sowerby, Patrick Syme, and George Field to explore the various ways in which authors craft books that are able to negotiate between prism and pigment, arts and science. These are self-contained, internally coherent reference texts that offered naturalists and painters standardised catalogues, but they also explicitly acknowledged their own status as experimental objects, reaching beyond conventional systems to create new organisational principles and actively engage their readers in the work of apprehending colour.

This chapter participates in a wider scholarly exploration of poetry's relationship to the organisation of knowledge that is neatly elucidated by Amanda Jo Goldstein in her discussion of 'sweet science':

Against the pressure, then and now, to treat the culture of science as context or antithesis to literary production, [there exists][...] a countervailing epistemology that casts poetry as a privileged technique of empirical inquiry: a knowledgeable practice whose *figurative* work brought it closer to, not farther from, the physical nature of things.<sup>468</sup>

Working by this logic, this chapter explores how theorists of colour engage in putatively literary ways of thinking, compiling, storytelling, and image-making that reach their apex with Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, with which this chapter concludes. Goethe's work takes us full circle to consider how charts and diagrams – scientific or, as he writes, 'hieroglyphic' representations of knowledge – might be reconciled to perceptual, experiential, and experimental knowledge. Goethe, controversially departing from Newton, finds the rainbow wanting, 'for the chief colour, pure red, is deficient in it [...] Nature perhaps exhibits no general phenomenon where the scale is in complete combination.'<sup>469</sup> In pursuit of perfect representation capable of 'complete combination' he turns to 'artificial experiments', writing that 'the mode, however, in which the entire series is connected in a circle, is rendered most intelligible by tints on paper'. This claim shifts readers' attention to the capacity of the printed or painted page to represent this material in motion. As Heather Sullivan

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<sup>468</sup> Goldstein, *Sweet Science*, p. 7.

<sup>469</sup> *Goethe's Theory of Colours*, p. 320.

has observed, for Goethe ‘colours represent the foundational explanation for all morphological and metamorphic processes of the active natural works [...] Colours are, above all, actively developing components of a world in flux, not fixed entities.’<sup>470</sup> Colours and especially ‘tints on paper’ are characterised by metamorphosis, fragmentation, and dispersal; they comprise a mode of fugitive knowledge that challenges and galvanises bibliographic mediation.

ii. ‘Specimen poetics’

The scope of ‘specimen poetics’, as described by Dahlia Porter, can be widened to include material colour which is, in Walter Benjamin’s terms, ‘a winged creature that flits from one form to the next’, as liable to decay and fade as the body of an insect or a clipping from a plant, as ripe for containment, dissection and display.<sup>471</sup> If natural specimens prompted the construction of vast cabinets, drawers, displays, illustrations and herbaria, what methods and material supports were required in the compilation and organisation of colour on canvas, on paper, and in books? This sense of colour’s role within a broader context of specimen poetics lays the groundwork for the readings that follow. Theorists of colour were concerned with isolating, naming, and arranging particular hues, deconstructing compounds into their component parts, and discerning hierarchies and orders that would enable further combinations. In addition to its aesthetic and natural historical uses, colour itself was treated as a resource and phenomena that needed to be parsed, organised and represented in order to be properly understood. Colour assumes the form and function of a specimen, much like the wing of a butterfly or the petals of a flower, as pigments are painted and pasted, identified in the natural world, named, defined, and arranged on the page in accordance with some wider system. Various cut, culled, coloured, and compiled, the organisational projects discussed in this chapter are composite texts that experiment with contrasting methods of visualising the relationships between various hues and compounds, many of which were unstable,

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<sup>470</sup> Heather I. Sullivan, ‘Goethe’s Colours: Revolutionary Optics and the Anthropocene’, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 51.1 (2017), 115-124 (p. 116).

<sup>471</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Child’s View of Colour’, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, I: 1913-1926*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1996), pp. 50-51 (p. 50).

changing over time. The focus here is not on colouring or coloured natural specimens, but on the particular kinds of specimen logic that colour itself generates and frustrates.<sup>472</sup>

Colour's specimen logic cuts across various domains of practice, from the botanist's herbarium to the printer's sample or advertisement, each of which participates in a wider culture of 'romantic exemplarity'.<sup>473</sup> To consider colour as a specimen offers a way of reading across the various interventions in colour theory undertaken in the early nineteenth century, from Joshua Reynolds's experiments to the entomologists and flower painters who sought to reconcile abstracted optics to their material practices of compilation and collection. The relationship between natural history specimens and their representation in illustration was complex, urging the reader to put the page to use in different ways: hand-colouring plates themselves to reflect the particularities of specimens within their own collection, removing plates from the bound book to compare with others, collecting and compiling illustrations. As Beth Fowkes Tobin has argued, natural history drawings 'could shape how collectors saw their specimens, directing them to look at a specimen in a certain way and teaching them which anatomical elements to focus on and which patterns and colours to attend to.'<sup>474</sup> The word 'specimen', like 'spectrum', comes from the Latin *specere*, 'to look', and, in its scientific usage, is concerned with the production of observational skill through particular kinds of methodical arrangement and experiment.<sup>475</sup> Its usage in relation to the parts of plants, animals and other organisms and minerals dates from the 1760s.

The term specimen was also used to describe projects of literary collection, such as George Ellis's *Specimens of the Early English Poets* (1790) and Robert

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<sup>472</sup> See Beth Fowkes Tobin, 'Butterflies, Spiders, and Shells: Colouring Natural History Illustrations in Late Eighteenth Century Britain', in *The Materiality of Colour: The Production, Circulation, and Application of Dyes and Pigments, 1400-1800*, ed. by Andrea Fraser, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 265-281.

<sup>473</sup> Theresa M. Kelley, 'Romantic Exemplarity: Botany and Material Culture', in *Romantic Science: The Literary Forms of Natural History*, ed. by Noah Heringman (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 223-254.

<sup>474</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, 'Collecting John Abbot's Natural History Notes and Drawings', *After Print*, pp. 52-73 (p. 60).

<sup>475</sup> 'Specimen, n.' *OED Online* (Oxford University Press)  
<[www.oed.com/view/Entry/186018](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/186018)> [accessed 25.02.18]

Southey's *Specimens of the Later English Poets* (1807). As David Duff has argued, these composite works 'invited the exploration of a neglected literary archive and critical evaluation of exemplary texts from the past. A "select beauty" or an "elegant extract" called for delectation and memorialisation; a "specimen" called for inspection and analysis'.<sup>476</sup> A specimen is at once an exemplary fragment and a partial suggestion of some full and future form, a piece and a proof. Going beyond 'inspection' and 'analysis', colour theorists engaged their specimens in the work of experiment, using instruments, paints, paper slips, blots and diagrams to explore the materials of method and to develop a means of representing all possible colours and compounds.

Attending to colour's particular specimen logic brings both its material and optical instantiations into view, uniting theory and practice, mind and matter in a way that now feels counter-intuitive or contrary to specialised disciplinary conventions. But such a union was keenly felt by the colour theorists discussed below. In her study of early modern insects and visual culture, Janice Neri argues that 'specimen logic turns nature into objects by decontextualizing select creatures and items'.<sup>477</sup> Specimen logic thus picks apart, detaches and separates; it is a process by which one thing or part might be distinguished and related to another thing or part, often within a vast network of adjacent specimens and in relation to given environments and representational contexts. For Neri, only 'those creatures and items that can be depicted or displayed as objects, those that possess clearly defined edges or contours and whose surfaces are visually distinct, are suited to the aims of specimen logic' (p. xiii). It is precisely those discrete 'edges' that theorists of colour were working to establish: what separates one hue or shade from another? What material or geometric forms might parse and display the relations between particular hues? Upon looking through a prism, or at a bouquet of flowers, how might one apprehend and replicate the colour that one observes? Can colour be picked apart and laid out in such a way as an anatomical or botanical specimen? While this emphasis on 'defined edges' might seem limited to the material constitutions of pigments, it is also a constitutive aspect of optics, a domain in which transient edges

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<sup>476</sup> David Duff, 'Literary Sampling and the Poetics of the Specimen', *Studies in Romanticism*, 59.1 (2020), 109-133.

<sup>477</sup> Janice Neri, *The Insect and the Image: Visualising Nature in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xiii.

and surfaces are productive experimental spaces. Goethe, for example, described colour as an ‘edge phenomenon’: looking at printed strips through a prism, colour appears at the fringes and boundaries, changing as the refractive angle or distance changes.<sup>478</sup> In this way, the interaction between light, instrument and the surface of the page produces colour and knowledge. Neri’s study charts changes in the pictorial depiction of insect specimens, from lively arrangements depicting entire lifecycles or habitats, to – following Linnaeus – tabular, static, and individualised illustrations that ‘narrowed the scope of inquiry to the anatomical structures involved in reproduction’. Colour books do not participate in this broader trend in representation. Instead, the early nineteenth century witnesses a range of increasingly experimental strategies for representing colour. Often these treatises had a broad analogical reach, relating the chromatic scale to music, or to objects in nature. The colour book is itself an integral experimental object that directly engages with, and is in some ways constituted by, the recalcitrance of its materials and the overlapping boundaries between materials and methods.

Colour charts, tables, and diagrams negotiate the dual problem of compiling and compounding colour specimens. At their core is what Hans Jörg Rheinberger, Lorraine Daston and Dahlia Porter have called ‘epistemic images’.<sup>479</sup> Collected in handbooks, ‘these images are designed to standardise the objects of inquiry and calibrate the eyes of inquirers [...] Epistemic images mobilize both senses of word “representation”: to copy and to stand for’.<sup>480</sup> In colour theory this representation is more complex as amorphous colour specimens – brushstrokes and blots – have both exemplary and experimental value. The pasted, painted slips in a nomenclature of

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<sup>478</sup> Gábor Áron Zemplén, ‘Structure and Advancement in Goethe’s Morphology’, in *Marking Time: Romanticism and Evolution*, ed. by Joel Faflak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2017), pp. 147-172 (p. 153); Jonathan Westphal, ‘White’, *Mind*, 95.379 (1986), 311-328 (p. 318n24).

<sup>479</sup> Hans Jörg Rheinberger, *Towards a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesising Proteins in the Test Tube* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 24-37 and 187-203; Hans Jörg Rheinberger, ‘The trajectory of a scientific object’, in *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, ed. by Lorraine Daston (Chicago, IL: Chicago University press, 2000), pp. 270-294; Lorraine Daston, ‘Epistemic Images’, in *Vision and its Instruments: Art, Science and Technology in early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alina Payne (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press: 2015), pp. 13-36; Dahlia Porter, ‘Epistemic Images and Vital Nature: Darwin’s *Botanic Garden* as Image Text Book’, *European Romantic Review*, 29 (2018), 295-308.

<sup>480</sup> Lorraine Daston, ‘Epistemic Images’, p. 19.

colour, for example, serve as both the specimen and the representation. Like William Hogarth's lines, in Ruth Mack's words, the specimen 'tip[s] over ontologically, standing for but also working as the things it represents'.<sup>481</sup> Taken as 'examples', specimens on the page gesture at once to an ideal type and comprise in themselves the condition and the limit of that type:

An emphasis on (re)inscription through the world of the exemplar allows one to retain the importance of singularity and historicity, while not remaining trapped in what is merely fleeting, sporadic, fugitive, and interruptive. Thinking about the exemplarity of the example, enables one to focus on *both* the distancing and the given order, a turning away, *and* the possibility of another way of being and acting – a turning toward that is inscribed in it.<sup>482</sup>

Fugitive colour, by its nature conditioned by historical and environmental specificity, carries this same both/and logic, focussing our attention on the individual character of the page at hand *and* the wider orders, systems and theories in which it participates and from which it departs. In this way, colour theory functions in Rancière's phrase as a 'partition of the sensible', at each turn proposing new orders of knowledge by which particular domains of practice are established and delimited.<sup>483</sup> This chapter traces developments in colour theory across different domains of practice, revealing the ways in which organisational partitions were forged in opposition to colour's recalcitrant tendency to blur, blot and fade, but also revealing the points at which those partitions embraced colour's fugitive qualities in order to create more dynamic systems. Like the botanical samples in James Petiver's (1665-1718) *hortus siccus*, material colour as specimen resists its 'transformation into print, stubbornly sticking up off the page, introducing ripples into the text, intruding on the space allotted to its neighbour'.<sup>484</sup> This recalcitrance is central to Porter's sense of specimen poetics, a phrase that brings scientific, natural historical, and imaginative implications into its fold. Specimen poetics is a rich term through

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<sup>481</sup> Ruth Mack, 'Hogarth's Practical Aesthetics', p. 37.

<sup>482</sup> Aletta J. Norval, "'Writing a Name in the Sky": Rancière, Cavell and the Possibility of Egalitarian Inscription', *American Political Science Review*, 106.4 (2012), 810-826 (820).

<sup>483</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 36.

<sup>484</sup> Dahlia Porter, 'Specimen Poetics', p. 66. See also Theresa M. Kelley, 'Romantic Exemplarity: Botany and "Material" Culture', in *Romantic Science*, pp. 223-255.

which to consider the processes by which experiments with light and pigment were apprehended and rendered on the page. Through colour's particular specimen poetics, new materials of method are devised, enshrined, and tested.

## II. Fugitive colour and the 'Praxis of Painting'

In this section I explore the interplay of fugitive materials across a number of different media from pigments to periodicals, exploring the function of fugitive knowledge within Reynolds's work and its reception in the Romantic period. The experiments undertaken in Reynolds's studio necessitated the overlap of creative and technical spheres, and demonstrated his keen control over the circulation and reproduction of expertise. His pupil and later biographer James Northcote (1746-1831) reported that Reynolds reprimanded young painters for their inquisitive investigation into 'foolish mixtures'.<sup>485</sup> Northcote recalls that 'all varnishes, and every kind of experiment, were strictly prohibited. Likewise, all his own preparations of colour were mostly carefully concealed from my sight and knowledge, and perpetually locked secure in his drawers; thus never to be seen or known by anyone but himself'.<sup>486</sup> There was some fear, perhaps, of theft, and a consequent assumption that experiment was a privilege that would derail the discipline of his younger pupils. Reynolds's did, however, engage in more public and commercially oriented chemical experiments. The Society of Arts elected him as a member in September 1756, and in 1757 he was nominated to a committee responsible for trialling verdigris, a blue-green pigment.<sup>487</sup> In 1760 he adjudicated Johann Heinrich Müntz's experiments with encaustic painting, overseeing the modern repurposing of an ancient method in which molten wax was used to bind pigments in order to produce innovative and inviolate tones. Experiment denotes both strict, standardised and institutionalised regimes, as well as private, esoteric,

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<sup>485</sup> James Northcote, *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 20 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1818), II, 23.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> See D. G. C. Allan, 'Artists and the Society in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Virtuoso Tribe of Arts and Sciences: Studies in the Eighteenth-Century Work and Membership of the London Society of Arts*, ed. by Allan and John L. Abbott (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), p. 97.

and enigmatic endeavours. In each sphere, colour provides material, composite, and fugacious materials that provoke both scientific and artistic enquiry.

The poet William Mason (1724-1797) used the phrase ‘Praxis of Painting’ to describe the subject of ‘a very detached, unmethodical, yet excellent work’ by Leonardo da Vinci from which Reynolds developed his own ‘manner of colouring,’ characterised by restless experimentation with innovative, multimedia mixtures.<sup>488</sup> Reynolds’s canvases are densely composite works. Uncovering Reynolds’s ‘Praxis of Painting’ requires both a forensic eye to the substance of material pigments and a broader view of the organisational texts that helped facilitate and record the painter’s work. Martin Postle, for example, describes how ‘Reynolds recorded an appointment with a “beggarman” in his sitter book on Wednesday 20 August 1766 at 10am. He also noted inside the black cover of the same book: “Old beggarman, yellow oker, lake, and black and blue. Drapery varnished with oils. Head etc. with wax.”’<sup>489</sup> The list comprises a kind of chromatic blazon, dissecting the body part by part to identify each constituent hue. Reflecting on Reynolds’s method for ensuring accuracy in his colouring, Mason recalls a visit to the painter’s studio:

I happened to visit him when he was finishing the head from a beautiful girl of sixteen, who, as he told me, was his man Ralph’s daughter, and whose flaxen hair, in fine natural curls, flowed behind her neck very gracefully. But a second casual visit presented me with a very different object: he was then painting the body, and in his sitting chair a very squalid beggar-woman was placed with a child, not above a year old, quite naked upon her lap. As may be imagined, I could not help testifying my surprise at seeing him paint the carnation of the Goddess of Beauty from that of a little child, which seemed to have been nourished rather with gin than with milk.<sup>490</sup>

Reynolds answered Mason’s surprise with the reassurance that ‘the child’s flesh assisted him in giving a certain *morbidezza* [softness] to his own colouring, which he thought he should hardly arrive at, had he not such an object, when it was extreme

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<sup>488</sup> William Mason, ‘Observations on Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Method of Colouring’, in William Cotton ed., *Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Notes and Observations on Pictures* [...] (London: John Russell Smith, 1859), pp. 47-61 (p. 52).

<sup>489</sup> Martin Postle, ‘Patriarchs, Prophets and Paviours: Reynolds’s Images of Old Age’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 130.1027 (1988), 735-744 (p. 725).

<sup>490</sup> Mason, ‘Anecdotes’, p. 55.



(as it certainly was) before his eyes'.<sup>491</sup> There is then, something quietly fugitive or out of place where one least expects it: a divine pink found in the flesh of a mendicant infant and superimposed onto the body of a goddess.<sup>492</sup> The authenticity and particularity of colouring brings into its service a variety of 'objects' or bodies not otherwise associated with the image at hand.

In addition to these bodily palimpsests, Reynolds 'used a clandestine laboratory of esoteric waxes, fugitive pigments, and unstable printing media to craft visually striking images' in his paintings.<sup>493</sup> In this way, his work did not merely represent experimentation but embodied experimental materials, often resulting in unstable colouring that changed in relation to environmental factors, such as natural light or humidity.<sup>494</sup> In its lack of durability, fugitive colour poses a direct challenge to posterity. In one extreme case, Reynolds's portrait of Walter Blackett, painted in 1766-9, faded as the sitter himself grew older, and in the end 'die[d] before the man'.<sup>495</sup> Some contemporaries enjoyed the singularly 'lucid transparency' of colouring that resulted from Reynolds's 'chymic experiments', but for later observers (in many cases, not much later at all), the finest tints quickly faded.<sup>496</sup> Despite this tenacity, as Horace Walpole put it at the time of the 1775 Exhibition, Reynolds's 'colours seldom stand longer than crayons', an implicitly less

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<sup>491</sup> Mason, 'Anecdotes', p. 54.

<sup>492</sup> In David Mannings's catalogue of Reynolds' paintings, he notes that Reynolds had used 'an Italian colour grinder named Grandi' as the model for Henry VI. See David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, 2 vols (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), I, 525-526 (p. 525).

<sup>493</sup> Matthew C. Hunter, 'Joshua Reynolds's "Nice Chymistry": Action and Accident in the 1770s', *The Art Bulletin*, 97 (2015) 58-76 (p. 58); Matthew Hunter, 'Reynolds's Science of Experiment in Practice and Theory', in *Joshua Reynolds: Experiments in Paint*, ed. by Lucy Davis and Mark Hallett (London: The Wallace Collection, 2015), pp. 100-122.

<sup>494</sup> See Edward Bancroft, *Experimental Researches Concerning the Philosophy of Permanent Colours* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1814). For more on Bancroft and fugitive colours across the media of paper, cloth, and skin see James Delbourgo, 'Fugitive Colours: Shaman's Knowledge, Chemical Empire, and Atlantic Revolutions', in *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820*, ed. by Simon Schaffer et al. (Cambridge: Science History Publications, 2009), 271-320.

<sup>495</sup> See M. K. Talley, 'All Good Pictures Crack': Sir Joshua Reynolds's Practice and Studio', in *Reynolds*, ed. by Nicholas Penny (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1986), p. 55-70 (p. 55).

<sup>496</sup> Anon., 'Sir Joshua Reynolds', *General Evening Post*, 25-28 Feb 1792, n. p.

sophisticated and palpably less durable medium that highlights the particular tension between high and low forms of fugitive media in all contexts.<sup>497</sup>

Taking colour as a specimen, Reynolds advised his students to cultivate a practice of empirical observation attentive to ‘digesting, methodizing, and comparing’ in order to ‘make new combinations, perhaps, superior to what had ever before been in the possession of art’.<sup>498</sup> This combinatorial method fuelled Reynolds’s experimental interventions in the mixing of pigment in pursuit of rare and permanent hues. The woodland depicted in Reynolds’s *Miss Jane Bowles* (1775-6), for example, is composed of pigments mixed with walnut oil, pine resin, mastic gum, and beeswax.<sup>499</sup> It is only with very recent technological advances in conservation that this complex intersection of materials has been made visible.<sup>500</sup> Material texture and aerial illumination also work in tandem in this painting as the raised threads of the canvas support emphasise the dappled sunlight. The woodland is not mimetically represented but viscerally present in the parts and processes of painting.<sup>501</sup> The *materia pictoria*, then, refers not simply to paint, but to a material assemblage in which colour interacts with a variety of natural media and textures. Heather Sullivan, approaching Goethe in the tradition of new materialism, roots an ‘ecology of colour’ in the interactive and metamorphic aspects of perceptual colour – but a turn to material colour shifts our attention to the literal natural residues that are marshalled together in service to experiment.<sup>502</sup> The composite nature of Reynolds’s

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<sup>497</sup> Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 17 April 1775, *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, 45 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83), XXIV, 93.

<sup>498</sup> Joshua Reynolds, ‘Discourse III’, in *The Works of Joshua Reynolds*, ed. by Edmond Malone, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell Jn. and W. Davies, 1797), I, 35-53 (p. 38).

<sup>499</sup> The Wallace Collection, P 36, see *Joshua Reynolds: Experiments in Paint*, p. 140; Alexandra Gent, Ashok Roy, and Rachel Morrison, ‘Practice Makes Imperfect: Reynolds’s Painting Technique’, in *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, 35 (2014), 12-3 (p. 23).

<sup>500</sup> See Joyce H. Townsend, ‘The Materials Used by British oil Painters in the Nineteenth Century’, *Tate Papers*, 2 (2004) < [http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/02/the-materials-used-by-british-oil-painters-in-the-nineteenth-century#footnote1\\_u6ejcq](http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/02/the-materials-used-by-british-oil-painters-in-the-nineteenth-century#footnote1_u6ejcq) > [accessed: 02.08.17]

<sup>501</sup> For context on nineteenth-century painters’ materials see Leslie Carlyle, *The Artist’s Assistant: Oil Painting Instruction Manuals and Handbooks in Britain 1800-1900* (London: Archetype Publications, 2001).

<sup>502</sup> Heather I. Sullivan, ‘The Ecology of Colors: Goethe’s Materialist Optics and Ecological Posthumanism’, in *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 80-97.

paintings runs deeper still. X-ray scans reveal inverted portraits painted beneath the images visible to the naked eye, which evidence that, like Titian, Rembrandt and others, Reynolds frequently re-used his canvasses.<sup>503</sup> More than this deep layering, though, single subjects are themselves composite bodies.

Reynolds's canvas, *Studio Experiments in Colour and Media* (1770-80) shows his experiments in action (Plate VII).<sup>504</sup> The canvas, 24 by 20 inches, is a cumulative record of investigation into the combination of a variety of pigments and varnishes, in which taxonomic discretion lirts into promiscuous assemblage.<sup>505</sup> Shaky circles match particular swatches to their identifying annotations, legible only when the canvas is turned and reoriented in various directions. While the colour books explored below seek out coherent and comprehensive means of testing and visualising the relations between colours, a record of intermedial relations is registered in Reynolds's experimental canvas, onto which the artist-turned-chemist 'arranged specimens of various pigments for experimental purposes'.<sup>506</sup> Reynolds believed that such experimental methods and spaces could accommodate a complete and comprehensive investigation: in the course of his work, he would try 'every effect of colour', 'every new colour', and was undeterred, even abetted, by the concomitant failures, fadings, and cracks.<sup>507</sup>

Reynolds's experiments in the constitution, use, and organisation of colour, and his own art that is itself integrated as experiment, articulates the interface between matter and mind, making and knowing. His experiments in and with colour sit between the three intersecting categories outlined by Robert Mitchell in his study *Experimental Life*. Mitchell groups experiment into three kinds of practice: the

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<sup>503</sup> See 'Practice Makes Imperfect: Reynolds's Painting Technique'.

<sup>504</sup> See Charles Locke Eastlake's transcription of Reynold's annotations on the canvas in *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1847), I, 444.

<sup>505</sup> This phrase originates from the preface to *A Catalogue of the Portland Museum* (London: Skinner & Company, 1786), p. iv. See Benjamin Schmidt, 'From Promiscuous Assemblage to Order and Method: Europe and its Exotic Worlds', in *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 325-337.

<sup>506</sup> Royal Academy Collections Team, 'Object of the Month: March 2015 – Sir Joshua Reynolds's PRA, "Studio Experiments in Colour and Media", 1770' (3 March 2015) <<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/object-of-the-month-march-2015>> [accessed: 30.09.18]

<sup>507</sup> Reynolds, quoted in 'Some Account of the Life and Writings of Sir Joshua Reynolds', in *The Works of Joshua Reynolds*, I, iii-lxxi (p. xxxi).

epistemological (concerned with knowledge creation), the sociological (concerned with resolving conflict), and the ontogenetic (concerned with creating new assemblages). Colour's specimen poetics is a product of a rich alliance between art, science, social life, and new bibliographic modes of representation. At its most material – sticky, lumpy, flowing, fading – these flying colours have a unique capacity to defy taxonomic categories, as well as to court the kind of organisational innovation evident in the *Experimental Canvas*.

These complex hierarchies of manner and materials are exemplified in James Gillray's 1797 print *Titianus Redivivus; - or, the seven wise men consulting the new oracle* (Plate VI), a satire on Benjamin West and other Royal Academy artists who had been fooled by the painter Ann Jemima Provis's 'Venetian Secret'.<sup>508</sup> This lucrative hoax relied on a forged manuscript that Provis and her father claimed detailed the distinctive and long lost methods of Renaissance masters, including the fictitious 'Titian shade', a mix of black ivory and Prussian blue (a pigment not invented until 1704) that was to be used beneath glazes of bright colours. Gillray's print depicts the chaotic intersection between orders of colour, as the aerial rainbow descends into a heap of smudged painters' pallets. There is a stark decay from the bright peacock-like blues and yellows at the top of the print to the shady greys of the credulous followers who remain unenlightened below. Both the illustrious and the industrious fall prey to the satirist as he literalises the trope of 'flying colours'. At the bottom left, the shrouded, bespectacled Reynolds (who died five years previously) peeks from beneath a paving stone, with a speech bubble that reads: 'Black Spirits & White; Blue Spirits & Grey. Mingle, mingle, mingle! – you that Mingle may'. The speech bubble alludes to Reynolds's infamous experiments in 'mingling' pigments, but is also itself a fugitive piece, an incantation repeated from

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<sup>508</sup> See John Gage, 'The Substance of Colour', in *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1999), pp. 213-227; Rosie Dias, 'Venetian Secrets: Benjamin West and the Contexts of Colour at the Royal Academy', in *Living with the Royal Academy: Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England, 1768-1848*, ed. by Sarah Monks, John Barrell, and Mark Hallett (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 111-131. Yale Centre for British Art held an exhibition exploring the hoax in 2008-9: *Benjamin West and the Venetian Secret*. For secrecy in relation to French traditions and techniques see Ann Massing, 'From Books of Secrets to Encyclopaedias: Painting Techniques in France between 1600 and 1800', in *Historical Painting Techniques, Materials, and Studio*, ed. by Corinne Lightweaver (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1995), pp. 20-30.

Hecate in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Emblazoned across Pegasus's wings we read: 'Review', 'Magazines', 'Squib', 'Herald', 'Times', etc. This intermedial satire puts stacks of frames, rows of canvasses, rungs of the rainbow, and even clouds, flames, and wings in service to textual transmission: it is a raucous satire on texts, colours and painters out of place. The print depicts fugitive knowledge in all its aspects: formative colours and finished works are not simply ephemeral, but illegitimate, corruptible, and volatile.

Reynolds's reputation for such stark ephemerality prompted connections between his flying colours and the flying leaves of the daily press. In the margins of a notebook, William Blake sneered:

No real Style of Colouring ever appears  
But advertising in the News Papers  
Look there youll see Sr Joshuas Colouring.  
Look at his Pictures All has taken Wing.<sup>509</sup>

Despite its density, material colour is imbued with an aerial quality as Blake likens the ephemeral flying leaves of the press to the manipulation of flying colours. On the one hand, the intermedial metaphor is characterised by ascent, on the other by a bathetic anchor that roots the Royal Academician in the grime and grub of the periodical news. The anecdote's legacy was longer lasting perhaps than the pigments in question. In 1820, *Scrapiana* reported that:

Two gentlemen were at a coffee-house, when the discourse fell upon Sir Joshua Reynold's painting, one of them said, that his tints were admirable, but the colours *flew*. Sir Joshua, who was in the next stall, took up his hat,

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<sup>509</sup> BL Add. MS 49460. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 511. See *The Notebook of William Blake: A Photographic and Typographic Facsimile*, ed. by David Erdman and Donald K. Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Aileen Ward, 'Sr Joshua and his Gang': William Blake and the Royal Academy', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 52.1 (1989), 75-95; Morton D. Paley, 'Blake's Poems on Art and Artists', in *Blake and Conflict*, ed. by Sarah Haggarty and Jon Mee (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 210-227 (p. 217). Paley notes that Blake found Reynolds's style of colouring overly mechanical: 'Colouring formed upon these Principles is destructive of All Art because it takes away the possibility of Variety & only promotes Harmony or Blending of Colours one into another', Blake, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, p. 661. See also: 'When Sr Joshua Reynolds died / All nature was degraded; / The King dropd a tear into the Queens Ear; / And all his Pictures Faded', Blake, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, p. 641.

and accosted them thus, with a low bow: Gentlemen, I return you many thanks for bringing me off with *flying* colours.<sup>510</sup>

More than levelling a criticism at Reynolds's audacity, ineptitude, or the ephemeral nature of his materials, the wry notion of '*flying* colours' suggests – at least for a caricatured Reynolds – that brilliance and impermanence work in tandem.

### III. Systems for 'sublunary things'

#### i. The 'materials of systems'

Where Reynolds opted for experimental contingency, printed books of colour theory sought to inform painterly practice through standardisation, reconciling recalcitrant colour to a universally applicable system. This corpus of texts are difficult to define: their preoccupations are at once practical and theoretical, their modes of representation at once visual and verbal; they bring into their disciplinary reach the objects of natural history, the forms and substances of art, the figurative language of poets, and the processes and vocabularies of scientific experiment. They are, in this way, intermediary: go-between works which intervene in and gather together a range of methods in pursuit of coherent and complete knowledge. As organisational texts, they concern themselves with the incremental gradations of hues in order to properly demarcate a seeming infinity of discrete, classifiable colours. Their intermediate nature also operates at the intersection between the spectral colours of the prism and the workings the material colours in which these texts are manifest.

Each of the colour books described here are headed with distinctive epithets: Moses Harris presents a *System* (c.1766), Mary Gartside a *Theory* (1808), James Sowerby an *Elucidation* (1809), Patrick Syme a *Nomenclature* (1814), and George Field a *Chromatics* (1817).<sup>511</sup> Together these works participate in what Clifford

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<sup>510</sup> *Scrapiana; or, Elegant Extracts of Wit* (London: T and J. Allman, 1820), p. 50.

<sup>511</sup> Moses Harris, *The Natural System of Colours* (London: Laidler's Office, c. 1766); Mary Gartside, *An Essay on a New Theory of Colours, and on Composition in General, Illustrated by Coloured Blots [...]* (London, T. Gardiner, 1808); James Sowerby, *A New Elucidation of Colours, Original Prismatic, and Material [...]* (London: Richard Taylor and Co., 1809); Patrick Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours, with additions [...]* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1814); George Field, *Chromatics or, an Essay on the Analogy and Harmony of Colours* (London: A. J. Valpy, 1817).

Siskin has identified as a ‘genre’ of systems.<sup>512</sup> A focus on *materia pictoria* and specifically on fugitive colour offers a corrective to what Siskin describes as the ‘sublimation’ of systems to the realm of intellect at the expense of practice: often, the notion of a system is reduced to ‘an *idea* that carries and accumulates meanings rather than an object that works in the world – or doesn’t – to produce them.’<sup>513</sup> But this does not account for the mediation of the idea through materials. I argue here that the materials and technologies by which the system is represented inform its contours and content. Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia* defines ‘system’ as ‘a certain Assemblage, or Chain of Principles and Conclusions: Or the whole of any Doctrine, the several Parts whereof are bound together, and follow or depend on one another’.<sup>514</sup> The book, then, seems a comfortable vehicle for the transmission of a system: sequential, gathered, bound, finite. The entry goes on to list a number of iconic systematisers. Islanded between ‘Sir *Isaac Newton’s* Doctrine of Colours’ and ‘System, in Astronomy’, is the curious phrase: ‘Experiments are the Materials of Systems: An Infinity are required to build one. See EXPERIMENT.’<sup>515</sup> Experiments – unbounded, erratic, volatile – must be given indefinite rein over endless time in order to ‘build’ a system. At the very heart of any avowedly systematic project, then, is this key tension between fixity and fugacity, materials and method. Projects such as Harris’s *Natural System* – at once a universally applicable model and a set of blotched, detached plates designed for practical use in the studio – are keenly concerned with the relationship between ideas and ‘object[s] in the world’. In its specificity, colour might seem at first to resist Siskin’s sense of system as large-scale networks, infrastructures, and other totalising, connective forms of knowledge. Yet, run to its logical extreme, colour theorists strive for a system which ‘*like the universe, is an absolute unity comprehending a relative infinity: - a perfect*

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<sup>512</sup> Clifford Siskin, *System: The Shaping of Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), p. 30.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, ‘System’, II, 165-166 (165). See Mark Canuel, ‘Introduction: Making and Unmaking Romantic Systems’, *Romantic Circles Praxis* (March 2016) <<https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/systems/praxis.systems.2016.canuel.html>> [accessed: 05.12.20]; Clifford Siskin, ‘The Year of the System’, in *1798: The Year of Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Richard Cronin (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>515</sup> Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, ‘System’, II, 165.

system'.<sup>516</sup> This totalising, dynamic system goes beyond expressing the constitution of and relationship between colours to expressing the relationship between all forms.

Harris's compound and prismatic colour charts are often appended to his *The Aurelian, or Natural History of English Insects* (1766), literally binding together a study of the sublime 'or otherwise aerial' with minute 'departments of creation' in a specimen poetics mediated by disbound pages and material colour.<sup>517</sup> The text of the *Natural System* was as changeable as the richness of the paint adorning its pages. The second edition of Harris's *System* was published by the naturalist Thomas Martyn in 1811. In the main, Martyn's editorial interventions are stylistic, and help the reader to parse Harris's long and meandering sentences (the very first of which is 100 words in length). However, some additions and emendations accentuate colour's aesthetic and affective value. In the 1766 edition 'colour' is described as that which is 'seen in the rainbow refracted by the prism, or that [which] so beautifully decorates the leaves of flowers'; in the corresponding paragraph of the 1811 edition, 'colour' is 'sublime and beautiful', 'vivid and rich', 'refracted in the prism' but also in a heap of natural objects each 'mutually vieing [sic] in their respective resplendencies'.<sup>518</sup> The additions assist reading, make the work feel more immediately relevant to fellow collectors and natural historians, and introduce a poetic grandeur somewhat lacking in the original. Reading the *Natural System* as itself a historically-contingent object-in-the-world, the two editions offer a sense of the changing registers and shifting scope associated with experiment.

The *Natural System* provides 'the first known presentation of a colour circle in full hue', a hand-coloured copperplate that represented three primary colours (red, yellow and blue), three 'mediates' (orange, green and purple) and the possible combinations – 660 different tints. He defined 'colour' with the shared interests of naturalists, painters, collectors, and colour theorists in mind, producing a mingled definition that fuses additive (prismatic) and subtractive (material) colour:

The term colour, or colours, is meant to include that sublime and beautiful effect exhibited in a rainbow, or otherwise aerial, refracted by the PRISM; or observable in innumerable objects in different departments of creation,

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<sup>516</sup> Field, *Chromatics*, p. 27.

<sup>517</sup> Harris, *Natural System* (1776), p. 2-3.

<sup>518</sup> Harris, *Natural System* (1776), p. 4; Moses Harris, *The Natural System of Colours*, 2nd edn, ed. by Thomas Martyn (London: L. Harrison, 1811), pp. 2-3.



where the most vivid and rich hues inherent in the precious gem, the glowing plumage of a bird, the wings of a Papillon and other insects, and *ad infinitum*.<sup>519</sup>

The *Natural System* not only attempts to represent all observable colours, but ‘all those colours which may *possibly* be made’.<sup>520</sup> Harris’s task is as speculative and efficacious just as it is acquisitive, systematising possibilities as much as it amasses ‘objects’ and placing as much emphasis on what might be ‘made’ as what might be recorded. The infinite ambition of his method is both held back and supported by the fugacity of his materials. As Alexandra Loske has observed, ‘some of the colours in surviving copies of the first edition have deteriorated badly, showing black splotches on the colour wheels, most likely caused by delayed chemical reaction of mixed pigments and painting materials’, while some first editions are missing the colour wheel plate, suggesting that readers removed it from the book for practical use alongside another illustrations.<sup>521</sup>

In addition to the colour circles described above, Harris includes a coloured series of squares, viewed through scored out windows in the preceding page (Plate VIII). The circles and the squares provide two alternative models for visualising the relationship between colours, each one experimenting with the bibliographic possibilities. The former is characterised by the encyclical scope and symmetry of the full circle and its incremental gradient from centre to periphery. The squares, by contrast, present more contingent instances of mixing: these examples are drawn from the universal principles of the preceding wheels and foreground the material processes which combine in uneven brushstrokes that exceed the parameters of the printed squares.

Little is known about Martyn, but what does survive of the paper record exposes the practicalities of production, labour and artistry in bookmaking. In the preface to his most lavish work, *The Universal Conchologist* in six volumes, first printed in 1784, Martyn had railed against ‘ill-qualified’ ‘draughtsmen, engravers, and colourists’, and their ‘complicated systems, bad arrangements, and the practice

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<sup>519</sup> Harris, *The Natural System* (1811), pp. 2-3.

<sup>520</sup> ‘Historical notes and commentary’, in Faber Birren, facsimile edn of Moses Harris, *The Natural System of Colours* (Privately Printed: New York, 1963), p. 1.

<sup>521</sup> Alexandra Loske, *Colour: A Visual History* (London: Tate, 2019), p. 27.

of crowding' images of different specimens on a single plate'.<sup>522</sup> Rather than offer his own authoritative system he presents extra-large plates displaying 1 to 3 illustrated specimens each, with plenty of white space, and indicates that they 'will be loose, for the convenience and utility of classing the different familiar at pleasure, and comparing together the various systems that have been advanced on the subject'.<sup>523</sup> Before he embarks on editing Harris's system then, there is already an entrenched belief that systems in print must be provisional and detachable, allowing for comparative and personal rearrangement. Even as works of natural history and colour theory worked to classify and demarcate specimens, many books in these fields were characterised by this sense of material contingency and by the blurred boundaries between individual publications.

Martyn's publishing practices emphasise both the division of labour that goes into making illustrations and the disaggregation of books themselves as plates were disbound and recombined. Martyn's practice for hand-colouring in the workshop was explicitly motivated by the provision of consistent and accurate representation of specimens.<sup>524</sup> Two of the three British Library copies of the *Universal Conchologist* are bound with 'A Short Account of the Nature, Principle and Progress of Private Establishment instituted for the purposes of instructing youth in the art of illustrating' (1789 – five years are the commencement of the *UC*). In this account, Martyn complains of the 'aggravation and expense' in producing these gorgeously illustrated natural history books, and notes with frustration that 'few artists' are willing to risk their reputation 'transferring their skill to an unknown subject': that is to suggest that natural history painting is a form of mechanical labour, and not a high art participating in the cult of celebrity. 'The labour of boys', he ventures, 'is always

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<sup>522</sup> Thomas Martyn, *Universal Conchologist, exhibiting the figure of every known Shell accurately drawn and painted after Nature with a New systematic Arrangement* (London: No. 26 King Street, Covent Garden, 1784), p. 4. Martyn's few extant letters are applications to the Royal Literary Fund for financial aid, the first written in 1803 and the second and third in 1823 and 1824. See British Library Loan 96 RLF 1/142/3; 1/449/6; 1/142/7.

<sup>523</sup> Martyn, *Universal Conchologist*, p. 8.

<sup>524</sup> For a 'bibliography of images' and the separate processes involved in different print techniques see Roger Gaskell, 'Printing House and Engraving shop: A Mysterious Collaboration', *The Book Collector*, 53.2 (2004), 213-51.

cheaper than that of men'.<sup>525</sup> As is to be expected, he pursued industry and economy over genius, and actively preferred the 'uniformity and equality of style, conception, execution' that results from 'inspection and control' over the work of juniors.<sup>526</sup> Artists, by contrast, are 'too vain', 'frugal', and of 'independent' mind, perhaps, too experimental.<sup>527</sup> To that end, he set up a small academy for training young, orphaned boys in the art of illustration. But all this was for little gains: in his *Exotic Conchology* (1841), William Swainson dismissed the *Universal Conchologist* as too 'costly' and 'imposing', moreover: 'the majority [of prints], though laboriously finished, betray an incorrectness of drawing and a gaudiness of colouring'.<sup>528</sup> The plates are only 'slightly etched' before they are handed to the colourists, who are 'so unequal' in skill 'that scarcely two copies will be found of the same subject that are alike'.<sup>529</sup> Each extant copy, then, provides differently coloured plates in a different order, leaving the reader to contend both with fugitive colour and fugitive pages. There is a tension between ideals of consistency and accuracy in colouring and what is materially possible or practicable. Harris's *Natural System* attempts to bridge this divergence, but, as this chapter will show, he inaugurates a restlessly experimental tradition of organising colour.

## ii. The experimental page

Early nineteenth-century colour theorists radically reshaped Harris's colour wheel. The flower painter Mary Gartside published three works on colour that chart her changing status from water-colourist to colour theorist.<sup>530</sup> Her *Essay on Light and Shade, on Colours, and on Composition in General* was first published in 1805, then revised and enlarged in 1808 as *A New Theory of Colours, and on Composition in General*, and supplemented by the separate, large format volume of exemplary

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<sup>525</sup> Martyn, *A Short Account of the Nature, Principle and Progress of Private Establishment, instituted for the purposes of instructing youth in the art of illustrating* (London: Printed by the Author 1789), p. 26.

<sup>526</sup> Thomas Martyn, 'A Short Account', p. 27.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>528</sup> William Swainson, *Exotic Conchology* (London: William Wood, 1821), p. iv.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>530</sup> See Alexandra Loske, 'Mary Gartside: a Female Colour Theorist in Georgian England', *Journal of Art History and Museum Studies*, 14 (2010), 17-30 (18).

‘specimen’ *Ornamental Groups* [...] *Illustrative of a New Theory of Colouring* (1808). Rare extant editions of this work contain loose plates of varied numbers and in various orders. The second edition represents Gartside’s shift in focus from the practical preoccupations of the flower painter to the scientific investigations of more ‘philosophical readers’.<sup>531</sup> In this second text, she subscribes, in most part, to Newtonian thought, departing only in her argument that colours can be arranged according to their brightness. Later, she makes direct reference to the painter Gerard de Lairese’s experiments with coloured patches of silk and astronomer William Herschel’s experiments on the heat and light of the sun: somewhat evasively, she recounts ‘having accidentally cast [her] eye on an extract from Dr. Herchell’s [sic] *Investigation of Colours* [1800] in a periodical work, for the very word colour was then sufficient to assert my attention’.<sup>532</sup> Simultaneously, Gartside’s essay is a testament to her increased relevance and rigour, and to the fragmentary diffusion of scientific knowledge in the popular press and though practical handbooks, such as this, designed for painters without scientific training.

Gartside believed that, having understood the relational principles of colour, the artist could work as ‘an original performer, not as mere copyist’.<sup>533</sup> For her, this understanding is as fundamental for the painter as learning the alphabet for a reader of Hebrew or ancient Greek. Following her discussion in prose, Gartside provides a series of illustrative examples that pose a stark contrast in form and function to Harris’s circles and squares (Plate IX). By way of introduction to what she calls ‘blots’, Gartside writes:

I wish to make [this] work more useful to those also who wish for a guide to their Pencils, in forming groups of flowers [...] I shall therefore suppose for the sake of illustration, that each blot is a group of flowers; but must at the same time observe, that they have not been formed with the most distant idea of being examples, in respect to the contours of flowers. They are

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<sup>531</sup> Mary Gartside, *An Essay on a New Theory of Colours, and on composition in general*, 2nd edn (London: T Gardiner, 1808), p. 45.

<sup>532</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 7. See Gerard de Lairese, *A Treatise on the Art of Painting*, revised and enlarged by W. M. Craig (London, Edward Orme, 1817), and William Herschel, ‘Investigation of the Powers of the Prismatic Colours to Heat and Illuminate Objects’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 90 (1800), 255-283.

<sup>533</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 33.

merely compact blots of colours, exhibiting the effect produced by arranging them according to the theory delivered by the foregoing pages.<sup>534</sup>

Gartside's text is more than a *vade mecum* for painters. It occupies a space that is both instructive ('useful') and peculiarly abstracted: readers must 'suppose' as much as they observe. Rather than adhering to the actual 'contours' of their subject, the 'blots' take a rather different approach, blending and blurring the edges between one hue and another. After all, 'colours arranged in circles in pictures would be very ridiculous'.<sup>535</sup>

Gartside's blots provide the experimental groundings that qualify her as both a theorist (observing principles) and a flower painter (imitating forms). The language of the 'blot' recalls Alexander Cozens's *New Method for Assisting the Invention of Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* (1785), by which the artist composed landscapes incrementally from abstract blots of ink to more definitive forms.<sup>536</sup> For Cozens, the 'blot' is 'swift', 'suggestive', 'instantaneous', and 'accidental'.<sup>537</sup> Like Cozens's blots and Reynolds's *Experimental Canvas*, Gartside's plates are a preparation towards the final work, experiments in mixing and arranging that utilise colour's propensity to smudge and blend on the page. Gartside's blots, by contrast, behave as similarly intermediary images – exemplars that sit between the discursive text of her *Theory* and the completed illustrations that comprise the *Ornamental Groups*; but unlike Cozens's, they derive their meaning from the interplay between text, image and imaginative supposition. They are not 'self-assertive', then, but rather relational, partial, contingent images. For example, Gartside cautions against the methods of her contemporaries, preferring a smooth and subtle mental 'conduction' from one aspect of the blot to another, though she does include a key, distinguishing the constitutive colours of each blot with small red letters in manuscript.<sup>538</sup> Her blots engage her reader in a moment of creative speculation: 'We will suppose', she writes, 'this blot to be a branch or group of fern, *growing* at the

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<sup>534</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 45.

<sup>535</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 29.

<sup>536</sup> See also George Field, *Chromatics* (1845), p. 118

<sup>537</sup> Quoted and discussed in Charles A. Cramer, 'Alexander Cozens's *New Method*: The Blot and General Nature', *The Art Bulletin*, 79.1 (1997), 112-129 (p. 113).

<sup>538</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 45.

side of an hedge'.<sup>539</sup> Her readers imagine the intervening hues between those represented, just as they imagine the more precise contours of fern and flower. The experimental page of the treatise thus becomes, in the act of imagining, an amorphous herbarium, fusing the processes of botanical collection with the polite arts of flower painting and the imaginative work of supposition.

Readers of both editions will be struck by Gartside's authorial growth and self-fashioning, evident in the extent of revision between editions. In 1805 the first edition opens: 'Among the ladies I have been called to instruct in painting, by far the greater number have been desirous of beginning *immediately* to *paint*, whether proficient [sic] in drawing or not, and sometimes without any knowledge of the theory or principles of the art' – they thus lack method, like 'mariners putting to sea without helm and compass'.<sup>540</sup> In the 1808 opening, we are told that:

As a reference to the former Edition of this Work is frequently made in a work entitled Ornamental Groups, lately published; and as the attention of the possessors of that Work may be directed to this Essay, the Author thinks it would be treating the public with disrespect, to refer them to a Work that might be in any respect rendered more perfect: She has, therefore, studiously attended to the different criticisms passed upon the former Edition.<sup>541</sup>

The second edition constitutes 'a careful revisal [sic] as to style', as Gartside hones her clarity and enlarges her examples. The supplementary work, *Ornamental Groups*, provides considered 'proofs' of her theory's 'truth, Veracity, and boldness'.<sup>542</sup> In this compilation of plates she offers two sets of exemplary specimens: one led by the principles outlined in her *New Theory* on the mixing and

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<sup>539</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 54. The intuitive relationship between part and whole in Gartside's work could also correspond to the contemporary gestalt theory, nascent in Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, see: Mitchell G. Ash, 'The Gestalt Debate: From Goethe to Ehrenfels and Beyond', in *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890-1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity*, ed. by Mitchell G. Ashe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 84-99.

<sup>540</sup> Mary Gartside, *An Essay on Light and Shade, on Colours, and on Composition in General* (London: Printed for the Author, 1805), p. 4.

<sup>541</sup> Gartside, *New Theory*, p. 5.

<sup>542</sup> Mary Gartside, *Ornamental Groups Descriptive of Flowers, Birds, Shells, Fruit, Insects &c. and Illustrative of a New Theory of Colouring form Designs and Paintings* (London: William Miller, 1808), unpaginated loose sheets. The edition quoted from here is from the Colour Reference Library, London: 752 GAR.

arrangement of colours, and another, for comparison's sake, led by 'accident and fancy'.<sup>543</sup> She also cites the 'author's inexperience in the management of Public works' as a defence for the prohibitive cost of the first edition. What began as an intimate and polite manual for domesticated paintings is at the last a self-consciously 'new theory', a 'public work'.<sup>544</sup>

Gartside was not alone in combining the pursuits of flower-painting and prismatic colour theory. If Gartside's work attests to the suggestive potential of material colour and intermedial images, contemporaries grappled with the difficulty of rendering prismatic light colour on the page. Such complaints rooted their frustration in the impermanence of fugitive colour, contrasting the permanence of a method with the inconstancy of materials. James Sowerby published his *New Elucidation of Colours* in 1809, long after his monumental, 36-volume *English Botany* (1790). The *Elucidation* expanded upon a lecture series 'intended to show the means whereby we may produce, arrange, mix, and measure prismatic tints and show their agreement with material colours'.<sup>545</sup> As Brian Dolan has demonstrated, 'Sowerby was not concerned with debating how the mechanisms of the eye mixed the principal colours into various tints. Rather, he was concerned with the method that [William] Wollaston and [Thomas] Young had suggested for replicating their observations of the prismatic spectrum'.<sup>546</sup> Sowerby worked to provide a 'permanent and constant means of comparison' from which to derive precise universal principles.<sup>547</sup> But such a venture exceeded the limits of mere paint: 'That philosophers and artists', he recognised, 'have long wished for some never-fading colours to fix their ideas and universalise them, is in every page amply verified; and as coloured substances, like all other sublunary things, are liable to a certain decay, so it has been but weakly attempted'.<sup>548</sup> At the other end of the proverbial spectrum, Sowerby investigated the 'originality in the prismatic tints of stones' [...] [but

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Lecture advertisement held in the Sowerby Collection, Natural History Museum Library and Archives, MS B65.

<sup>546</sup> Brian Dolan, 'Pedagogy through print: James Sowerby, John Mawe and the problem of colour in early nineteenth-century natural history illustration', *British Journal of the History of Science*, 31 (1998), 275-304 (p. 295).

<sup>547</sup> Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 1.

<sup>548</sup> Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 5.

found] them too fixed, as it were'.<sup>549</sup> Next, he produced a key to his painted colour chart which replaces yellow, red, and blue, hues with 'dots', 'undulating lines', and 'straight lines', rendering chromatic variation diagrammatically.<sup>550</sup> Colour posed a problem seemingly timeless and timebound: how might a 'sublunary thing', by its nature inconstant, be fixed and universalised?

Finally, in an effort to entirely remove the problem fugitive colour posed to accurate and standardised representation, Sowerby developed a black and white plate that he called the chromatometer (Plate X). Readers were encouraged to equip themselves with a prism, place it close to the eye, and observe the white spaces between the black markings on the plate. The colours produced along the different black wedges provide 'conclusive comparisons', reliable and constant for every reader.<sup>551</sup> As such, for example, the particular red of a '*euphorbia peplis*', a coastal bush more commonly known as 'purple splurge', would be rendered with perfect prismatic accuracy and physical constancy.<sup>552</sup> The chromatometer mobilises the surface of the material text in the work of experiment, taking account of the likely wrinkles and margins in the paper and guiding readers through the use of a variety of different paper types, from 'dense, smooth black paper', to white paper at first 'smooth and free from spots or marks', and finally, to margins and pen strokes.<sup>553</sup> Taking his lead, perhaps, from Hooke's famous 'splatch' – a microscopic view of a printed full-stop – Sowerby encourages his readers to incorporate the peripheral and accidental aspects of the book into their own, necessarily contingent experimental reading practice.<sup>554</sup> The experiment is thus not simply represented in the book but carried out upon the surface of the experimental page.

The chromatometer is a loose sheet, a fugitive page disbound from the *New Elucidation* to serve, like a barometer, as an 'independent instrument' or, to employ

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<sup>549</sup> Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 1.

<sup>550</sup> Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 27.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 18.

<sup>554</sup> Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 27. Robert Hooke, *Micrographia: or, Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses [...]* (London: James Allestry, 1667), p. 3.



Ursula Klein's analytical category, a 'paper tool'.<sup>555</sup> As flashes of light are cast upon the page the chromameter materialises prismatic colour and expands the representational possibilities of the book: 'When viewed through the prism, 'the spectrum will appear in great beauty and order'.<sup>556</sup> Separated from the book, this fugitive page exceeds the boundaries of the conventional paper tool, interacting with the phenomena it is designed to investigate as flashes of light are cast upon the page. Moding between cultural and performative contexts well beyond the laboratory, the chromatometer forms one aspect of what Darnton has described as an pervasive 'paper consciousness'.<sup>557</sup> Mapping the laboratory onto domestic reading spaces, Sowerby conjectures that the paper instrument could provide a 'useful and if we please an ornamental appendage in a parlour or study [...] It might therefore be flattened on a board and hung like a picture, decorated with gold or other frame that does not overshadow it, perhaps rather in the shady corner of a room to preserve it'.<sup>558</sup> The detached page and the optical experiment are repurposed as a domestic parlour-game that puts empiricist observation at the very centre of natural history, scientific experiment, and even personal recreation. This instrumentalization of the disbound page enables readers to actively participate in cultures of experiment and popular science, supplanting the specimen collection with the play of light on the page.<sup>559</sup>

By contrast, Patrick Syme's edition of *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours* (1814), a small duodecimo, provides a tabular synthesis of 'description, figure and colour combined', a 'perfect representation', 'as complete as possible'.<sup>560</sup> Werner was a flower painter, drawing-master and designated painter of objects in natural history

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<sup>555</sup> Ursula Klein, *Experiments, Models, Paper Tools: Cultures of Organic Chemistry in the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 1-9.

<sup>556</sup> James Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 28.

<sup>557</sup> Robert Darnton, "'What is the History of Books?'" revisited', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4.3 (2007), 496-508 (p. 498).

<sup>558</sup> James Sowerby, *New Elucidation*, p. 27.

<sup>559</sup> On 'popular science' see Ralph O'Connor, *The Earth on Show: Fossils and the Poetics of Popular Science, 1802-1856* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 11-15; Jonathan R. Topham, 'The Scientific, the Literary, and the Popular: Commerce and the Reimagining of the Scientific Journal in Britain, 1813-1825', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 70.4 (2016), 305-324. On the prism as a technology of mediation see Tita Chico, *The Experimental Imagination: Literary Knowledge and Science in the British Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), p. 161.

<sup>560</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, p. 2.

to the Wernerian Natural History Society in Edinburgh. *Werner's Nomenclature* crafts colour specimens from painted slips pasted into a chart, accompanied by a name, and references to a natural artefact in which this particular colour (he lists 660) can be found (Plate XI).<sup>561</sup> His aim is to develop a nomenclature rooted firmly in the natural world, so that readers will always have material points of reference beyond the book, insurance against the paint which would 'soon tarnish'.<sup>562</sup> Werner hoped to overcome the contemporary complaint that 'there are no words in common use for colours, in any known language, which are sufficiently explanatory'.<sup>563</sup> His descriptions are, then, primarily verbal – a vocabulary for use rather than a 'blot' for conceptualising, or an instrument for practicing. Yet the resulting nomenclature is peculiarly embodied and affective. Readers find examples of the 'purest white', 'free from intermixture', in 'snow white', but we are also given the more quotidian example of 'skimmed milk white', and even the uncanny 'white of the human eye balls'.<sup>564</sup> Colours are thus rendered into words with uncanny specificity, placing the specimen into conversation with the text and world beyond. Werner locates his standardised reference points in the immediate world around him, going so far as to employ his readers' bodies in his dictionary of terms. Preceding the tables, the component parts of each hue are described verbally, and thus: 'Indigo blue, is Berlin blue mixed with a considerable portion of velvet black, a very little asparagus green or arterial blood red' and 'brownish red' is 'chocolate red mixed with hyacinth red, and a little chesnut [sic] brown'.<sup>565</sup> The result is a curiosity cabinet of colours that resembles both the scrapbook and the recipe book. The colour named Lavender Purple is found in the light parts of spots under the wings of a peacock butterfly, in dried lavender flowers and in porcelain and jasper.<sup>566</sup> Each small slip of coloured paper, pasted onto the table, reaches sumptuously beyond itself to find a sensual

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<sup>561</sup> Werner perhaps develops this method of pasting in coloured slips from *Wiener Farbenkabinet* (1774), see Giulia Simonini, 'Organising Colours: Patrick Syme's Colour Chart and Nomenclature for Scientific Purposes', *Revue de la Société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 75 (2018) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/1718.1327>> [accessed: 7/10/20].

<sup>562</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, p. 11.

<sup>563</sup> Thomas Forster, *Researches about Atmospheric Phenomena* (London: Thomas Underwood, 1813), p. 66.

<sup>564</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>565</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, p. 23; p. 40.

<sup>566</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, p. 11.

manifestation in botanical, animal, mineral and edible examples. Vindicating Sowerby's criticism, perhaps, the chart remains of use even as the pigments used to colour it fade with time: 'veinous blood red' appears now a deep brown and 'crimson red' has dampened into purple.<sup>567</sup> In *Werner's Nomenclature*, there is something oneiric even in the descriptions, which map the book at hand onto the colourful book of nature. A certain poetic license combines with taxonomy locate a specimen of 'Flax flower Blue' both within the confines of the paper chart and out in wild, spotted on 'Light Parts of the Margin of the Wings of the Devil's Butterfly'.<sup>568</sup> Unlike the prismatic circle or the disembodied blots, the *Nomenclature* constitutes its colours as subjects that occupy a place and a character beyond the page to comprise a rich and varied ecology of colour.

Harris, Gartside, Sowerby and Syme each produced theories and manuals with relatively specialised applications, devised to connect the work of colour mixing to the production of natural history and botanical illustrations. For them, specimen poetics was rooted in *poesis*, or specimen making: how might the nasturtium or butterfly wing be *made* on the page, replicated in colours that are faithful to the natural object, bright and lasting. By extension, they each take on colour as itself a specimen to be parsed and arranged in diagrams, tables and on slips of paper, revealing the artisanal and chemical processes underpinning the production of natural historical works. In addition to relationships between colours and the mixing and blending of materials, these colour books expressed the mutual imbrication of the arts and sciences, visual and textual media at a key moment of disciplinary formation and differentiation, a tendency that would increase with interventions of chemist and colourman George Field.

#### IV. Towards an 'Aesthetical Chromatics'

##### i. The 'expandable' volume: Between manuscript and print

Reading between printed editions reveals the iterative and composite nature of the growth of ideas, as concepts are revised, expanded, and abandoned. A second edition

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<sup>567</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, p. 42.

<sup>568</sup> Syme, *Werner's Nomenclature*, p. 31.

testifies to an author in demand and to ideas continually in use. For Gartside, this brought a shift in authorial self-fashioning that emphasised professionalisation and an explicit intervention in scientific discourses. Reading between the 1817, 1835 and 1845 editions of George Field's works on colour, inclusive of a unique edition extra-illustrated by the author, reveals the gradual consolidation of an analogical philosophy rooted in both the physical and perceptual qualities of colour.<sup>569</sup> The gradual expansion of this text over time also reveals the chemist's changing relationship to literary materials and to the work of compilation as quotations. Colours and excerpts alike are gathered and mixed on the page, extending the scope of what Porter has identified as 'the methodological thread' that connects literary and scientific experiment.<sup>570</sup> Field had been engaged in the manufacture of pigments from 1804, and supplied artists, bookmakers and tradespeople with colours from 1809. Just 250 copies of the first edition of his *Chromatics*, including seventeen hand-coloured copperplates, were published in 1817. These works, growing vastly in length with each new edition, united technical skill with theoretical ambition. Field's famously bright and lasting pigments were used by Turner, Constable and the Pre-Raphaelites, but his wider philosophical and theological claims were met with criticism. John Ruskin went so far as to caution: 'If you wish to take up colouring seriously, you had better get Field's "Chromatography" [1835] at once; only do not attend to anything it says about principles or harmonies of colour; but only to its statements of practical serviceableness in pigments, and of their operations on each other when mixed, &c.'<sup>571</sup> All materials, then, but no method. For Field, divinely ordained 'harmonies' operated between colours, but also between chromatic and musical scales, and, at the last, between art and nature, God and the world, in a web

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<sup>569</sup> See Linda M. Shires, 'On Colour Theory, 1835: George Field's *Chromatography*', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History* (2012) <[https://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=linda-m-shires-on-color-theory-1835-george-fields-chromatography](https://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=linda-m-shires-on-color-theory-1835-george-fields-chromatography)> [Accessed: 07.10.20]; John Gage, *George Field and his Circle: from Romanticism to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum, 1989); Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 38-52.

<sup>570</sup> Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction*, p. 22.

<sup>571</sup> John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing; in Three Letters to Beginners* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1857), p. 209.

of relations consolidated in his two-volume *Outlines of Analogical Philosophy* (1839).

Analogy apprehends what is held in common among life's discrete compartments; it signifies a relation, shared proportion or likeness. In *Zoonomia* (1794), for example, Erasmus Darwin identified 'rational analogy' as the key to apprehending relationships in nature, where '*the whole is one family of one parent*'.<sup>572</sup> Such comparisons should be handled with caution, though, especially in the realm of corruptible scientific inquiry, lest 'with licentious activity [analogy] links together objects, otherwise discordant, by some fanciful similitude; it may indeed collect ornaments for wit and poetry, but philosophy and truth recoil from its combinations.'<sup>573</sup> The stakes here are high, with sublime connectedness on the one hand, and a fall into chaos on the other. As Devin Griffiths has argued, tracing analogy through its usage in empiricist philosophy, natural theology and poetry, analogy shapes the 'condition of our experience of the world as patterned and intelligible'. Porter has identified a tension in Darwin's work that can also be applied to Field's intervention in colour theory and its reception by contemporaries: while the poetics of the specimen seeks to separate and distinguish, analogy represents a desire to connect and relate.<sup>574</sup>

For Field, organising colour is founded on a 'system' or 'universal archetype' in which each element is 'correlative and co-essential'.<sup>575</sup> Following Newton, Field's analogical method mapped the harmony of colours onto music, working by symbolic association to connect the primary colours to the notes C, E, and G. In describing the relation between 'inherent' colour (pigments; white and black), and 'transient' colour (the prismatic rainbow; light and dark), he contends that 'all the foregoing colours primary, secondary &c., in their reciprocal combinations have infinite intermedia or degrees, with a boundless variety of hues'.<sup>576</sup> Field's analogy pushes the capacities of text and image to their limits, switching between mathematical and perceptual registers, and mingling sight and sound to represent materials that are not

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<sup>572</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia: or, The Laws of Organic Life*, 2 vols (London: P. Byrne and W. Jones 1794), I, 1.

<sup>573</sup> Darwin, *Zoonomia*, I, vii.

<sup>574</sup> Dahlia Porter, 'Scientific Analogy and Literary Taxonomy in Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*', *European Romantic Review*, 18.2 (2007), 213-221 (p. 214).

<sup>575</sup> Field, *Chromatics* (1817), p. 2.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.* Field takes up this idea again in his *Outlines of Analogical Philosophy*.

only fugitive or ‘transient’ but richly composite, even ‘boundless’. In this formulation, for example, blue and green are described as ‘discordant’, a semi-tone between the musical notes B and C.<sup>577</sup> In its final instantiation, analogy comes to unify the broader intellectual disciplines in which it intervenes: ‘For there is a boundless analogy by which the sciences and arts are reciprocally connected and their forms identified, whence they mutually reflect light on each other.’<sup>578</sup> Arts and sciences themselves become the ‘materials of systems’, the tools that might be worked with and upon in the course of optical experiment, ‘mutually’ reflecting light.

Analogy of this kind works by a delicate interplay of similitude and difference; it is a method that ‘uncovers connection but allows for change’.<sup>579</sup> Field writes that the ‘principal distinction between [these] two systems is, that the notes of sound are *separated by intervals or spaces*, while the notes of colour are the *spaces themselves*: for colour, as expansible quantity, bears the same relation to *space* that musical sound, as quantity successive, does to *time*’.<sup>580</sup> The coloured plates of the book – *expansible space* – serve then not as the record of an experiment but an event in themselves. One particular edition of Field’s *Chromatics* demonstrates a relationship to space and to time that is quite distinct from the works discussed above. Field’s own copy was specially bound and extra-illustrated as a presentation copy, and later epitaph, for his wife – materially expanded to accommodate further evidence, associations and relations.<sup>581</sup> Extra-illustration, or supplementing a bound volume with additional plates, has typically been considered as a ‘genteel practice predicated on exegesis and display [...] similar to the connoisseurial processes of collating, mounting, and annotating prints in albums’.<sup>582</sup> In Field’s case, extra-illustration serves as one aspect of experimental method, as it gathers together

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<sup>577</sup> Field, *Chromatics* (1817), p. 35.

<sup>578</sup> Field, *Chromatics; or, the Analogy, Harmony, and Philosophy of Colours* (London: David Bogue, 1845), p. 76.

<sup>579</sup> Gillian Beer, ‘Plants, Analogy, and Perfection: Loose and Strict Analogies’, *Marking Time: Romanticism and Evolution*, ed. by Joel Faflak (University of Toronto Press: 2017), pp. 29-45 (p. 39).

<sup>580</sup> Field, *Chromatics* (1817), p. 36.

<sup>581</sup> Fitzwilliam Museum, Object No. PB.1817.1.

<sup>582</sup> Lucy Peltz, *Facing the Text: Extra-Illustration, Print Culture, and Society in Britain, 1769-1840* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2017), p. 5.

supplementary, functional plates that support Field's analogical theory, and it materialises knowledge's 'correlative and co-essential' function. The altered, composite gift book offers a rather more affective, provisional, and dynamic picture of unity than the conventionally illustrated codex, participating in a long tradition of 'sociable knowledge', 'appropriating the properties of scribal texts – revisability and expandability – to printed books' in a process of compilation and inscription that 'reimagined (and reengineered) the print book into a print-manuscript hybrid.'<sup>583</sup> This edition includes a bespoke, unsigned and undated frontispiece displaying cherubs collecting Newton's three primary colours in urns, their wings flecked with paint, and the surrounding glade washed with coloured shadows. This scene of invention alludes to Angelica Kauffman's allegorical painting *Colour* (1780), in which a female artist takes pigment from a rainbow to fill her empty pallet. Field's appropriation of a motif used by Kauffman (in work that decorates the ceiling at Burlington House) fuses official iconography with the tools of the trade.

Fugitive knowledge is at work in multiple ways in Field's extra-illustrated book. As Luisa Calè writes, 'extra-illustration challenges the stability and homogeneity of identified with the codex as a commodity and as a condition of possibility for the production and circulation of knowledge'.<sup>584</sup> The extra-illustrated book locates the 'condition of possibility' in the intermedial spaces between text and image, the book and the world. In Field's customized volume two admittance tickets are pasted onto the fly-leaf, next to which a handwritten librarian's note attests to the volume's intermedial status as an object somewhere between the categories of print and manuscript: 'this volume has been registered as a Printed Book and entered in the Library Catalogue / The inserted prints have been recorded for the Print Room Catalogue / The volume is to be kept in the Mss Room with the Constable-Lucas

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<sup>583</sup> Elizabeth Yale, *Sociable Knowledge: Natural History and the Nation in Early Modern Britain* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 11-12.

<sup>584</sup> Luisa Calè, 'Extra-Illustrations: The Order of the Book and the Fantasia of the Library', in *Material Cultures of Enlightenment Arts and Sciences*, ed. by Simon Schaffer and Adriana Craciun (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 235-255 (p. 235). See also, see Lucy Peltz, 'Facing the Text: the amateur and commercial histories of extra-illustration, c.1770-1840', *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mendelbrote (London: British Library, 2005), pp. 91-135; and Lucy Peltz, 'A Friendly Gathering: The Social Politics of Presentation Books and their Extra-Illustration in Horace Walpole's Circle', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 19.1 (2007), 33-49.

Correspondence'.<sup>585</sup> The volume itself is an object of categorical confusion, at once ephemeral and bound, personal effect, composite album, practical guide, and scientific intervention.<sup>586</sup> The volume has escaped the 'disrupted history' by which 'albums or prints and drawings [were] both taken apart, dispersed and rearranged' between departments and institutions; rather, it has retained its composite integrity but finds itself an intermedial object always at least half out of place under either the discrete umbrellas of manuscript or print.<sup>587</sup> A leaf from a sale catalogue enumerates its contents: it includes eight plates, a number of exemplary illustrations, original drawings, portraits, views and autographs. While Martyn's and Gartside's unbound books encourage the constant rearrangement of loose parts, this extra-illustrated edition augments the text with a variety of fugitive pieces that inflect reading and meaning, monumentalising the network of associations, pressures and desires that directed historical readers. The pages as they rest today materialise an accretive storehouse of connections – between colours, but also between readers, institutions, and practices. Most numerous among the interleaved plates are botanical drawings exemplifying the relations between colours. There is a clear division between the heft of the printed text and the added plates and portraits, which almost all occur after rather than around or in between the main body of the work. There is, then, a peculiar sense of diffusion as readers reach the end of the text of *Chromatics* and find themselves in an album, a sketchbook, a catalogue, a letter.

The book is inscribed 'to Mary Ann Field, with the author's best affections', and behind a paper window, inside a thick black border, we find a silhouette of Field's late wife, who died in 1834, alongside lines of praise in pencil.<sup>588</sup> The extra-illustrated book comprises the materials of an analogical method that reaches farther and deeper than the standard printed edition. Field writes of complimentary colours: 'thus harmony consists in relation, and springs from the reunion of that which is

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<sup>585</sup> Fitzwilliam Museum, Object No. PB.1817.1.

<sup>586</sup> The relationship between extra-illustration and scientific inquiry has yet to be explored. Further volumes of interest in this respect include Jesse Foot, *The Life of John Hunter* (London: T. Becket, 1794), Wellcome Collection 41224i; and Thomas Pennant, *History of Quadrupeds* (London: B. & J. White, 1793), Wellcome Collection 40326/C/1 I-II.

<sup>587</sup> Alice Wickenden, 'Things to Know Before Beginning, or: Why Provenance Matters in the Library', *Inscription*, 1.1 (2020) 17-27 (p. 18).

<sup>588</sup> Fitzwilliam Museum, Object No. PB.1817.1.



naturally one or united'.<sup>589</sup> The more intimate a relation or unity is, the nearer to perfection is the harmony. The bibliographical practice of extra-illustration operates both as a scientific method that offers multiple and varied demonstrations of the principles described, and also as an extension of relational intimacy. In an inversion of Sowerby's practice that situated the experimental page on the parlour wall, Field brings the domestic to bear on the book. The materials of method, here, do not only facilitate proving certain analogical and theoretical principles, but engage the writer-reader-painter-husband in an interactive, affective and intermedial process of making, compiling and remembering. The edition is an exercise in capturing the fleeting and assembling the fugitive. Thus, in this fragmentary and deeply personal artefact we feel a sense of reflective harmony.

ii. Sciences and the 'sororal' arts

Field's later printed editions took on a similarly composite form. While the 1817 edition makes very sparing use of literary quotations, the 1835 and 1845 demonstrate an increasingly important role for fugitive poetry. What begins in 1835 as a chapter on 'The Expression of Colour' is expanded into a full 'Aesthetical Chromatics' in 1845, in which compilation demonstrates 'the analogous elementary accordance of literary art and poetry with the system of colours and colouring, in the manner previously pursued with regard to the arts of music and painting.'<sup>590</sup> This 'coincident, sororal' relationship between the arts of poetry, painting and music has a clear pedigree in the notion of the 'Sister Arts', a phrase scarcely used by Field but one that prompts further assessment of the relationship between disciplinary and professional boundaries. Thora Brylowe has made a convincing case for a 'moment that changed the cultural landscape' in this respect, as a set of professional tensions between painters and engravers, and shifting distinctions between artistry and craftsmanship that 'exploded the analogy between painting and poetry and prompted a "crisis in the arts: around 1805.'<sup>591</sup> But neither Field – colourman and chemist – nor his 'sororal' arts fit quite so well within these binaries. *Chromatics* and

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<sup>589</sup> Field, *Chromatics* (1817), p. 28.

<sup>590</sup> Field, *Chromatics* (1845), p. 122.

<sup>591</sup> Brylowe, *Romantic Art in Practice*, p. 4.

*Chromatography* testify to the ways in which the sciences jostle uncomfortably with the arts within the ‘one family’ of knowledge, pressing further on the affinities and disparities between sisterly disciplines.

Field expands his repertoire of poetic quotations of ‘auxiliaries’ with each new version of his work, ‘collating the poets for instances of [...] *poetical* painting.’<sup>592</sup> For Field, ‘the connexion of art with science, theory, and practice, and of these with literature, is most intimate and indissoluble.’<sup>593</sup> In both editions, what follows is a lengthy commonplace of poetic quotations, in which authors mix words as paints, arranging colours in verse with pleasing harmony, by Field’s standards at least: ‘words are to the poetry of language what colours are to painting’.<sup>594</sup> ‘Aesthetical Chromatics’ sees fugitive or recycled poetry gathered together, mixed and combined like paints on a palette. This intermedial method, though, was not universally well received. An exasperated reviewer of the 1835 edition remarked in *The Athenaeum*:

A few illustrations from the sister art might be ornamental, and, if selected with great care, useful; but to fill pages with scraps from Shakespeare, down to the maudlin poetess of the day, and refer to them with so grave an air as authorities, is, we conceive, in a Scientific Treatise on Painting, to reach the very summit of absurdity.<sup>595</sup>

Rather than exhibiting harmony, Field’s litany of ‘scraps’ is taken as a sign of the work’s mystifying obfuscation, fit only for readers happy to ‘mistake the obscure for the oracular’.<sup>596</sup> Here, again, miscellaneity and fugitive knowledge carry profane associations. The reviewer does not only bristle at the appearance of arts in the realm of science, but at Field’s perversion of the orders of the book proper to scientific discourse, rooting his invective in the colourman’s particular modes of bibliographic mediation:

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<sup>592</sup> Field, *Chromatography: or, A Treatise of Colours and Pigments, and of their Powers in Painting* (London: Charles Tilt, 1835), p. 16; See also the development of this passage in 1845, from p. 141.

<sup>593</sup> Field, *Chromatography*, p. xiv.

<sup>594</sup> Field, *Chromatics* (1845), p. 124.

<sup>595</sup> Unsigned review, ‘Chromatography; or a Treatise on Colours and Pigments, &c.’, *The Athenaeum* (Aug 22 1835) 637-638 (p. 638).

<sup>596</sup> ‘Chromatography’, *Athenaeum*, 638.

A quarto which comes forth with such pomp and pretension, cannot be passed over like a modest effusion or ignorance in octavo. He reminds us of the cuttle-fish, that, when desirous to baffle its pursuer, ejects and inky fluid to conceal its movements [...] If the practical parts of Mr. F.'s work stood as a single duodecimo, it would be more creditable to him than the present farraginous volume.<sup>597</sup>

Words are not figured here as the poet's paint, but as a gross 'inky fluid', excessively and indiscriminately ejected rather than artfully applied. In these critiques, the 'expansible' scope of analogical method is materialised in the bloated dimensions of the oversized codex. If materials beget method, this is a monstrous progeny. While the Sister Arts are predicated on a particular division of labour that distinguishes the author/artist from the craftsperson, here the shape and weight of the book's materials and its parameters as a malign bibliographic object embody the perversity of the composite book: how can a farrago such as this give rise to harmony?

This question strikes at the heart of Field's wider analogical method and to the broader problem presented by fugitive colour, which presents a conflict between the theory and practice of organisation. Indeed, the *Athenaeum* review criticised Field for his 'most unwise pandering the public taste for that gay lady – Colour', over expression, innovation and design.<sup>598</sup> The material textuality of Field's *Chromatics* amounts to a paradox, as his books 'make available a mode of reading against the grain of their stated theories, a mode of reading in which one finally arrives not at divine order but at the material qualities of the page and illustration, which appeal directly to the sensing body.'<sup>599</sup> This is most palpable in Field's superimposition of the chromatic scale not upon the stave but upon the landscape (Plate XII). For Morgan, this illustration represents a visual crux by which 'the point of the image is to make the physical marks on the page disappear into the mathematical and geometrical truths of a Platonic order. The landscape, by contrast, is entirely arbitrary and contingent.'<sup>600</sup> However, read as part of the incremental development of 'Aesthetical Chromatics', this image rather underscores Field's engagement with the 'sororal arts' and with compilation, working within the realm

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<sup>597</sup> 'Chromatography', *Athenaeum*, 638.

<sup>598</sup> 'Chromatography', *Athenaeum*, 638.

<sup>599</sup> Morgan, *The Outward Mind*, p. 49.

<sup>600</sup> Morgan, *The Outward Mind*, p. 52.

of print and the ‘expansible’ page to express the connections between materials and method. Field’s diagrams are emphatically not ‘free floating, colourful and abstract’, but fugitive in the sense of being composite, material and mobile.<sup>601</sup>

Each of the colour books discussed in this chapter position themselves in relation to very different traditions, as well as to interconnected intellectual, professional and personal histories. This plays out most clearly in their various dedications: Sowerby both to Newton’s memory and to Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society; Gartside – on the contrary – to Reynolds; and Harris, first to Reynolds and later, under Martyn’s editorship, to Benjamin Haydon. At the turn of the century, this heterogeneous corpus of colour books straddle ‘one family’ of artistic, artisanal and scientific traditions and methods. They bring together a veritable assemblage of practices, referents, and readers to participate in their various new theories and new representations. Field’s, more so than others and increasingly so in its later editions, situates colour at the centre of an interdisciplinary and intermedial nexus of artistic practice. Art, science, poetry, and music coalesce to produce new and complex materials of method, conditioned at each turn by a multivalent fugacity and by material colour, in all its sensuousness and compound complexity.

iii. ‘Unweaving the rainbow’

The prism conditions a particular way of looking that is difficult to map onto the terrain of paints, pigments and pages. In the 1845 *Chromatics*, Field complained:

Had our veteran in landscape [J. M. W. Turner], when painting some late beautiful visions, instead of looking at nature through the *prism*, regarded it, as before hinted, through the *spectrum*, he would have approached much nearer to the *truth of nature*, and distinguished properly the *truth of vision* from the *truth of colouring*.<sup>602</sup>

Field is making a distinction between the realm of optics and the orders of material colours, intersecting yet divergent domains of practice: ‘the first is the immediate

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> George Field, *Chromatics* (1845), p. 117.

work of the eye, the latter of the hand'.<sup>603</sup> The rich scope of intermedial analogy expressed in the *Chromatics* is nonetheless dependent on disciplinary specificity. To support this claim, Field turns to a comparison between Turner and Keats's *Endymion*, drawing on an 1842 review of the poem by Leigh Hunt. Both the poet and the painter engage in 'chromatic exsuperances [sic]' and 'effusions', expressive excess in which '*a number of bright pictures are presented to the imagination, and a fine feeling expressed of those mysterious relations by which visible external things are assimilated with inward thoughts and emotions [...] To an unpoetical reader such passages will generally appear mere ravings and absurdity*'.<sup>604</sup> Being a 'poetical reader', by contrast, is predicated on being able to parse and understand a particular kind of poetic-chromatic mediation that appeals less to the hand or eye as to the mind. Field's persistent analogies and assimilations, by which one art or practice lilts knowingly into another, characterise an order of colours that is attentive to both the 'truth of vision' and the 'truth of colouring'. Here I make a return to Keats to explore poetic method more specifically in relation to this distinction between the 'vision' and 'colouring': what does it mean to look at nature through a prism; how might poetry mediate and condition fugitive knowledge?

Famously, at a dinner party hosted by the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon on 28 December 1817, Keats and Lamb complained that, over a century earlier, Isaac Newton's *Opticks* had 'destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to a prism'.<sup>605</sup> This scientific instrument intervened, they suggested, in what was an otherwise lyrical encounter characterised by vastness and insubstantiality. Haydon considered Newton to have 'the greatest human mind that ever touched our sphere',

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. Italics in original.

<sup>605</sup> *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. by W. B. Pope, 10 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960-63), II, 173. For a comprehensive overview of the reception of Newtonian optics in the romantic period see Frederick Burwick, *The Damnation of Newton: Goethe's Colour Theory and Romantic Perception* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986); John Gage, 'Signs of Disharmony: Newton's *Opticks* and the Artists', *Perspectives on Science*, 16.4 (2008), 360-77; for comprehensive background on Newton's reception in eighteenth century descriptive poetry, aesthetics and metaphysics, see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's Opticks and the Eighteenth Century Poets* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); for an introduction to the relation between prismatic and materials colour, see Alan E. Shapiro, 'Artist's Colors and Newton's Colors', *ISIS*, 85.4 (1994), 600-630.

and yet he lamented that ‘it was impossible to resist [Lamb and Keats],’ before they toasted jovially to ‘Newton’s health, and confusion to mathematics!’<sup>606</sup> Keats and Lamb were likely drawing on the fibrous metaphor used by James Thomson, who, almost a century earlier, had mused that Newton’s ‘brighter mind’:

Untwisted all the shining Robe of Day;  
And, from the whitening undistinguish’d Blaze,  
Collecting every Ray into his Kind,  
To the charm’d Eye educ’d the gorgeous Train  
Of *Parent-Colours*.<sup>607</sup>

Keats’s poem goes on to seamlessly fuse the sartorial with the ethereal: the sky is ‘heavy-skirted’, ‘robed’; refracted light – otherwise, in Richard Sha’s words, an imponderable ‘matter without mass’ – glimmers in the rainbow’s weft.<sup>608</sup> The workings of the prism are played out in material, sensual terms. Soon after Haydon’s dinner, William Hazlitt elaborated upon the division between poetry and science in his 1818 *Lectures on the English Poets*:

Let the naturalist, if he may, catch the glow-worm, carry it home with him in a box, and find it next morning nothing but a little grey worm; let the poet or lover of poetry visit it at evening, when beneath the scented hawthorn and crescent moon it had built itself a palace of emerald light. [...] The progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination, and to clip the wings of poetry. The province of the imagination is principally visionary, the unknown and undefined.<sup>609</sup>

The naturalist’s archive has no contingency for fugitive colour: its specimens dull to grey when extracted from their organic habitats. Hazlitt’s dying glow-worm accentuates the disinterested and acquisitive tendencies of the naturalist and contrasts them with the seemingly passive yet luminously monumental affections of the poet. In spite of its splendour, the poetic encounter is characterised by its twilight

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<sup>606</sup> *Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, II, 172.

<sup>607</sup> James Thomson, *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (London: James Thompson, 1727), p. 10.

<sup>608</sup> Sha, *Imagination and Science in Romanticism*, p. 10.

<sup>609</sup> William Hazlitt, ‘Lecture I: Introductory – On Poetry in General’, in *Lectures on the English Poets, Delivered at the Surrey Institution* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1818), pp. 1-39 (p. 17).

liminality; its olfactory sensuousness and the glint of its precious verdure are ephemeral. Hazlitt sets up a methodological conflict between measurable ‘progress’ and spacious ‘province’, in which the tools, methods, and records of scientific advancement are placed at odds with the transcendent ‘unknown’. Hazlitt’s easy contrast between scientific experiment and poetic enchantment sets up two mutually exclusive relationships between collector and specimen. The passage begs the question, how does poetry apprehend and reorganise the natural world in all its colour and richness? In what ways does it treat the colours of the rainbow as specimen to be collected and classified as fastidiously as one would an *arachnocampa luminosa*, or ‘glow-worm’?

Hazlitt’s cautionary lines resonate in a passage from Keats’s narrative poem *Lamia*, written a year later. In this poem, alternative methods of apprehending knowledge are hinged on optical revelation. Three key moments of reflection, refraction, and recognition structure the poem’s protracted meditation on the problems of organising the visible. *Lamia*’s hybrid protagonist – both woman and snake – falls foul of the division between the materialist physical sciences and a still-sensual idealism. *Lamia*’s initial metamorphosis utilises the terrifyingly vivid and metamorphic qualities of colour, echoing Johann Caspar Lavater’s description of serpents’ physiognomy, by which ‘the very play of their colours, and wondering meandering of their spots, appear to announce and warn us of their deceit.’<sup>610</sup> The ‘rainbow-sided’ serpent with which the poem begins is ‘gordian’ and ‘interwreathed’.<sup>611</sup> This blotched ‘brilliance feminine’ at first comprises a fugacious tangle of carnal colour, at once ‘Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue’.<sup>612</sup> Her lustrous, cosmological frame resists zoological analogy or categorisation: marked at once ‘like a zebra’, ‘like a pard’, and like ‘peacock’.<sup>613</sup> At Hermes’ direction, a wild ‘volcanian yellow’ swallows up *Lamia*’s ‘milder-mooned body’s grace’, ravishes her animal markings, and eclipses her precious ‘sapphires, greens, and amethysts’ in a description that ‘resembles nothing so much as the effects of a violent chemical

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<sup>610</sup> Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy; for the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind, Written in the German Language, Abridged from Mr Holcroft’s Translation* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1800), p. 235.

<sup>611</sup> John Keats, *Lamia*, in *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1820), pp. 1-47 (p. 6).

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*

reaction.’<sup>614</sup> In advance of the poem’s brief, anti-Newtonian invective, its first rainbow – a compendium of animal specimens, precious mineralogical objects, and vibrant hues – is violently subsumed. In her inaugural metamorphosis, the ‘rainbow-sided monster’ was ‘left to herself’, unobserved and fearing Lycius’s proposition of a public wedding.<sup>615</sup> Nameless and friendless, observation by and incorporation into the community at Corinth threatens Lamia, an alienated being who is both everything and outlying. The ‘common eyes’ of the public were not granted witness to the metamorphic, electro-chemical storm that ‘flash’d phosphor and sharp sparks’ and which brought Lamia into human form. Against her better judgement, this community – ‘their bright eyes double bright’ – do serve as witnesses to her death. This final episode both commands and condemns witnessing as Lysius begs Apollonius to shut his eyes, and begs his audience to ‘Corinthians, see!’ *Lamia* presents a tension between private transformation and public revelation that experimental science had long been contending with. At the last, surrounded by smoke and mirrors, it is Appolonius’s ‘fix’d eye’ and his utterance of a single appellation – ‘serpent!’ – that kills Lamia.

In its ‘specious chaos’ Lamia’s body embodies precisely the ‘monstruous FICTION’ of Newtonian optics that Coleridge abhorred: hers are colours at their most fugitive, a volatile, intermedial mixture of art and science.<sup>616</sup> Orrin Wang likens Keats’s *Lamia* to a phantasmagoria or mediated light, ‘as a rainbow her colours are the refractions of light; they are the projection of light through one medium into another – in the case of a rainbow through rain into the air; in the phantasmagoria through glass lenses into a wall, sheet, screen, or even smoke’.<sup>617</sup> The poem’s vexed mediation of the visible wrenches apart a fantastical, composite body in just the same moment as it brings it together. The poem’s famous invective against Newtonian ‘unweaving’ presents a very particular kind of knowledge-making that foreshadows Lamia’s final destruction:

Do not all charms fly

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<sup>614</sup> Stuart M. Sperry Jr, ‘Keats and the Chemistry of Poetic Creation’, *PMLA*, 85.2 (1970), 268-277 (p. 275).

<sup>615</sup> Keats, *Lamia*, p. 11.

<sup>616</sup> Keats, *Lamia*, p. 14.

<sup>617</sup> Orrin Wang, ‘Coming Attractions: “Lamia” and Cinematic Sensation’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 42.4 (2003), 461-500 (p. 487).



At the mere touch of cold philosophy?  
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:  
We know her woof, her texture; she is given  
in the dull catalogue of common things.  
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,  
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,  
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine –  
Unweave a rainbow.<sup>618</sup>

The passage seems to disavow Enlightenment knowledge-making, as the 'dull catalogue' reduces the aerial grace of a natural world to a mass of inert fibres and rigid measures. In this caricature, the imperious catalogue depletes its surroundings with an exhaustive industry: its touch 'empties' and 'unweaves' the natural world, quite unlike contemporary attempts to dissect and represent the rainbow which, as discussed above, emphasise interrelations and generative, intermedial accretions. Indeed, Keats's posturing here does not hold in poem in which enchantment is so keenly rooted in the language of chemistry, medicine and the life sciences.<sup>619</sup>

Keats's suspicious interrogation of 'cold philosophy' was answered directly by Leigh Hunt in an 1820 review of *Lamia* for *The Indicator*, in which he offered a corrective to Keats's 'condescension to a learned vulgarism'.<sup>620</sup> Rather than pit the imagination in opposition to 'the knowledge of natural history and physics', Hunt locates in poetry the potential for a 'greater philosophy':

A man who is not a poet, may think he is none, as soon as he finds out the physical cause of the rainbow; but he need not alarm himself: - he was none before. The true poet will go deeper. He will ask himself what is the cause of that physical cause; whether truths to the senses are after all to be taken as truths to the imagination; and whether there is not room and mystery enough in the universe for the creation of

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<sup>618</sup> Keats, *Lamia*, p. 41. On the link between this line from Hazlitt and the passage from Keats see James Engell, *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1989), p. 65.

<sup>619</sup> See Alan Richardson, 'Keats and Romantic Science: Writing the body', in *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, ed. by Susan J. Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 230-245; Denise Gigante, 'The Monster in the Rainbow: Keats and the Science of Life', *PMLA*, 117.3 (May 2002), 433-448 (p. 434).

<sup>620</sup> Leigh Hunt, 'The Stories of *Lamia*, the Pot of Basil, The Eve of St Agnes, &c. As Told by Mr. Keats', *The Indicator* (2 Aug 1820), 337-44 (p. 341).

infinite things, when the poor matter-of-fact philosopher has come to the end of his own vision. It is remarkable that the age of poetry has grown up with the progress of experiment [...] Even if there were nothing new to be created, - if philosophy, with its rule and line, could even score the ground, and say to poetry, “Thou shalt go no further”, she would look back to the old world, and still find it inexhaustible.<sup>621</sup>

Poetry then is characterised by its capacity to delve in to the endless and infinite questions of nature, always itself a ‘species’ of fugitive knowledge that pays no heed to the line in the sand that distinguishes art from science. In *Lamia*, Keats delights precisely in the ‘woof’ and ‘texture’ – the earthly specificities and material realities – of rainbow science, ‘go[ing] deeper’ and exceeding boundaries in just the manner that Hunt suggests. Thus, returning to Field’s observation, the ‘truth of vision’ and the ‘truth of colouring’ are mutually constitutive.

#### IV. Razing the Bastille

This chapter has explored the organisation of colour as a practical and theoretical pursuit and intractable problem that brings together a number of natural historical, scientific and artistic processes. The common aim of these diverse ventures was a complete, perfected, and harmonised knowledge of colour. The methods used to preserve, classify and use colour have each engaged with its material or conceptual fugacity in contrasting ways. I conclude here by returning to Goethe’s anti-Newtonian *Theory of Colour*, which has been lauded as the ‘founding document for modern explorations of colour’s capacity to affect’.<sup>622</sup> Goethe’s *Theory* pushes against the seeming reductionism of Newton’s optical experiments to describe how its author experiences the force and form of colour. In his preface Goethe figures Newton’s *Opticks* as ‘an old castle’ and describes at length how it is gradually enlarged and eventually evacuated.<sup>623</sup> ‘In razing this bastille’, the description concludes, ‘and in gaining a free space, it is thus by no means intended at once to

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<sup>621</sup> Leigh Hunt, *The Indicator*, 2 Aug 1820, 337-44.

<sup>622</sup> Timon Beyes, Christian de Cock, ‘Adorno’s Grey, Taussig’s Blue: Colour, Organisation and Critical Affect’, *Organization*, 24.1 (2007), 59-78 (p. 65).

<sup>623</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Locke Eastlake (London: John Murray, 1840), p. xxiii.

[...] encumber it with a new structure'.<sup>624</sup> Goethe's tract is a lesson less in the organisation of experience, and all the more affecting itself for its poetic embrace of the free, the fleeting, and the unencumbered. To this end, he notes, scientific 'diagrams' are not matters of fact but 'symbolical resources, hieroglyphic modes', proxies for experience that 'rather hinder than promote knowledge'.<sup>625</sup> The reports that follow the preface thus encourage replication and engagement in readers' own 'free space' outside of the text. For Goethe, understanding the 'completeness of nature [...] her power, her pervading life and the vastness of her relations' is a sensuous process attentive to the breadth, excitement and harmony of the 'infinite visible' and its 'infinite vitality'.<sup>626</sup> Nature, he goes so far as to claim, 'speaks to other senses', too, 'to known, misunderstood, and unknown senses: so she speaks with herself and to us in a thousand modes [...] with light poise and counterpoise, Nature oscillates within her prescribed limits, yet thus arise all the varieties and conditions of the phenomena which are presented to us in space and time'.<sup>627</sup> The mode of attention Goethe both demands and praises is in all ways active: 'in every attentive look we already theorise'.<sup>628</sup> This deft balance, and sensuous plenitude characterises a particular brand of romantic encyclopaedism that tempers proliferation with poise, and reconciles the individual to the multiplicity; it locates the capacity for theorisation in the infinite combinations of materials and their interface with sensual beings.

Goethe outlines three types of colour – physiological, physical, and chemical – which are each described in temporal terms: the first is 'fleeting and not to be arrested; then next are passing, but still for a whole enduring; the last may be made permanent'.<sup>629</sup> Goethe figures organising colour through terms associated with chase and arrest: it is a pursuit of fugitive knowledge for which the condition of possibility is evanescence. Permanence, embodied by the 'old castle', is not the aim, but rather simultaneity, succession, and a resolutely compendious sensuality. It is appropriate,

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<sup>624</sup> Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xxiv.

<sup>625</sup> Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xxix.

<sup>626</sup> Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xviii.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xx.

<sup>629</sup> Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, p. xli.

then, that three years later, J. W. M. Turner's oil painting *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory)*, first exhibited in 1843, was accompanied by the following lines:

The ark stood firm on Ararat; th' returning sun  
Exhaled earth's humid bubbles, and emulous of light,  
Reflected her lost forms, each in prismatic guise  
Hope's harbinger, ephemeral as the summer fly  
Which rises, flits, expands, and dies.<sup>630</sup>

Here, the prism is less an apprehensive tool of objective scientific discovery, and more a naturally ebullient trick of the light. The oppositions here, between the ark and the fly, between the castle and the sky, replicate Hazlitt's binary between measurable progress and spacious province. Romantic-period colour theory was closely tied to taxonomic projects in natural history, and as such, colour was taken on as a specimen, 'ephemeral as the summer fly', to be sampled, compared and compiled in books. More than simply 'ephemeral', though, colour is fugitive: its strokes fade and its beams dissipate. More than any other form or substance, it pushes experimental, bibliographic and poetic methods to their most extreme and requires a mode of compilation and description that, rather than being ready to pursue, grasp, and affix, is capable of harmonising.

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<sup>630</sup> J. W. M. Turner, *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) – The Morning After the Deluge – Moses writing the Book of Genesis*. Oil on Canvas. Exhibited 1843. Tate, London N00532.

4.

*Spolia:*

‘Mighty fragments’, scattered leaves and the making of Sir John Soane’s Museum

I. Building a Poem

i. ‘A monster in the art of building’

The museum of Royal Academy architect Sir John Soane survives to this day at 12-14 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London. Its collection of sculptures, paintings and fragments are arranged in the manner of Soane’s broader architectural style, which combined neoclassicism and cockney eclecticism to produce a ‘deleterious mixture’, a ‘monster in the art of building’.<sup>631</sup> In his description of the museum, published in 1827, the antiquarian and topographer John Britton mounted a defence of Soane, his friend and collaborator, challenging critics who were only able to ‘measure profiles and quote authorities [...] and have as little pretensions to be classed with the masters of art, as a dictionary maker has to be ranked with Shakespeare.’<sup>632</sup> The implication was that Soane’s rivals and detractors were derivative, that they lack the architect’s originality, demonstrating in its stead a more puerile and mechanical compilation. This chapter will explore a defence of Soane that takes up exactly the inverse position, that Soane’s originality is rooted in the labours of compilation and the various uses of composite forms: the dictionary maker and the poet are not so far apart as it might at first seem, and certainly not for Soane.

Britton’s criticism develops into an argument about hybridity that seeks to distance Soane’s work from the charge of monstrosity, re-purposing the criticism as a charge against his opponents:

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<sup>631</sup> ‘T.C.’, *The Guardian*, 77, 27 May 1821, n.p.; Quoted in Gillian Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 272, 235. On Soane, his critics and cockneyism see Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 163-195.

<sup>632</sup> John Britton, *The Union of Architecture, Sculpture and Painting* (London: Printed for the Author, 1827), p. 8.

Those unfortunate pretenders give us the mere *caput mortuum* after suffering all the finer particles, - the spirit, to evaporate; they complacently exhibit a mangled cor[p]se, instead of the living body endued with life and grace; or, like another Frankenstein, they compose a loathsome monster of heterogenous parts, and then wonder that we do not admire its proportions; a monster doubly hideous for reminding us what it is not.<sup>633</sup>

Britton's reading suggests that there are forms of reference and assemblage that unify and forms that horrify. The issue of 'class' and 'rank' is described here by way of a Cartesian binary, as 'finer particles' transcend the material mess of monstrous materiality. *Caput mortuum*, as Samuel Johnson – foremost dictionary-maker – notes, means 'dead residuum' or 'worthless remains'.<sup>634</sup> It is also the name of a dark violet pigment otherwise known as cardinal purple and occasionally used as an alternative name for Egyptian brown, a bituminous pigment made from white pitch, myrrh and the remains of embalmed bodies and used up until the mid-nineteenth century. The phrase, literally 'dead head', is a resonant epithet for the museum famed for its acquisition of the sarcophagus of Pharo Seti I, and for the bust of Soane himself – a marble head that resides in the museum's central dome.<sup>635</sup> While the bust – a literal *caput mortuum* – authorises the predominant critical reading of the museum as a chiefly autobiographical space, a collection that oscillates around the 'interior life' and 'individual, expressive agency' of its collector-curator, the '*caput mortuum*' gestures to a wider discourse on fugitive poetics, one that sets up a stark contrast between imagination and material remains.<sup>636</sup> Britton's argument aligns Soane with Percy Shelley, another dweller in the 'finer particles' of light and imagination. Writing on paradox and commonplace in *Table Talk*, Hazlitt took aim at Shelley for his pathological levity: 'There is no *caput mortuum* of worn-out, thread-bare experience to serve as ballast to his mind; it is all volatile intellectual salt of tartar, that refuses to combine its evanescent, inflammable essence with anything solid or

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<sup>633</sup> John Britton, *The Union of Architecture*, p. 8.

<sup>634</sup> *Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language in Miniature* (Edinburgh: W. Creech, 1808), p. 258.

<sup>635</sup> On the present-day uses of fragmentation of the bust see 'The Digital Soane: Winning designs announced in Sir John Soane's Museum and Royal College of Art competition', <<https://carocommunications.com/digital-soane-winning-designs-announced-sir-john-soanes-museum-royal-college-art-competition/>> [accessed: 12.07.20].

<sup>636</sup> Sophie Thomas, 'A "Strange and Mixed Assemblage": Sir John Soane, Archivist of the Self', *Studies in Romanticism*, 57.1 (2018), 121-143 (p. 125).

anything lasting'.<sup>637</sup> Yet the centrality of the *caput mortuum* – material remains – to Soane's museum suggests a rather more complex relationship between 'volatile' or transcendent thought and the 'ballast' of experience. Fugitive knowledge captures this complexity, holding within its shifting forms the weight of material life and the metamorphic evanescence of the imagination.

This chapter traces a gradual consolidation of fugitive knowledge through the shifting state and status of Soane's composite texts, mapping the development of his own attempts at describing the museum against its transition from private collection to public institution, and in relation to his architectural teachings and practices. The three examples that form the core case studies of this chapter – a manuscript, a series of albums, and a printed book – trace Soane's disparate attempts to imagine, organise and describe his work as a collector, exposing a constant and formative preoccupation with fugitive materials: quotations, clippings, scraps and architectural fragments. Manuscript writing, album making, and publication in newspapers and privately printed books each mediate the museum and approximate authorial presence very differently – from the 'palsied hand' with which Soane imagines himself writing as an antiquary, conjecturing on the parameters of his museum through a gothic fiction penned in manuscript, to the scattered leaves of poems circulated between friends, cited at lectures, reprinted, posted, pasted, and, finally for Soane, 'embodied' in the final edition of his official description.<sup>638</sup> Read together, these documents expose a fascination with scattered materials and a desire to fully embody them within the museum, developing in turn into a desire to fully incorporate the museum within the nation. The fear that the collection itself might be dispersed or diffused within a larger collection motivated Soane's repeated and increasingly comprehensive attempts to decode and preserve its arrangements in book form. Soane looked to build unity through the full embodiment of composite and fugitive forms, yet, 'like another Frankenstein', as disparate pieces are compiled

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<sup>637</sup> William Hazlitt, 'On Genius and Common Sense', in *Table Talk, Or Original Essays*, 2 vols (London: John Warren, 1821), I, 65-113 (p. 107)

<sup>638</sup> John Soane [and Barbara Hofland], *Description of the House and Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's Inn Fields* (London: Privately Printed by Levey, Robson and Franklyn, 1835), p. viii. Unless otherwise stated, all references are to this edition, and are given in the abbreviated form *D* in the footnotes.

together the points of contact between antique and modern, architecture and poetry remain clearly visible.

Textual compilation finds a corollary practice in the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated artefacts and the mingling of different ages and styles under one roof. Visiting the museum in 1826, a year before the publication of Britton's *Union of Arts*, the Prussian architect Karl Schinkel described how 'medieval, antique and modern works are intermingled at every level; in courtyards resembling cemeteries, and in chapel-like rooms, in catacombs and drawing-rooms, ornamented in Herculanean [sic] and Gothic styles. Everywhere little deceptions'.<sup>639</sup> Soane's museum treads a thin line between the confusion that Schinkel distrusted and the instructive effects of contrast and heterogeneity (Plate XIII). But one further 'level' escaped Schinkel's gaze – the level of the archive, the papers that lie behind the scenes, documenting, decoding, and imagining the museum at large and the city beyond. These archival assemblages mirror Soane's re-use and rearrangement of classical architectural fragments to produce new combinations and meanings.<sup>640</sup> Soane's museum of architecture and his archive are mutually constitutive domains of practice that each construct their own 'little deceptions', at times through their intentionally mystifying fabrications, but most often through suggestive juxtapositions and contrasts, resemblances and 'intermingling'.

The tearing and recompilation of manuscripts, newspapers and book parts illuminate the broader projects of architecture, museum-making and nation-building. This chapter explores two key modes of re-use – destructive spoliation and restorative compilation – and begins with a discussion of the emergence of spolia studies and its methodological usefulness in reading Soane's corpus. Manuscripts, excerpts and scraps of poetry assembled in Soane's archive – interleaved, pasted-down, bundled-up, or else loose – resemble less the *folia* associated with the poetry anthology (a gathering of loose flowers) than *spolia*, repurposed sculptural

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<sup>639</sup> Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *English Journey: Journey of a Visit to France and Germany, 1826*, ed. by David Bindman and Gottfried Reiman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 114.

<sup>640</sup> Susan Palmer, 'Sir John Soane: Rewriting a Life', *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, 44.1 (2009), pp. 65-81 (p. 67). On Soane and the 'gallic tradition of encyclopaedism', see *Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures*, ed. by David Watkin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 12. All subsequent references to Soane's lectures are taken from this edition.



fragments. *Crude Hints Towards an History of my House* (1812), a manuscript that remained unpublished in Soane's lifetime, and which has been described by the museum's current Deputy Director Helen Dorey as 'one of the strangest and most perplexing documents in English architecture', envisions an alternative genealogy for the building at a formative moment in the construction of Soane's Museum.<sup>641</sup> The manuscript narrative troubles the relationship between 'Antiquarian origin' and the generative possibility of what '~~may be~~ might have been', concerning itself not only with an evanescent material past but with the claim of such a past on the parameters of the present moment, and on the future.<sup>642</sup> In it, Soane figures himself as an antiquary of the future, excavating the remains of the museum when it was, in reality, still under construction. The manuscript pictures an archaeological *mise en abyme* that, as Yue Zhuang has observed, recalls the English geologist John Whitehurst's (1733-88) 'ruin upon ruin', an image that surfaces again in Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'ruin within ruin'.<sup>643</sup> I focus first on the manuscript's participation in circular economies of textual re-use, and read marked quotations from Pope as touch stones for architectural knowledge and teaching in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I then move on to consider the tale's introduction of what will become a key concept for Soane – the pasticcio – and discuss the uses of this particular mode of assemblage in organising miscellaneous materials across the disciplines of architecture, visual arts, literature and music.

This chapter's third part focusses on the compilation and mediation of daily news through albums, investigating Soane's relationship to contemporary print culture through textual fragments and ephemera pasted onto sheets and bound into volumes. If *Crude Hints* captures and refracts an early moment in the making of the museum, Soane's albums of scraps form a vast diachronic archive of contemporary culture at the heart of the museum of ancient objects. I explore the scope, contents

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<sup>641</sup> Helen Dorey, *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies and Designs for Garden Follies* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 1999), p. 53. This exhibition catalogue contains Dorey's transcription of Soane's *Crude Hints* manuscript from pp. 53-78. Unless otherwise stated, all references are to this edition and given in the abbreviated form *CH* in footnotes.

<sup>642</sup> *Crude Hints*, p. 63.

<sup>643</sup> Yue Zhuang, 'Eighteenth- and Nineteenth Century Classicism in England: John Soane's Language and Imagination', in *The Routledge Handbook on the Reception of Classical Architecture*, ed. by Nicholas Temple, Andrzej Piotrowski and Juan Manuel Heredia (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 135-149 (p. 137).

and arrangement of nineteen volumes and three packets of newspaper clippings compiled between 1804 and 1835. No such study of the albums yet exists, and only one scholar has acknowledged them in relation to Soane's self-fashioning and his cultivation of personal fame and celebrity.<sup>644</sup> By contrast, I focus instead on the relationship between scraps, sheets and fugitive poetry and what they might reveal about Soane's collaborative and combinatorial methods as a collector of textual as well as artefactual forms.

The albums suggest a new inflection for Soane's own use of the word 'assemblage' to describe his museum, emphasising the relational and imitative aspects of compilation. Bill Brown's definition is useful at this juncture: the assemblage, for him, is 'constituted through the interaction among its component parts, which themselves have external relations, each component having once belonged somewhere else (and *to* something else). The part is *there* (in the work) but it was (and continued to point) *elsewhere*, in place and in time.'<sup>645</sup> In this way, spoliation – the re-use of fragments in which the shorn edges remain visible, and the source document or site remains incomplete – comes to the fore as a mode of textual transmission; the clipping or scrap points simultaneously to its source and its new surroundings. These deictic 'interactions' outside of the book at hand perform a kind of textuality that is particular to the museum setting, a space constantly engaged in the negotiation between objects and texts, antique and modern; a kind of space within which catalogues, guidebooks and descriptions proliferate and condition a kind of museum reading that must always look beyond the book. These interactions also re-enact the associative and chaotic orders of the newspaper that redirect reading downwards in columns rather than across the horizon of the whole page, producing wild and incongruous juxtapositions when one strays from the path.<sup>646</sup> Through this gathering of fugitive pieces, the 'there' and 'elsewhere' of the assemblage are brought into view simultaneously.

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<sup>644</sup> See Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgement: On Architecture and the Public Eye* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 124.

<sup>645</sup> Bill Brown, 'Re-Assemblage (Theory, Practice, Mode)', *Critical Inquiry*, 46.2 (2020), 259-303 (p. 271).

<sup>646</sup> See Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 75.

Two packages of unbound sheets, onto which Soane pasted select newspaper clippings, reveal the raw materials for the construction process that brought the albums together.<sup>647</sup> The papers were clipped and pasted, often in columns, onto large paper sheets that had been folded in half and would later be bundled and bound together. Read in this preparatory form, outside of the bound book, the sheets replicate and reconstitute the original newspaper pages from which they were gleaned. One package contains mounted clippings from 1833 and is labelled (not in Soane's hand) 'Scraps from Newspapers Pertaining to Museum Bill'.<sup>648</sup> It contains newspaper reports alongside copies of parliamentary speeches, manuscript letters and printed scraps of poetry, as well as a description titled 'The Soanian Museum', published in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*. The albums thus serve two seemingly contradictory functions, the one concerned with preserving ephemeral and miscellaneous fragments of daily life, and the other concerned with documenting a transition from private collection to public institution and with the development of a trademark 'Soanian' practice.

Soane gave this composite method a more permanent form in his final edition of the *Description of the House and Museum*, privately printed in 1835, upon which I focus in this chapter's final section. This revised and expanded version of a text first published in 1830 is interpolated with the 'poetical and pictorial remarks' of the novelist Barbara Hofland (1770-1844), alongside illustrative plates, a copy of the 1833 Act of Parliament by which Soane bequeathed his collection to the nation, and a translation of the whole work in French. Readers are guided so far by Soane's narrative, and then taken back to retrace their steps, this time guided by Hofland. The two contrasting voices co-produce the space, leaving the reader to vicariously interpret the collection from their paper pasticcio, an assemblage of two seemingly contrary perspectives. The large, lavish *Description*, with its two typographically and formally distinct voices, as well as vignettes, literary extracts and paratextual supplements bears some resemblance to the albums, similarly imposing in size and fragmented in substance. Soane's decades of compilation culminate in a printed volume that seeks not only to mediate the collection, but to enshrine its orders, to ensure – as far as possible – that no item is removed from the collection nor moved

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<sup>647</sup> Soane Museum, NC/20, NC/21.

<sup>648</sup> Soane Museum, NC/20.

within the collection, and to complete the transition from private collection to public institution. As Hofland cautions, ‘other museums have been scattered when their authors died, or have been individually lost, from their union with the national one.’<sup>649</sup> The transparency between the composite book and the collection summons the figure of the ‘author’ alongside that of the architect and collector, his works as liable to be dispersed to the wind as any other. In describing the museum, Soane hopes to settle, preserve and stabilise it. Musing on the ‘mighty fragments’ that reside in the collection, ‘all feathers shed from the wings of Time’, Hofland writes: ‘The most original thinker, and even the wildest wanderer in poetic conception must have some foundation on which to raise the superstructure that may prove the temple of his fame.’<sup>650</sup> This liting between ‘excursive fancy’ or wild wandering and the great ‘superstructure’ is borne out in the museum’s textual assemblages as well as its artefactual collection, its ‘foundation’.<sup>651</sup> I argue that, rather than a passive or ornamental supplement, Hofland’s text serves a key strategic function as the museum assimilates spolia into its own union, and, in turn, as it is itself bequeathed to the nation as a whole to be preserved.

In each case, from the arcane fantasies of *Crude Hints*, to the laborious compilation of ephemera, to the publication of a luxury *Description*, Soane’s books and bookmaking practices are central to the workings of the museum. The essayist Isaac D’Israeli received a copy of Soane’s third edition of his *Description of the House and Museum* as a gift, and wrote in reply:

I have been enchanted by your felicitous combinations in Art, which have been “*Placed in description.*” [...] Your museum is permanently magical, for the enchantments of Art are eternal. Some in Poems have raised fine architectural Edifices, but most rare have been those who have discovered when they had finished their House, if such a House can ever be finished, that they have built a Poem.<sup>652</sup>

The printed volume becomes itself a kind of museum or repository in which objects might not only be represented but duly ‘placed’ for perusal in an alternate,

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<sup>649</sup> *D*, p. 46.

<sup>650</sup> *D*, p. 13; p. 14.

<sup>651</sup> *D*, p. 13.

<sup>652</sup> 14 August 1836, in Arthur Bolton, *Portrait of Sir John Soane, RA (1753-1837 set forth in letters from his friends 1775-1837)* (London: Butler and Tanner, 1927), pp. 529-30.

bibliographic form. D’Israeli’s metaphor, though, discloses a paradox that poses a quiet challenge to the enduring permanence of the museum’s ‘enchantments’: in Soane’s architectural and archival imagination, buildings and texts are not only ‘raised’ but razed, cast and read as ruins even in the moment of their creation. D’Israeli’s hypothetical ‘if’ poses key methodological questions about the intersections between different kinds of making and knowing: how does the tension between creation and destruction – raising and razing – condition fugitive knowledge? How might we encounter the unfinished and unfinishable? How are we to encounter works or traces of works that have, by their nature, been wholly or partially destroyed, or which have, over time, endured the multiple and divergent interventions of curators, so much so that any sense of their original logic or arrangement is almost totally obscured? With what materials, by what method and to what ends might one ‘build a poem’?

ii. Spolia and the disciplinary gaze

Spoliation denotes a pragmatic mode of re-use by which durable materials such as stone bricks and marble fragments were recycled, just as old coins might be melted down and recast, or old parchment might be scraped clean for new writing.<sup>653</sup> But spoliation also has a militaristic resonance – things taken or stripped by force in order to be conspicuously displayed elsewhere. In his twelfth and final Royal Academy lecture, delivered in 1815, Soane described the ‘spoliations or casualties of war’ that leave ancient sites ‘exposed, neglected, and repeatedly plundered.’<sup>654</sup> The incongruity or contrast generated by the use of repurposed architectural fragments can act as an index to geopolitical and historical power relations, as well as markers of public taste, the depredations of time and the pressures of resource finitude and economic expediency. As Dale Kinney has argued, these re-used fragments can seem to contradict their new setting, bringing contrasting iconography into stark and juxtaposition ‘such is the case with the gems, cameos, ivory plaques, and sarcophagi

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<sup>653</sup> See, for example, Beckford’s revival of the medieval practice of spolia in Laurent Châtel, ‘Recycling Orientalia: William Beckford’s Aesthetics of Appropriation’, in *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Ariane Fennetaux, Amélie Junqua and Sophie Vasset (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 49-71 (p. 51).

<sup>654</sup> Soane, *Royal Academy Lectures*, p. 264.

carrying profane or Pagan imagery that were frequently reused in Christian contexts during the middle ages.<sup>655</sup> Espousing the virtue and value of unity from the very beginning of his career, Soane argued against this kind of ‘profane’ re-use: ‘The ancients with great propriety decorated their temples and altars with the skulls [sic] of victims, rams heads and other ornaments peculiar to their religious ceremonies; but when the same ornaments are introduced in the decoration of English houses, they become puerile and disgusting.’<sup>656</sup> But how can this insistence on ‘propriety’ be reconciled with the construction and organisation of a museum such as Soane’s?

Soane confronted just this question in his ninth Royal Academy lecture, also delivered in 1815, in which he characterised the architect Robert Adam’s allusion to the Arch of Constantine at Kedleston Hall’s south front as ‘pure architecture’, and praised his ‘efforts to reconcile the idea of blending an ancient triumphal arch with the exterior of a modern building’: ‘In this superb structure [Robert Adam] has united in no inconsiderable degree the taste and magnificence of a Roman villa with all the comforts and conveniences of an English nobleman’s residence.’<sup>657</sup> The neoclassical turn in architecture is not simply a return to first principles, but a ‘blending’ of antique with modern in pursuit of harmony.<sup>658</sup> The Arch of Constantine is one of Rome’s most well-known monuments and incorporates sculptural decoration – spolia – taken from earlier imperial monuments, such as the roundels depicting Dawn and Evening, casts of which are also housed in Soane’s museum. Tracing the idea of Soane’s museum back to an unrealised plan for an architectural

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<sup>655</sup> Dale Kinney, ‘The Concept of Spolia’, in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. by Conran Rudolph (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2006), pp. 233-252 (p. 234).

<sup>656</sup> John Soane, *Plans of Buildings erected in the Counties of Norfolk, Suffolk &c.* (London: Printed for the Author, 1788), p. 9. On contemporary critiques of Gothic architectural extravagance as a ‘product of an arrested development, a juvenile aesthetic imagination defined by the glossy, the ornamental, and the disordered’ and Horace Walpole’s opposing stance that the Gothic heralded a new ‘species of modern elegance’, see Matthew Reeve, *Gothic Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020), p. 26; Matthew Reeve, ‘Gothic Architecture, Sexuality, and License at Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill’, *The Art Bulletin*, 95.3 (2013), pp. 411-439.

<sup>657</sup> Soane, *Royal Academy Lectures*, p. 216.

<sup>658</sup> For David Watkin, this pursuit of harmony is indicative of Masonic influences on Soane’s thought, as the architect ‘attempted to reconcile apparently contradictory elements in Greek, Gothic, Tudor and Baroque architecture’: ‘Freemasonry and Sir John Soane’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 54.4 (1995), 402-17.

gallery at Pitzhanger Manor – his villa in Ealing – Susan G. Feinberg argues that, like Kedleston, ‘the Pitzhanger façade was composed of an assemblage of antique quotations, including not only the Constantinian Arch theme, but also casts of classical ornamental reliefs such as the eagle framed by an oak wreath copied from the entrance to SS Apostoli in Rome.’<sup>659</sup> Soane’s practice of ‘blending’ suggests a new role for spolia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one that, rather than signalling conservation and continuity, provides the materials for multiple possible configurations and transformative associations within what Rees Arnott-Davis has described as architecture’s ‘constellation of reproductions’.<sup>660</sup> Writing of Kedleston, Peter de Bolla argues that ‘the “moment” of a building, the tense of its coming into being, is [...] a complicated and complex form: its temporality is often the anterior future.’<sup>661</sup> He goes on to ask, ‘what does it mean to build for posterity? To build in the tense of the anterior future?’<sup>662</sup> Part of the answer, de Bolla contends, lies in our approach to history in general as well as to the building in particular: we must ‘not only look *at* and *in* it but also look *with* it.’<sup>663</sup> This imperative to ‘look with’, or to co-produce a building or a space, is central to Soane’s use of spolia and the genesis of his museum, as is this Janus-faced sense of the ‘anterior future’, looking forward and backwards in a single moment.

In the mid twentieth century, spolia studies enjoyed a critical revival, coincident with a postmodern turn in art historical scholarship that emphasised re-use, fragmentation and appropriation. In his foundational 1969 study of the afterlives of spolia, Arnold Esch argues that spoliation does not sit in any easy relation to singular disciplines or domains of practice: ‘re-use is by definition a subject that lies *between* disciplines,’ it is liminal and combinatorial.<sup>664</sup> ‘Disciplines direct their gazes

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<sup>659</sup> Susan G. Feinberg, ‘The Genesis of Sir John Soane’s Museum Idea: 1801-1810’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 43.3 (1984), 225-237 (p. 226).

<sup>660</sup> Rees Arnott Davis, ‘The Reproducible Museum: Collecting, Describing and Representing Antiquity, 1753-1837’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London 2018), pp. 175-6.

<sup>661</sup> Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 153.

<sup>662</sup> de Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, 154.

<sup>663</sup> de Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, 152.

<sup>664</sup> Arnold Esch, ‘On the Reuse of Antiquity: The Perspectives of the Archaeologist and the Historian’, in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (Abington: Routledge, 2016), pp. 13-27 (p. 14).

in different directions', Esch suggests; for the archaeologist, the spolium is '*removed* from Antiquity', whereas for the historian that same piece is '*received* from Antiquity [...] Thus while the archaeologist will once more (in his imagination) bring the kidnapped pieces back to their original location and reignite them into an ancient monument, the historian is intrigued precisely by their distance, spatial and conceptual, from their original site and function.'<sup>665</sup> These questions of distance, reception and imagination are fundamental to understanding how different practitioners work with fugitive materials, variously 'removed' or 'received', and how they contend with the relationship between an object in its present and original conditions.

But Soane – and indeed the disciplines of history and archaeology in the early nineteenth century – do not sit so comfortably in Esch's typology. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and especially so for Soane, the archaeologist, the historian and their respective 'gazes' were not so easily distinguished. Soane's museum is testament to the wide scope and contradictory movements of his disciplinary gaze, but his contemporaries judged him harshly for his lack of focus. Soane was criticised for his perceived resistance to conventional orders of chronology and categorisation. A satire on the 'Sixth or Boeotian Order of Architecture' published in the *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* in 1824 takes aim at Soane's 'chimerical and absurd' constructions, and the supposed contradictions inherent in his far-reaching disciplinary gaze:

There is no acquirement within the range of human knowledge which a learned Professor may not apply to the ornamental purposes of his Art. Is he a geologist? He dismisses the petty markings of the mason, and uses an interminable joint, which copies successfully the grand appearances of nature in the stratification of rocks. Is he a botanist? He may ... combine the forms of every variety of plant ... Is he a conchologist? Is he an Astronomer? His science will lead him to surmount his roofs with unglazed apertures, that he may *coolly* trace the course of the midnight stars. Is he an Undertaker? He will know the proper construction of *Mausolea*, feel the just altitude of sarcophagi ... Is he a voyager? He will know the value of a prosperous gale, and return with the 'Temple of the Winds' in his portfolio. Is he an optician? He will understand all the varieties of opaque [sic] and stained glass, and so to apply their colours in a Court of justice (for instance)

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid.



as to shed the yellow hue of guilt on the face of a criminal, and the rosy tint of modesty on the front of a barrister.<sup>666</sup>

For the *Knight's Quarterly*, the Boeotian Order of architecture represents a compendious circle of fugitive knowledge: Soane's command of his materials – from fleeting colours to forceful gales; rocks, trees, stars, shells, sarcophagi – is too weak, the divisions of disciplines too tangled. As the *Knight's Quarterly* writer argues, Soane's museum might have all the '*spolia opima* of Westminster' lavished upon it, but these artefacts have a diminutive and refractive effect: 'Every where [sic] you see ornament making great edifices look little, by subdividing their general surfaces into such a multitude of members, as prevents the eye from re-combining them'.<sup>667</sup> Soane's collection activates and combines the full scope of Boeotian disciplinarity, as well as a dizzying range of original, new and composite forms. There is, seemingly, no method in these materials.

This Boeotian disorder is most palpable in Soane's albums, in which reports of chemical experiments are pasted alongside obituaries, reviews of Royal Academy lectures interspersed with scraps of poetry, reports of petty crime mingled with reports on world affairs. Ellen Gruber Garvey, working on a history of nineteenth-century scrapbooking, writes that 'the origin of the material [can be] less important than the new form it takes [...] writing is understood as a process of recirculation, in which information is sorted and stockpiled until it can acquire value by being inserted into a new context [...] the reader becomes an author.'<sup>668</sup> This attribution of value to the new, rather than to the 'original' is not without its tensions, particularly within the context of the nascent museum, where questions of origin, circulation and institutionalisation are paramount. But what of the textual fragments or spolia assembled within the museum and its archive? Esch argued that spoliation exposes palimpsests of historical process – one assemblage gestures to multiple periods and places – but that the term's reach does not extend to any form of recontextualization

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<sup>666</sup> [Thomas Whitwell?], 'The Sixth or Boeotian Order of Architecture', *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, 2 (April 1824), 456-7 (p. 459). On the Soane's relation to the existing orders of architecture – Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Etruscan and Composite – see Arnott Davis, 'Reproducible Museum', pp. 185-192.

<sup>667</sup> Whitwell, 'The Sixth or Boeotian Order of Architecture', p. 458.

<sup>668</sup> Ellen Gruber Garvey, 'Scissoring and Scrapbooks: Nineteenth-Century Reading, Remaking and Recirculating', in *New Media, 1740-1915*, ed. by Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 207-229 (p. 224).

or re-use.<sup>669</sup> Spoliation implies mutation and rupture more than generic portability; it destroys the original context, while quotation, for example, leaves it intact. Spoliated texts – books and newspaper sheets cut up and reconstituted in albums or scrapbooks – sit between Richard Brilliant’s categories of *spolia in se* (physical re-use of material objects) and *spolia in re* (‘virtual’ re-use, such as quotation, citation and the recycling of visual imagery).<sup>670</sup> Spoliation can only serve as an analogical framework by which to analyse the movement, arrangement and re-use of fugitive texts where there is evidence of destruction, such as there is in composite texts whose ‘seams and stitchery were clearly visible’.<sup>671</sup> In Soane’s archive, spoliation and compilation are fundamental aspects of preservation and self-fashioning; the fault lines between original and new contexts are visible and rich with meaning.<sup>672</sup>

II. ‘A pasticcio of modern taste’: *Crude Hints Towards an History of my House*

i. ‘Sketch a grace beyond the reach of art’

In his first Royal Academy lecture, delivered in 1809, Soane spoke of those who had ‘endeavoured to preserve and make us acquainted with the previous fragments of antiquity’.<sup>673</sup> He entreated his listeners to ‘tread the paths’ of those who came before us and restore remains to their former glory through imitation and restoration, to ‘co-operate’ and ‘walk on’ with them.<sup>674</sup> When there is no such ‘path’ or evidence, he said, ‘let us consult the poets, historians, and orators, wrecks of whose works have happily reached us [...] enough yet remains if we have industry and application [...] enough yet remains to enable us to restore the art to at least a portion of its ancient glory’.<sup>675</sup> For Soane, engaging with ancient art and producing modern works is a

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<sup>669</sup> Esch, ‘On the Reuse of Antiquity’, p. 20.

<sup>670</sup> See Sarah A. Rous, *Reset in Stone: Memory and Reuse in Ancient Athens* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019), pp. 8-12.

<sup>671</sup> Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction*, p. 60.

<sup>672</sup> See Soane’s diary entries quoted in Palmer, ‘Sir John Soane: Rewriting a Life’, p. 76.

<sup>673</sup> Soane, *Royal Academy Lectures*, p. 40.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*

restorative and associative process that requires a mind both comprehensive and co-operative. The refrain ‘enough yet remains’ catches multiple forms of literary and historical production within its scope; it forces our attention onto the evidentiary value of fragments – spolia and ‘remains’ – but also onto the implicit sufficiency of the literary ‘wreck’. This conjectural and antiquarian logic sits at the heart of Soane’s architectural practice as it is set out in his first lecture, in which he makes the distinction between an artist and a ‘mere copyist’ on the basis of their ability to discern not simply what the ancients ‘have done’ but ‘what they *would* have done’.<sup>676</sup> This conjectural logic is most clearly recognisable in *Crude Hints Towards an History of my House*, a rare work of speculative fiction produced by Soane just as he was in the process of renovating the buildings that housed his collection. Here, Soane offers up his own ‘wreck’, fictionalising the museum-in-progress as a ruin of the future and speculating, by way of an antiquarian narrator, upon their supposed origins.

Soane drafted his manuscript *Crude Hints* on 30 August and 7 and 22 September of 1812, though it was not published until 1999. The ‘Hints’ are narrated by ‘an Antiquary’ inspecting the ruins of Soane’s house and museum, a ‘great assemblage of ancient / fragments’ and a collection that would ‘lay the / foundation of an History of the Art itself - / its origin – progress – meridian splendour / & decline!’<sup>677</sup> In the same year that Soane composed the manuscript narrative, he created the museum’s Monument Court, an external gallery of sculptural, architectural and archaeological fragments, including three large ammonite fossils. In *Crude Hints*, the museum’s emergent contours and collection are recognisable, but merged with other fantastical possibilities: a crypt, a magician’s lair, a convent. It embodies a much-maligned quality that Gregory Dart locates in Soane’s collaborations with Joseph Gandy, ‘the repeated insistence on presenting buildings that not only *would* never but *could* never be built’.<sup>678</sup> The manuscript offers Soane the space to ‘tread the paths’ of the ancients, collapsing distinctions between real and unreal, past and present: ‘presenting these contradictory interpretations in double or triple columns, the mock-learned document illustrates not only the frustration of

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<sup>676</sup> Soane, *Royal Academy Lectures*, p. 29.

<sup>677</sup> *CH*, p. 70.

<sup>678</sup> Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature*, p. 177.

historical understanding by fragmentary evidence, but the effacement of historical specificity by an aesthetic interest in generic antiquity.’<sup>679</sup> Yet, this effacement – arising from the collapse of ‘origin’ into ‘decline’ – serves to expose the pressures of the present moment, using ‘generic antiquity’ as a stalking horse for approaching contemporary controversies surrounding the building of the museum. The material text itself is a site of unstable evidence: the page numbering is in Soane’s hand and suggests that a leaf numbered 49-50 is missing. This gap tempts the same speculative impulses that it represents in the narrator’s fragmentary excavations and conjectures.<sup>680</sup>

The manuscript reveals Soane’s didactic instincts and dynastic anxieties, emphasising the emergent museum’s two parallel channels for transmission, firstly as knowledge to be diffused and secondly as property to be bequeathed. In both cases, Soane lingered on the vexing possibility that those channels of transmission may be disrupted or blocked. The future of the museum thus troubled, the manuscript pivots to its origins. The narrator catches a sense of the building’s composite nature and its presumed ‘enlargement’ over time through reading its extant spolia: as ‘its decorations suggest’ it was ‘in some degree formed from the ruins of / others of a more magnificent and interesting / description.’<sup>681</sup> The building is described in a moment of formative precariousness, and indeed, by the close of Soane’s manuscript, we are presented with a site ‘mouldering in dust’.<sup>682</sup> How then do the manuscript’s extant and often conflicting accounts relate to the building itself, to the production and organisation of architectural knowledge, and to the other texts that Soane quotes and repurposes within his narrative? Is it possible to read the manuscript itself as a kind of spolia – reading, that is, in the manner that the narrator encounters archaeological and architectural fragments, and in the manner in which Soane instructs his students to engage with the ancient ‘wreck’?

One particular instance of textual quotation – *spolia in re* or ‘virtual’ spolia – is instructive in demonstrating the imbrication of this recondite manuscript and the incremental development of the museum. As the narrator of *Crude Hints* proceeds

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<sup>679</sup> Nicholas Halmi, ‘Ruins Without a Past’, *Essays in Romanticism*, 7.18 (2011), 7-27 (p. 22).

<sup>680</sup> *CH*, p. 67.

<sup>681</sup> *CH*, p. 61.

<sup>682</sup> *CH*, p. 74.

from the interior of the ruin to the exterior, he conjectures that the building's front 'must have been raised / by some fanciful mind smitten with the love of novelty in direct [utter] defiance of all the / established rules of the Architectural / Schools, anxious to "Sketch a grace beyond / the reach of art."'683 The phrase is a misquotation from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, in which Soane's 'sketch' – intuitive for the architect – appears as 'snatch'. Soane's quotation modifies as it moves and, in so doing, erases the act it represents (the 'snatch') and shores-up art's superlative 'reach'. The same lines from Pope appear in the *European Magazine* of November 1812, in an article describing Soane's residence, which reports on the tribulations of Soane's conspicuous façade. This article notes that Thomas Sandby (1721-98), previously Soane's teacher, quoted the lines from Pope annually in his lectures (1770-1798) demonstrating a close and contemporary circulation of choice poetic excerpts within circles of architects.<sup>684</sup> As David Watkin has described, Soane read Pope frequently, making notes on his poems as he prepared for his lectures.<sup>685</sup> This is a curious choice of excerpt, alluding as it does to Pope's argument in *Essay on Criticism* that 'artistic power proceeds by way of fault, disorder, and contradiction'.<sup>686</sup> Just as its narrator considers the blasted ruinscape before him, he appropriates and modifies textual spolia – in D'Israeli's phrase, 'building a [new] poem'.<sup>687</sup> *Crude Hints* is not singularly responding to contemporary controversies and disputes – of which the façade is one among many – but participating in a circular economy of literary excerpts, generating new meaning through new associations and harnessing the generative power and didactic potential of disorder.

Soane's modification of Pope's line also gestures to the limits of conventional modes of architectural visualisation through drawings and plans, suggesting that the manuscript tale might 'sketch' something 'beyond the reach' of visual media, drawing instead on suggestive verbal descriptions and demanding imaginative leaps and associations from its reader. In a later section of the manuscript, Soane's narrator is unable to determine the purpose of this 'strange and

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<sup>683</sup> 'Observations on the House of John Soane, Esq. in Lincoln's-inn-Fields', *The European Magazine and London Review*, 62 (April 1812), 381-387 (p. 382).

<sup>684</sup> On Sandby see Sigrid de Jong, 'The Picturesque Prospect of Architecture: Thomas Sandby's Royal Academy Lectures', *Architectural History*, 61 (2018), 73-104.

<sup>685</sup> Soane, *Royal Academy Lectures*, p. 23 and p. 431.

<sup>686</sup> Arnott Davis, *The Reproducible Museum*, p. 212.

<sup>687</sup> Bolton, *Portrait of Sir John Soane*, pp. 529-30.

mixed assemblage,’ supposing that it may have been an academy for the advancement of architectural knowledge for the use of students unable to take the Grand Tour, and providing them instead ‘some better ideas of ancient Works than / would be conveyed thro: the medium of / drawings of prints.’<sup>688</sup> The manuscript and by extension the museum supplement the otherwise deficient medium of pictorial representation and thus ‘sketch[es] a grace / beyond the reach of art’. Yet, in the manuscript’s third and final variant ending, the narrator makes reference to ‘annexed drawings taken in the year 1830’, eighteen years after the manuscript’s composition. No such drawings are compiled with the manuscript. The ghostly annexation complicates the text’s already vertiginous timeline as Soane writes in 1812 about a future in 1830 while simultaneously excavating the past. The hypothetical mechanism of ‘annexation’ fashions the unpublished manuscript as a public-facing, instructional or professional text. The manuscript as whole ‘sketch[es] a grace’ not only ‘beyond the reach of art’, but beyond the reach of history and discernible fact, positing instead a range of fragmentary and fantastical histories.

ii. Restoration, imitation, counterfeit, curiosity: uses of the pasticcio

The circulation, re-use and imitation of quotations and fragments foregrounds problems of contiguity and felicity. A further misquotation from Pope follows soon after the first in *Crude Hints*, as Soane’s narrator laments the absurdity of architects who replicate the architecture of warmer climates – ‘porticos & / peristyles of magnificent / Columns [...] “Opened to catch cold at a / Venetian door”’.<sup>689</sup> Writing in his ‘Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington’ (1731), Pope criticised the arrogance of architects who adopt triumphal arches for garden gates; in his poem, ‘Opened’ appears as ‘proud’.<sup>690</sup> In Pope’s critique, bathetic incongruity has a practical as well as aesthetic consequence as winds rage through doors more suited to a Mediterranean climate. Once again, this line had also been quoted by Sandby in his first lecture (1770), as he commented on the ‘false taste’ of transplanting Italian

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<sup>688</sup> *CH*, p. 69.

<sup>689</sup> *CH*, p. 66.

<sup>690</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington*, 2nd edn (London: L. Gilliver, 1731), p. 13.

architecture to England.<sup>691</sup> Both textual and architectural borrowing risk contributing to a contemporary and implicitly vulgar ‘taste’ for incongruities and objects or styles out of their proper place. Despite this, Soane was fascinated by the uses and misuses of juxtaposition.

*Crude Hints* describes one such misapplication of classical architectural elements – a ‘grand portico’ that resembles the museum’s controversial façade. In doing so the text introduces a concept that will become the linchpin for the museum and the texts that describe it: the pasticcio. Soane began working on *Crude Hints* shortly after he had first received a complaint from the district surveyor pertaining to the façade of the building at 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, a three-storey projection and a ‘ridiculous piece of architecture [that] destroys the uniformity of the row, and is a palpable eye-sore’, as one reviewer wrote in the *Morning Post* of 30 September.<sup>692</sup> During the associated trial before magistrates, eventually won in Soane’s favour, the district surveyor advised that the addition violated the Building Act, which prohibited the incursion of facades beyond the fronts of residential buildings.<sup>693</sup> In *Crude Hints*, Soane included a description the portico, adding a marginal note that draws on a culinary metaphor that will prove central to his later architectural thinking in the museum:

The architects of [concerned  
In] this work (for two are said  
To have joined their talents to  
Produce this pasticcio of  
Modern taste) were  
Determined not to imitate the Bachelors dinner [sic]:  
Tongues first cover, tongues  
Second, tongues the third  
& so on.<sup>694</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> *CH*, p. 77n32.

<sup>692</sup> Quoted in ‘Observations’, *The European Magazine*, p. 382.

<sup>693</sup> See Anthony Jackson, ‘The façade of Sir John Soane’s Museum: A Study in Contextualism’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 51.4 (1992), 417-429.

<sup>694</sup> *CH*, p. 66. The square brackets here are used throughout the printed edition to indicate deletions within the manuscript.

The tiresome ‘Bachelors dinner’ refers to a monotonous meal – tongues, tongues and more tongues, a lack of variation or innovation, the kind of uniformity embodied in the fronts of Georgian townhouses such as the ‘two old / houses’ that here form a ‘united mass of building’.<sup>695</sup> The gastronomic analogy compares the architectural mismatch with a rustic, Italian pasta or pastry dish comprising of a medley of leftovers, a ‘pasticcio’. Describing the culinary roots of ‘indigestible texts’ and literary terms that connote hybridity (macaroni, pastiche, medley, farce, olio), Raphael Lyne notes that ‘this is the kind of writing that refuses to incorporate its ingredients into a harmonious whole, that rejects good taste [...]. [T]he metaphor remains productive in framing the characteristics that are most difficult to capture.’<sup>696</sup> Soane materialised the metaphor through textual compilation and sculptural production, placing the pasticcio at the heart of his museum.

Soane’s Pasticcio can be read as a parodic Babel, his way of lampooning the contemporary taste for amalgamating historical and cultural styles. But that is only part of the story, and his suggestive choice of title for the column engages with a range of eighteenth-century art historical discourses on composition and imitation that suggest a more important role for the Column in the teaching of architecture and in the wider, syncretic logic of the museum. The Italian term first appears in French discourses on art with the painter and critic Roger de Piles, who combined the culinary and artistic meanings of ‘pasticcio’ in 1706 when he wrote of ‘indeterminate’ forms, ‘those pictures that are neither original nor copies, which the Italians calls Pastici [sic], from Paste, because, as the several things that season a pasty, are reduc’t to one taste, so counterfeit that compose a pastici tend only to effect one truth.’<sup>697</sup> Pasticci of this kind, however accomplished, were seen to signal an unbecoming eclecticism in style and technique and represented the lowest order of art – not imitation but ‘counterfeit’ affectation, a contrivance not unlike Soane’s

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<sup>695</sup> CH, p. 66.

<sup>696</sup> Raphael Lyne, ‘Skelton and the Macaronic Book’, in *Text, Food and the Early Modern Reader: Eating Words*, ed. by Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Zurcher (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 89-107 (p. 90).

<sup>697</sup> Roger de Piles, *The Art of Painting, and the Lives of the Painters* (London; J. Nutt, 1706), p. 74. Soane owned both the first edition in French and the English translation of de Piles’ *Principles of Painting*. See Ingebord Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film and Literature* (Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 4; Ingebord Hoesterey, ‘Postmodern Pastiche: A Critical Aesthetic’, *The Centennial Review*, 39.3 (1995), 493-510 (pp. 493-496).



own creation of sham or hoax ruins.<sup>698</sup> Soane's engagement with fabricated ruins – in *Crude Hints* and at Pitzhanger manor (manuscript recollections of which are bound with *Crude Hints*) – perhaps suggests a recuperation of these 'indeterminate forms', dislocating objects from history to reflect on the present and imagine the future. Soane read de Piles' *Principles of Painting* in 1806, excerpting passages that emphasised the importance of 'disposition' or arrangement to invention, and extracts that made connections between art, architecture and poetry and their shared valorisation of unity. From de Piles, Soane copied the lines: 'the whole, arising from the combination of several objects, must not be like a number made up of several unities, independent and equal among themselves, but like one poetical whole', adding in the margin of his commonplace book, 'all this applies to architecture'.<sup>699</sup> With this shared application in mind, Soane worked to recuperate 'indeterminate forms' from their lowly status as counterfeits, positing the 'pasticcio of modern Taste'.

Through the pasticcio, the lone artefact is assimilated into a new, complete whole that exists at the intersection between the plundering of old materials and the composition of a wholly original work. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, the art of selection implicit in the making of a pasticcio gained traction as a means by which painters could gain the requisite knowledge and skills to invent anew themselves. As Joshua Reynolds warned in his twelfth discourse (1784):

Young students should not presume to think themselves qualified to invent, till they were acquainted with those stores of invention the world already possesses, and had by that means accumulated sufficient materials for the mind to work with. It would certainly be no improper method of forming the mind of a young artist, to begin with such exercises as the Italians call a *Pasticcio* composition of the different excellencies which are dispersed in all other works of the same kind.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> On hoax ruins at Pitzhanger see Sophie Thomas, *Romanticism and Visuality: Fragments, History, Spectacle* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Dale Townsend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 161-3.

<sup>699</sup> Quoted in David Watkin, *Enlightenment Thought and the Royal Academy Lectures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 189-191.

<sup>700</sup> Reynolds, *Works*, ed. by Malone, I, 243-266 (p. 261).

The art of selection is thus central to the art of composition, and new works are themselves contingent on the formative, generative pasticcio from which their constitutive elements and methods are gleaned. Soane's museum formed one such 'repository' from which students of architecture could learn from a range of 'different excellencies.' Through the observation of eclectic assemblages, students metabolize 'dispersed' knowledge into new forms. Barbara Maria Stafford has argued that the renaissance principles of imitation, blending and unity such as those espoused by Reynolds 'left no room for the metamorphic imagination. Collecting and arranging, gathering and re-piecing a design – as Piranesi argued in contradistinction to Robert Adam – do not lead to the creation of something new.'<sup>701</sup> For Stafford, the patchwork pasticcio is the work of anticlassical parodists, but for Soane its uses are more complex and contradictory, precisely giving latitude to the 'metamorphic imagination' and bridging the contrary principles espoused by Piranesi and Adam. It is precisely Soane's use of the pasticcio that trains visitors' attention on his museum as both a 'free-form archive and encyclopaedia of infinite and enchanting stylistic permutations that force the viewer to interpret, not just absorb.'<sup>702</sup>

Soane inherited this approach from changing eighteenth-century uses of the pasticcio, which gradually moved beyond accusations of forgery to appreciations of medley. Such compositions, as Michelle Fletcher describes, were created by 'blending elements from different works by a famous artist into "new compositions"'.<sup>703</sup> This kind of 'blend' – neither authentic original nor merely derivative copy – characterises Soane's Column and his wider practice of fusing ancient with modern. Indeed, Britton wrote that 'we cannot but applaud the skilful manner in which various styles, apparently so irreconcilable, have been blended, so as to form a beautiful and almost an harmonious *tout ensemble*' – a convivial and commendable form of collaboration.<sup>704</sup> Reading *Crude Hints* as a kind of pasticcio emphasises the heuristic, imaginative and historical value of assemblage.

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<sup>701</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, 'The Eighteenth-Century: Towards an Interdisciplinary Model', *The Art Bulletin*, 70.1 (1988), 6-24 (p. 14).

<sup>702</sup> Stafford, 'Towards an Interdisciplinary Model', 14.

<sup>703</sup> Michelle Fletcher, *Reading Revelation as Pastiche: Imitating the Past* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 50.

<sup>704</sup> John Britton, *Union of Architecture*, p. 43.

The term was also taken up by compilers of fugitive pieces: John Collins's *Scrapologia; or Collins's doggerel dish of all sorts* (1804) is a 'pasticcio of modern taste' by another name, its contents figured as 'Ingredients as contrasted as those of a Greek Pye', and rooted in the familiar culinary metaphor:

Scraps, as observ'd in the Title Page, are all the pickings here, which the daintiest Guest must expect to sit down to [...] though, if kindly palleted, with Taste unprejudic'd, and an unvenom'd Tongue, without nibbling at them like a ZOILUS, or grinding them to Power like a hard mouth'd REVIEWER, perhaps, upon the Whole, they may go glibly down.<sup>705</sup>

Here we find not 'excellencies' but 'pickings', as the pasticcio is repurposed to serve the needs of vernacular tastes and to suit the palate of acerbic critics. Collins's 'dish' emulates the cut-and-paste methods of albums within the printed codex, participating in the imitative and intermedial shape-shifting that characterised early nineteenth-century print. Reviewing Walter Scott's metrical romance *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810, one such 'Zoilus' made a direct comparison between the literary and architectural pasticcio. The reviewer compared Scott's fabrication of 'modern antiquities' to Horace Walpole's chimneys at Strawberry Hill:

These imitations of gothic architecture are beautiful in themselves; yet are they strangely misplaced, and applied to odd purposes: they have a singular appearance in rooms covered with Turkey Carpets, among pictures of all ages, and furniture and utensils of modern times, and reared up in apartments with windows and ceilings modelled after the taste of different centuries. A pasticcio, however skilfully put together, is vastly inferior to an original effort of genius.<sup>706</sup>

In this way, 'blending the customs of one age with those of another' produces a huddle characterised by incongruity and paltry imitation. The pasticcio mediates history and produces knowledge both by way of striking contrast and laboured resemblance.

*Crude Hints* is often described as a literary iteration of the architectural capriccio, a pictorial combination of ancient fragments or modern and ruined

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<sup>705</sup> *Scrapologia; or Collins's doggerel Dish of All Sorts* (Birmingham: Printed for the Author, 1804), pp. vii, i.

<sup>706</sup> 'Review of *The Lady of the Lake; a poem*', *The Literary Panorama*, 8 (November 1810), 1231-1243 (p. 1231).

buildings typified in works such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Grotteschi* (1747-48), though the influence of Piranesi's *Pasticcio Albani*, a 'pastiche of authentic ancient artefacts', is also clear.<sup>707</sup> Soane met Piranesi shortly before the latter's death and amassed a comprehensive collection of his etchings, drawings and restored antiquities. In the exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Piranesi, Paestum, Soane* (2015), Dorey and John Wilton-Ely attribute Soane's eclectic style and fantastical manner to Piranesi's commanding if controversial influence over European neoclassicism. Publicly, Soane criticised Piranesi for 'whimsical combinations' that mistook 'Confusion for Intricacy', but the clear connection between their practice suggests how we might read Soane's fragments in and between their textual and artefactual forms.<sup>708</sup> Exploring Piranesi's pursuit of historical and archaeological knowledge, Susan M. Dixon argues that his work expands the limits of the lone artefact, 'often isolated, sometimes fragmented, and by itself deficient.'<sup>709</sup> It is ironic, then, that Piranesi's voluminous output has been subject to scholarship and reproductions that isolate singular drawings from their accompanying text and surrounding plates: the reception of Piranesi's work in the nineteenth and twentieth century favoured the singular and discrete over the associative and multitudinous: 'a curious state', as Heather Hyde Minor observes, 'for the books themselves are often filled with etchings of the blasted remains of ancient structures', compounding the idea that Piranesi's works exist 'as loose sheets, fluttering free from texts that were an integral part of their design.'<sup>710</sup> Through assemblage, Piranesi and Soane unlocked the aesthetic, historic and epistemological value of remains.<sup>711</sup> This goes

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<sup>707</sup> Susan M. Dixon, 'Piranesi and Francesco Bianchini: *Capricci* in the service of pre-scientific archaeology', *Art History*, 22.2 (1999), 184-213 (p. 192).

<sup>708</sup> This critique originates from William Chambers. See Watkin, *Enlightenment Thought*, p. 605n25.

<sup>709</sup> Dixon, 'Piranesi and Francesco Bianchini', p. 188. On Piranesi's paper constructions, see Heather Hyde Minor, 'Engraved in Porphyry, Printed on Paper: Piranesi and Lord Charlemont', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes, 4: The Serpent and the Stylus: Essays on G. B. Piranesi* (2006), 123-147.

<sup>710</sup> Heather Hyde Minor, 'G. B. Piranesi's *Diverse Maniere* and the Natural History of Ancient Art', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 56.7 (2011/12), 323-351 (p. 323).

<sup>711</sup> As the online catalogue for the museum describes, 'Piranesi's interest in antiquities extended to collecting and restoring often fragmentary pieces of sculpture or decorative art.' For example, the museum houses a cinerary vase restored with neoclassical ornament by Piranesi's workshop, part of which is antique, part of which is 'restored to provide an attractive antiquity for the Grand Tourist market.' Curatorial Note, Roman cinerary vase

beyond the task of record keeping, and indeed Dixon points out that Piranesi only inconsistently recorded exact ‘find spots’ of artefacts, arguing instead that meaning arises from selection and arrangement, not from original disposition.<sup>712</sup> Like the museum, these arrangements on the page resituate and recontextualise remains, suggesting new connections and possibilities for the artefact as well as generating historical knowledge.

Quite apart from the ‘excellencies’ inherent in the instructive pasticcio of Italian art, as a linguistic and bibliographic term ‘pasticcio’ represents provisionality and a fragile chaos. For Thomas Warton writing on the poems of Thomas Rowley, it could be used to characterise a ‘discordant tissue of words of distant provinces and distant periods, as never before co-existed’; a ‘motley mixture of the modes of antient language being worked in a modern ground.’<sup>713</sup> In this version of the pasticcio, originality (‘never before’) is tempered by the artifice of ‘fabrication’, ‘obsolete and heterogenous, anomalous’, an only ever superficial engagement with the remains of antiquity.<sup>714</sup> *Crude Hints* constitutes a similarly ‘discordant tissue’ as ‘distant’ possibilities are brought to bear on the remains at hand and as the narrator wonders whether the ruins he sees are the remains of a convent, a magician’s lair, or an ancient crypt.

The history of Soane’s pasticcio, from its first appearance in manuscript to its gradual construction, deconstruction and reconstruction in the Monument Court, demonstrates the importance of spolia and assemblage to Soane’s architectural imagination. Soane first erected his Pasticcio Column in the Monument Court in 1819. The construction emulated triumphal Roman columns and Piranesian capricci of antiquities, paying homage to architecture itself by bringing ancient and modern together in a towering assemblage. In its first instantiation the Pasticcio column consisted of eight sections (Plate XIV): the base, according to Soane, is a Hindu capital (in fact a fourteenth century Nasirid capital from Morocco); above it a decorative block featuring a garland of rosettes; a domed spacer block; the column’s

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carved with *bucrania* (ox skulls) and garlands: A44, <<http://collections.soane.org/object-a44>> [accessed: 13.12.20].

<sup>712</sup> Susan M. Dixon, ‘Piranesi and Francesco Bianchini’, p. 189.

<sup>713</sup> Thomas Warton, *An Enquiry in the Authenticity of the Poems Attributed to Thomas Rowley* (London: J. Dodsley, 1782), p. 44, p. 43.

<sup>714</sup> Warton, *Enquiry*, p. 43.

main feature, its Tivoli capital; another spacer; a Norman capital, and, at its very top, a pineapple.<sup>715</sup> In 1822, Soane inserted a stone section with Ionic pilasters, and placed four cast iron urns at the top of the column. In 1825, when Soane installed what had previously been the base for the cast of Apollo Belvedere (residing on the east side of the dome) as the base of the Pasticcio, the column reached thirty feet (Plate XV). The Pasticcio column was dismantled over health and safety concerns in 1896 and restored in 2004, reusing the surviving elements and re-carving the missing pieces.<sup>716</sup> The column can be read as a fulcrum for the museum at large, demonstrating the potential uses of contrasting fragments and assemblage in the teaching of architectural histories and the cultivation of architectural tastes. Like the ruinscape of *Crude Hints*, the Pasticcio column rouses viewers' conjectures and speculations on the provenance of its various parts and the meaning of the whole.

The Pasticcio column is one stopping place in an economy of architectural fragments in which fugitive pieces surface, circulate, disappear and return, aptly symbolised by the Pasticcio's pineapple and the ouroboros that surmounts the Dome, both cinerary figures for eternity and regeneration. Dorey describes how, during the 2002-4 reconstruction, the architects discovered that the surviving Tivoli capital in the Monk's Yard, part of Soane's monument to Eliza's dog Fanny, was not identical to the Tivoli capital in the Pasticcio, as they had expected. Through detailed measurements and the examination of historical drawings, they found that the Tivoli capitals included in the façade at Soane's Bank of England were identical to those included in drawings of the original Pasticcio; perhaps the one used for the Pasticcio was re-used surplus, or perhaps it was carved for his personal use.<sup>717</sup> The 'pasticcio of modern taste' extends beyond the museum itself to encompass the design and distribution of architectural materials within and outside of the museum. Architectural quotations and borrowings connect the inner world of the museum – not quite as settled and preserved as it may at first seem – to a wider world of

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<sup>715</sup> Kate Clark, *Sir John Soane's Museum Conservation Management Plan 2008* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2008), p. 58. On Hindu sculpture within the museum see Sarah Monks, 'Making Love: Thomas Banks' *Camadeva* and the Discourses of British India, c. 1790', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 11.2 (2010), 195-218.

<sup>716</sup> See *Reinstatement of the Pasticcio* (London: Julian Harrap Architects, 2004).

<sup>717</sup> Helen Dorey, 'Soane's Pasticcio', *The Georgian* (2003), 14-17 (p. 17)

architectural practice contingent on the re-use and imitation of spolia, fragments and fugitive pieces.

From ‘discordancy’ and resemblance to ‘detachment’, Chambers’ 1819 *Cyclopaedia* briefly defines the Italian pasticcio as a ‘pie or pasty’, but also draws on other disciplines, noting that ‘in music [it] implies an opera composed of detached airs by different composers, frequently introduced without any connection with the drama, character or situation of the singer’.<sup>718</sup> In the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth, the majority of operatic productions took the quintessentially baroque form of the pasticcio. Just as the textual miscellany operated as a patchwork pasticcio, so too did these combinations of ‘suitcase arias’ that were transported from theatre to theatre and recombined according to the preferences of local singers.<sup>719</sup> Here again, the pasticcio signifies the traversal of distance and the mixing together of disparate parts. The pasticcio was later absorbed by Romantic-period poets, philosophers and compilers of fugitive pieces as a word to describe textual patchworks: Jeremy Bentham referred to a collection of eleven of his papers written between 1810 and 1830 as a ‘pasticcio’; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge used the word ‘pasticcio’ to describe his ‘patchy’ volume *On the Constitution of the Church and State* in an unpublished Advertisement that itself survives only as a manuscript scrap now held at the British Library.<sup>720</sup>

In 1812, the prevalence of the pasticcio across visual, textual and musical forms marks compilation as a prevailing form for organising fugitive materials. When, in *Crude Hints*, Soane evoked the ‘pasticcio of Modern taste’, and when he erected his own Pasticcio Column, he was not simply marking out an architectural conceit at odds with the Georgian norm, but participating in a long tradition that rooted learning and amusement in variously composite, comparative, imitative and popular forms. Positioning Soane’s work in dialogue with the pasticcio’s rich and aptly varied uses directs our attention to his own ‘Scraps’ and ‘pickings’. If the Pasticcio

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<sup>718</sup> Rees, *Cyclopaedia*, XXVI, n.p.

<sup>719</sup> See Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 128; Curtis Price, ‘Unity, Originality and the London Pasticcio’, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 2.4 (1991), 17-31.

<sup>720</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Official Aptitude Maximised, Expense Minimised*, ed. by Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), xv-xviii; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, ed. by John Colmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. lvi.

Column materialises one form of comparative architecture, Soane's paper pasticcio – cut and paste albums – reveal an architect laboriously concerned with tracing and preserving all aspects of 'Modern taste'.

### III. Miscellany and memorial in Soane's newspaper albums

#### i. 'Some trifles for the albums'

Soane's albums of clippings form a compendium of diurnal histories. The architect selected, mounted and bound daily affairs into vast annals to form a 'pasticcio' of another kind in paper form. The first of Soane's large albums has the widest chronological scope and includes cuttings from various newspapers published between 1805 to 1814, chiefly from the *Sun*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Herald* and the *Morning Post* – with the dates and publications of most clippings identified by handwritten in annotations in various hands, including Soane's. The second volume contains clippings from 1814 to 1821, and thereafter each volume (bar the last, which runs from 1828 to 1833) contains clippings from a single year. Only one volume, the eleventh, contains clippings from just one paper, *The Morning Herald*. Very occasionally these volumes will contain other ephemera, materials that comprise 'the body of knowledge about quotidian life, associational culture, customs and amusements, the mundane and the marvellous, as documented in fugitive print and visual culture.'<sup>721</sup> Some clippings are marked with a handwritten date, some note the newspaper of origin for each clipping, many are unmarked. The archive also contains a small bundle of assorted, unclipped newspapers from 1794 to 1836 and a packet of mounted but unbound clippings from 1813-15 and from 1833-35. These materials record the trials and tribulations of a wide and almost uninterrupted span of time and reflect the bustling drama of metropolitan life.

This section surveys the shape of this collection of albums as a whole, considering how readers and researchers might approach them. I then focus on two

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<sup>721</sup> Gillian Russell, "Announcing each day the performances": Playbills, Ephemerality, and Romantic Period Media/Theatre History", *Studies in Romanticism*, 54.2 (2015), 241-268 (p. 242n3).



distinct but intersecting themes that emerge from the albums, and which relate to Soane's concurrent project of constructing a museum: memorial and miscellany. In the first instance, the albums mediate Soane's personal grief at the death of his wife and offer – as did the museum itself – unique opportunities for personal tribute, monumentalising and legacy-building. The albums also perform the more immediately recognisable function of the miscellany, assimilating poems cut out from books, privately printed and sent in the post, and shorn from newspapers. These volumes are not discrete in their form or function, but insistently relational. Soane's albums constitute one of many early nineteenth-century reciprocal media formations, in which one medium would imitate the techniques and vocabularies of another genre of domain of practice, such as the 'museum' or 'asylum' in print. Soane's albums point simultaneously to their 'original' state within the newspaper and to their new form in the album. They also suggest some strategies for compilation and composition that would be fully 'embodied' in bibliographic form in the 1835 *Description*.

The packets of Soane's unbound clippings reveal a little of the construction process that brought the albums together. Soane – and also his wife Elizabeth and his butler – would clip the papers and mount the cuttings in columns on large paper sheets that are then folded in half, creating the effect of replicating and reconstituting the newspaper sheet from which they were gleaned. Some columns are cut out in their respective 'L' or 'T' shapes and folded over one another in order that they lie flat and within the parameters of the larger album sheet. Unsigned articles, reviews and poems become doubly anonymous as the clippings are inconsistently labelled with manuscript attributions to the newspaper and date of origin. For the most part, the clippings are pasted in chronologically and the sheets are gathered and bound in volumes by year. The books were very likely constructed within Soane's lifetime: the bookplates are in his hand, and while some early sheets remain unbound, the majority of unbound sheets contain clippings taken in the latest years of Soane's life. Correspondence between Soane and his close friend, the newspaper editor John Taylor, confirms that Soane was intimately invested in the work of compilation: archived correspondence reveals that Taylor often sent extracts, papers, clippings and samples of his own poetry in manuscript and in print enclosed in his letters, much of which ends up in the albums. On 26 December 1822 he wrote to Soane: 'I inclose [sic] some trifles for the Albums'; in 1827 he sent an extract 'worthy of

being placed among your memorabilia'.<sup>722</sup> Soane is therefore engaged not only in composing, collecting, excerpting and preserving, but in making books, in mingling poetic gifts and missives with clippings purloined from the local dailies to produce a museum of textual 'memorabilia'.

The albums expand the usual scope of ephemera as 'fragment[s] of social history' and 'the minor transient documents of everyday life' to interact more broadly with the wider contexts and methodologies of the museum.<sup>723</sup> These assemblages stretch and challenge existing critical vocabularies and generic terms for discussing material texts: the various labels that might be used – albums, books, volumes, sheets, clippings – each have their limits and inconsistencies. These materials are not quite 'albums' in the typical and still capacious sense of pre-existing blank books (from *albus*, meaning 'white') through which one might 'perform archivalness' by pasting-in scraps, pictures and ephemera, copying-in quotations by hand, or interleaving drawings and fabric or botanical specimen; they are certainly very different to the heavily embellished and highly affective Victorian scrapbook.<sup>724</sup> This difficulty in appropriately naming these materials is commonly felt in book history, such as in the 'messy' or 'invisible' manuscript books that Margaret Ezell describes as somehow outside of our usual bibliographic vocabulary and accordingly outside of usual bibliographic (and literary) studies: 'they are books that look like "real" books, that is to say, like printed books, on the outside, but behave entirely differently for the reader and writer once the cover is opened'.<sup>725</sup> Ezell's work draws on the practices of renaissance print culture and on Gerard Genette's writing on paratexts which, in his words, are 'what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to readers.'<sup>726</sup> Genette, and in turn Ezell,

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<sup>722</sup> Correspondence between Taylor and Soane held at the Soane Museum's archive: IV.T.7/73; 88.

<sup>723</sup> Maurice Rickards, *This is Ephemera: Collecting Printed Throwaways* (Battleboro, VT: Gossamer Press, 1977), p. 9; Maurice Rickards, *Collecting Printed Ephemera* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1988), p. 7. See also Harry G. Cocks and Matthew Rubery, 'Margins of Print: Ephemera, print culture and lost histories of the newspaper', *Media History*, 18 (2012), 1-5.

<sup>724</sup> Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 18.

<sup>725</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell., 'Invisible Books', in *Producing the Eighteenth Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650-1800*, ed. by Laura L. Runge and Pat Rogers (Newark: University of Delaware Press), pp. 53-69 (p. 55)

<sup>726</sup> Quoted in Ezell, 'Invisible Books', p. 59.

employ the architectural metaphors of the ‘threshold’ and ‘vestibule’ to materialise this bookish ‘becoming’. Surprisingly, in the case of the architect himself and for books that almost entirely contain printed material, these volumes have no title pages, contents or indexes; no entrances, exits, or ways by which a reader might find their way around. As these sheets come into beings as books (if indeed they do or can), they eschew any overt mechanisms of information management. Perhaps, then, they were not intended for sustained reading, and were instead private records; perhaps their value to Soane was in the making – selecting, cutting and pasting – and not in subsequent reference.

In nineteenth-century newspapers, fugitive pieces coalesce and combine to produce new forms and news ways of reading. The periodical form fashioned a particular mode of apprehension. Richard Terdiman argues that it was the newspapers of the period that ‘trained their readers in the apprehension of detached, independent, reified, decontextualized “articles” ... [the newspaper] instructs us in the apparently irreducible fragmentation of daily experience, and by its normalisation prepares us to live it.’<sup>727</sup> Soane’s remediation of daily newspapers through albums suggests a rather different story, one that emphasises the dialectic between fragmentation and assemblage. Terdiman writes that, the newspaper’s ‘form *denies form*, overturns the consecrated canons of text and structure and coherence which had operated in the period preceding its inception’ – this, though, is less the denial of form than its constant renegotiation through assemblage and inflection.<sup>728</sup> As Soane interrupts his annals with handwritten notes, ephemera and gifts from friends, we find him not denying form but experimenting with and reconstituting it as part of a broader project of preservation and legacy building, one that privileges the miscellany and the pasticcio as ways of organising knowledge and experience.

ii. Album as miscellany: ‘almost as good as manuscript’

While scholarship on romantic-period albums has tended to focus ‘the vigour of manuscript culture’ as it interacts with ‘the industrialisation of print and publishing’,

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<sup>727</sup> Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 122, p. 125.

<sup>728</sup> Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse*, p. 122.

Soane's project offers a different view, one that focusses our attention on the relationship between album-making, the life of the architect, the proliferation of daily newspapers and the institutionalisation of the house museum.<sup>729</sup> The albums enshrine multiple temporalities and networks – of the periodical press, epistolary exchange, museum making, and ephemera such as tickets, invitation and handbills. The subject matter of the clippings varies considerably and there is little thematic continuity within particular pages or volumes: reports of Soane's Royal Academy and Royal Institution lectures predominate, but so do current affairs, city gossip, notices of crimes within the city, of excavations of sites abroad, of new scientific experiments and invention, letters to editors, reviews, and a considerable cache of poetry. Timothy Hyde, focussing on the mediation of libel and celebrity in early nineteenth-century newspapers, gives a brief nod to these albums, noting that they 'give palpable evidence of [Soane's] concern for, and his attempt to bring to bear some personal control over the public sphere made concrete in the ever-accumulating pages of newspapers and journals.'<sup>730</sup> While most album sheets assume the *mise en page* of the newspaper, this section explores instances where the layout is more expressive, mingling different media and ephemera. In these instances, album making is less a form of 'control' than of re-making meaning through preservation and reproduction. Just as Soane's museum itself has been described as a 'refractive and dynamic theatrical experience', 'labyrinthine and kaleidoscopic', his archive reveals ideas as they move between and within different media – poetry appears and reappears as part of letters, clippings, printed scraps, variously compiled and arranged.<sup>731</sup>

Soane's third album contains clippings from papers dated 1823, among which there is a scrap of poetry entitled 'The Newspaper' and another entitled 'To a Lady with An Album'.<sup>732</sup> I begin here, rather than with the contents of album one, as

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<sup>729</sup> Samantha Matthews, "'O all pervading album!'" Place and Displacement in Romantic Albums and Album Poetry', in *Romantic Localities: Europe Writes Place*, ed. by Christophe Bode and Jacqueline Labbe (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 99-177 (p. 100).

<sup>730</sup> Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgement*, p. 124.

<sup>731</sup> Donald Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums, and the Phantasms of Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 83. On refraction as visual effect see Danielle Willkens, 'Clouds and Cataracts: Optical Experiments at Sir John Soane's Museum', *Technology and Architecture*, 3.2 (2019), 211-220.

<sup>732</sup> Soane Museum NC/4 f. 18.

these clippings offer an insight into the media that Soane has merged in the creation of these volumes – newspaper and album – and this insight conditions the readings that follow. ‘To a Newspaper’, printed in an unnamed publication on 18 January 1823, is comprised of eighteen jaunty tercets, each ending in the right-justified exclamatory refrain, ‘The Paper!’ The repetition throws its emphasis onto the various pasted pages of the album – folded, stitched, of slightly varying yellow and white hues. The poem depicts all quarters of quotidian life, from mealtimes to church, from law courts to theatres – and Soane, in turn, represents each of these spheres of London life in his albums. The penultimate tercet ends with a question rather than exclamation, introducing a moment of quiet doubt amid a tirade of confident assertions: ‘Who can possibly do without / The Paper?’. Read in the album, the question lingers, drawing extra emphasis from the many papers with which it is bound.

‘The Newspaper’ is pasted to the far-right edge of the right-hand page; to its left is an article titled ‘Extracts from the Inn Keeper’s Album’ by W. F. Deacon, taken from a paper from the preceding day. The extracts referred to are taken from a ‘miscellaneous volume’ published in the same year, 1823, a record of ‘scattered legends, tales and verses’ collected while travelling around Wales.<sup>733</sup> Soane’s album page re-uses a newspaper reproduction of a printed ‘album’, next to a newspaper poem about a newspaper: these multiple layers of intermedial re-use suggest a confluence of fugitive materials that expose the possibilities and inherent referentiality of the album form. Soane’s archive thus reaches out beyond the museum to record his inveterate interests in miscellaneity, paper technologies and fugitive knowledge. More than the circulation of memorable quotations in manuscripts, lectures and printed books – as we saw in *Crude Hints* – the album literally detaches fragments and emphasises their hybrid forms, each inscribed with evidence of their previous situation and inflected with the multiple and often contradictory influences of their adjacent surroundings.

‘To a Lady with An Album’ poses rather more subtle questions about the circulation of and interaction between paper media. A variant version of this unsigned poem appears years later in *The Edinburgh Literary Journal* of 1829,

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<sup>733</sup> William Frederick Deacon, *The Inn-Keeper’s Album* (London: Thomas McLean, 1823), p. xi.

attributed to Alaric A. Watts, retitled ‘To a Lady, with a Book of Manuscript Poems’, and accompanied by a note: ‘This poem, and the one which follows [titled ‘Song’], were both written fourteen years ago, and were presented to us by an early friend of the poet in the author’s own handwriting. They have never before been published – Ed. Lit. Jour.].’<sup>734</sup> The note eclipses the poem’s earlier iteration in print – and indeed, a version that is earlier still, in the *New Monthly Magazine* of 1818, signed A. A. W. (Alaric Watts) and identical to the version in Soane’s album in every detail apart from its altered title: ‘To Emily, With an Album containing the Author’s Poems’. Sidestepping these earlier printed versions allows the editor of *The Edinburgh Literary Journal* to throw emphasis on the supposed intimacy of the ‘author’s own handwriting’, the exclusivity of something ‘never before published’, and alludes to the possibility that the printed periodical might extend and amplify the movements of manuscript circulation. Reading across the two versions prompts some key questions about the medium in which we read the poem in Soane’s museum, namely – what is an album, and how does it relate to such gatherings as ‘a book of manuscript poems’? The modification to the title is suggestive – what was it about the term ‘album’ that was, fourteen years later, insufficient or inappropriate? Perhaps ‘book of manuscript poems’ implies a level of authorial sophistication and intention with which the ‘album’ is not imbued. Soane’s inclusion of the poem in his own album is evidence to the contrary, and a suggestion that ‘an Album’ might have multiple personal, disciplinary and institutional applications. Incorporated into Soane’s album, which inconsistently utilises handwritten captions to identify the source newspaper and date of clippings, ‘To a Lady’ becomes a palimpsest of the multiple and mutable lives of albums and of ‘Manuscript Poems.’

The ‘heart’ of the first poem’s speaker – ‘by youth beguiled / by passion led’ – seems to have been tamed by the second version, in which this description does not appear. But each poem features the same central issue – the inscription, ‘tracing’ and ‘darkening’ of otherwise blank and ‘snowy page[s]’, ‘unsullied by the blots of Care’. The amendments between the two poems are largely at the level of single words and short phrases: ‘ruffled many a leaf’ becomes ‘darkened many a leaf’; ‘scattered pages’ becomes ‘scattered leaves’. The biggest change comes at the poems’ close:

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<sup>734</sup> Alaric A. Watts, ‘To a Lady with a Book of Manuscript Poems’, *The Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 30 (6 June 1829), p. 13.

The first – for the ‘album’ – concludes:  
At length there came a beauteous maid  
Who found one leaf though ruffled fair,  
And as the book had often strayed  
‘*She wrote her name for ever there.*’<sup>735</sup>

While the second – for ‘the book of manuscript poems’ – concludes:

At length there came a gentle maid  
Who found one page, though ruffled, fair,  
And as the book had often stray’d,  
She smiled, and wrote a spell-word there,  
Which, spite of Folly, Grief, or Pain,  
Will never let it roam again!<sup>736</sup>

Both versions seek to restrain the flight of sibylline leaves, the first by autograph, the second by the genteel and anonymous ‘spell-word’. Read in parallel, the emendation suggests that the work of inscription might ensure posterity – ‘for ever there’ – but also threaten mobility – ‘never let it roam’. While the first suggests permanence and a metaphysics of presence – the maid survives through her name inscribed in the book – the second implies a concomitant stasis or entrapment. In either case, Soane’s album cancels the ‘spell’ and belies the editorial note as the poem’s own scattered leaves find their way out of the newspaper and into the book, emphasising the fugitive piece’s propensity to ‘stray’ and ‘roam’.

Alaric Watts, author of these poems, compiled his own album in print in 1828, writing in its preface that he would depart from convention in two key ways. Firstly, Watts acknowledged the newspaper origins of his *Poetical Album; or Register of Modern Fugitive Poetry* by noting the newspaper source for each republished poem, connecting periodical and book publication by way of ‘scrupulous’ referentiality.<sup>737</sup> Secondly, no poem should be included which has previously featured in the collected works of its author. Thirdly, a considerable

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<sup>735</sup> [Watts], ‘To a lady’, Soane Museum, NC/4 f. 18.

<sup>736</sup> Watts, ‘To a Lady’, *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 13.

<sup>737</sup> *The Poetical Album; or Register of Modern Fugitive Poetry*, ed. by Alaric A. Watts (London: Hurst, Chance, and Co., 1828), iii.

portion of the album's contents should be original.<sup>738</sup> But Watts is also quick to note that this terrain is always shifting: 'Since [the album] was prepared for the press, however, most of the then unpublished articles have from time to time crept into print, and it can now merely claim to be regarded as a selection of the fugitive gems of our modern poetical literature.'<sup>739</sup> Poetry's 'creep' from manuscript to print belies the profusion of published forms of early nineteenth-century texts and the speed with which works would move between media. Still, Watts savoured the possibility that his album might be the sole and authoritative repository: 'The greater part have never before appeared in any collected form, and (considering how often good poetry is overlooked in the columns of the magazines and newspapers) may be pronounced, to apply Mr. Coleridge's phrase, "almost as good as manuscript.'" <sup>740</sup> Despite his fastidious approach to referencing sources for the poems, Watts does not cite a source for his turn to Coleridge (whose own fugitive poetry is contained within the collection). Watts' quotation is perhaps a misremembered line from *Biographia Literaria*, in which Coleridge lamented that the publication of his periodical *The Friend* did not bring with it the desired reputation nor income: 'printed rather than published, or so published that it had been well for the unfortunate author, if it had remained in manuscript' – *The Friend*, then, is 'almost as good as manuscript', and that is no good thing.<sup>741</sup> For Watts, being 'as good as manuscript' connotes proximity to the original and authentic text, for Coleridge it implies a restricted scope. Watts's borrowing from Coleridge demonstrates the ways in which, dislocated from its source material, the fugitive text or excerpt is amorphous, reshaped in each of its new iterations.

The importance of naming and inscription to the album in Watts' poem directs our attention to the relationship between Soane's identity and the flying leaves of poems gathered in this volume. One page (Plate XVI) includes a poem by John Taylor that has not been clipped from a newspaper (there are many such poems scattered throughout the albums, as well as loose among correspondence). Perhaps, like others, this poem was sent in the post. The page also includes a poem by Felicia Hemans, a column of anonymous epigrams, and an article entitled 'The Picture

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<sup>738</sup> *Poetical Album*, iii.

<sup>739</sup> *Poetical Album*, iv.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>741</sup> *BL*, I, 175.



Book’, which begins by describing a trip to Vauxhall gardens and references a further ‘very spirited and entertaining’ account of the space in *The Museum*.<sup>742</sup> Three identical clippings containing text reprinted from an article in *The Sun* newspaper in January 1823 are pasted on the margin of the page, one in the bottom left and two in the top right. This article mounts a defence of Soane’s architecture against envious and injurious critics, namely a clergyman. Its author cautions:

If [the clergyman] cannot find sufficient occupation in diffusing and practising the doctrines upon which the happiness of man depends here and hereafter, let him amuse himself more profitably in giving importance to old and obsolete books, and not endeavour to wound the peace, and injure the reputation, of a Gentleman whose talents are an honour to the country, and whose conduct renders him an ornament to society.<sup>743</sup>

The reappearance of the clipping three times around the page works like a refrain to create emphasis, perhaps pride, ornamenting the page as its subject ornaments society. Soane is thus the agent who assembles the album and the subject of its discourse; his pasticcio method – appropriating the materials and imitating the shape of the newspaper to produce new meanings within the album – does not privilege a teleology that takes us from original manuscript to print, but instead privileges the dynamic of the page at hand and the flight, pursuit and apprehension of ‘scattered leaves’.

iii. A ‘new species’ of memorial

Scrapbooks and periodicals are ‘complimentary media forms that arose with the expansion of print culture’, as Alexis Easley has described and as Soane’s albums of clippings attest.<sup>744</sup> But this expansion also gives rise to many other kinds of printed ephemera. Together, the variously fugitive forms of the scrapbook, periodical and printed ephemera form an evanescent archive as much concerned with the problems

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<sup>742</sup> Soane Museum, NC/4 f. 13.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> Alexis Easley, ‘Scrapbooks and Women’s Leisure Reading Practices, 1825-60’, *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 15.2 (2019) <<https://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue152/easley.html>> [accessed: 13.12.20]. See also Maria Damkjær, *Time, Domesticity and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 148.

of performance, preservation and remembrance as the museum collection itself. Soane moves beyond the compilation and reconstitution of newspaper sheets to utilise more creative and multi-media layouts that incorporate playbills and tickets alongside manuscript letters and poems. In what follows I explore how different aspects of print culture converge within Soane's albums, and their variously commemorative and performative functions. Soane's first album includes material from 1805 to 1820, spanning the death of his wife Eliza, and is striking in its composition and lack of chronological arrangement. This formative exploration in album making documents the news of the day alongside ephemera relating to funerals and theatrical performances that are pasted alongside epitaphs for Eliza. The result is a dynamic and suggestive assemblage that shows the imbrication of Soane's personal and professional lives, as well as the relevance of contemporary theatre to the design and layout of Soane's museum. In the album Soane constructs a form of memorial that – rather than the conventional, lapidary stasis of the monument – relies upon the fugitive ephemerality of flying papers.

Soane's first album participates in Soane's 'theatre of display', suggesting possible sources for the architect's aesthetic and scenographic experiments at Lincoln's Inn Fields.<sup>745</sup> This compilation of fugitive forms mirrors the enthusiasm with which Soane experimented with contemporary optical technologies within the museum, interrupting and distorting fields of vision and producing compelling and fantastical contrasts. In both cases, the museum and the album are less concerned with classifying information and organising knowledge than they are with materialising the kinds of complex temporalities that structure *Crude Hints Towards an History of my House*. Plate XVII shows an album page that references both a theatrical performance and performances of mourning.<sup>746</sup> Reading the materials gathered here requires unfolding and unveiling; it is impossible to view the whole on a flat terrain, as overlaid ephemera creates a three-dimensional space upon the page. In the top left, Soane has pasted an invitation to the funeral of naval officer Horatio Viscount Nelson (which took place in 1806). Pasted below is a song written for the anniversary dinner of the students of the British Institution, which includes a

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<sup>745</sup> Helene Furján, *Glorious Visions: John Soane's Spectacular Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 4-5.

<sup>746</sup> Soane Museum, NC/1 f. 13.

footnote directing readers to another poem, Mr Shee's 'Rhymes on Art'. To the left, unfold the clipping to reveal a handbill advertising the Eidophusikon, a miniature mechanical theatre designed by Soane's friend, fellow Royal Academician and painter Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812) and the actor David Garrick. Both the song and the playbill partially cover a column of scraps pasted down the right-hand margin of the page, an array or refrain of identical printed epitaphs for Eliza. Private and public acts of commemoration and theatricality coalesce on the page, their proximity and entanglement raising questions about the relationship between performance and mourning to Soane's wider project of preserving and displaying objects in his museum of architecture.

The clippings gathered on this page bear no clear historical relation to one another, suggesting that there was some other connecting logic. The Eidophusikon opened in 1781 but closed again in the same year; it was re-opened in 1786, 1793, and for the final time in 1799; the set burned down in 1800.<sup>747</sup> Soane's friend John Britton performed as part of the show in 1799. Writing on Soane's use of atmospheric lighting and stained glass in his architecture, Dorey has suggested that the Eidophusikon had some influence over Soane's use of mirrors, coloured glass and candlelight to create a fantastical and performative aesthetic, as well as some of his curatorial choices within the museum: 'De Loutherbourg realised that having moveable elements was key to creating the kind of effects that no painter could produce within the confines of a frame or backdrop. Soane knew this too and the museum incorporates "moveable planes" for the display of paintings in the Breakfast Parlour, North Drawing Room and Picture Room.'<sup>748</sup> Soane's museum is constituted by a delicate balance between fixity – the stasis of objects in particular rooms and positions – and the mechanics of mobile display that allowed him to hang a huge collection of 118 paintings in a room measuring thirteen by twelve feet. In the Eidophusikon, scenographic movements and visual effects were terrifyingly

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<sup>747</sup> See Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1979), pp. 123-127; David Kornhaber, 'Regarding the Eidophusikon: Spectacle, Scenography, and Culture in Eighteenth Century England', *Theatre Arts Journal*, 1.1 (2009), 45-59 (pp. 47-8).

<sup>748</sup> Helen Dorey, "'Exquisite hues and magical effects": Sir John Soane's use of stained glass at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields', *The British Art Journal*, 5.1 (2004), 30-40 (p. 38). On the relationship between technologies such as the Eidophusikon and concepts of the sublime, materiality and virtuality see J. Jennifer Jones, 'Absorbing Hesitation: Wordsworth and the Theory of the Panorama', *Studies in Romanticism*, 45.3 (2006), 357-375 (pp. 358-360).

revelatory, as ‘the rocks split open and discover the castle of Nigromant’ or as ‘the seraglio breaks to pieces, and discovers the whole palace in flames.’<sup>749</sup> An attenuated sense of movement, overlap and crowding is at play too in the albums, with clippings juxtaposed and overlaid; with scraps at once obscured by and elaborated upon by their surroundings.

The reference to the Eidophusikon within the album gestures to a world of technological and theatrical innovation to which fugitive print media – tickets, advertisements, bills, reviews - were central. A 1782 review from the *European Magazine* described the Eidophusikon as a ‘new species of painting’; ‘such are the pictures which this artist has introduced for the purpose of displaying the efficacy of his moving canvas in the representation of nature. There reigns a harmony in all the movements which completes the deception.’<sup>750</sup> In a wider taxonomy of visual representation, this ‘new species’ suggests an evolution of theatrical life of which the handbill is one extant remain, a ‘paper fossil’ that carries traces of the evanescent workings of this ephemeral art.<sup>751</sup> Yet the terrain in which we discover these traces has nothing of the earthly density that we associate with fossils. Instead, playbills – as efficacious and performative as shows themselves – are represented as resisting their various trappings: pasted to walls and windows, affixed to theatre cushions and, here, album pages. These loose sheets demonstrate a Sibylline will to flight and escape only to meet an early end. One parodic poem from 1812, part of James and Horace Smith’s *The Rejected Addresses*, describes how a play bill is dropped from above at the end of a performance, going some way to illustrate how and why so many ephemeral documents are lost before they meet the archive:

Like Icarus, while laughing galleries clap,  
Soars, ducks, and dives in air the printed scrap;

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<sup>749</sup> David Garrick, *The Christmas Tale*, quoted in Cecil Price, *Theatre in the Age of Garrick* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), p. 80. On the Eidophusikon’s hellish associations and the reception of de Louthembourg as a ‘demonic conjuror’ see Luisa Calè, *Fuseli’s Milton Gallery: Turning Readers into Spectators* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 116-118.

<sup>750</sup> ‘A view of the Eidophusikon’, *The European Magazine and London Review* (January 1782), 180-181.

<sup>751</sup> On fossils, the geological imagination and literary record see Jessica Roberson, ‘Fossil Poetry: Thomas Lovell Beddoes and the Material Record’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 58.2 (2019), 209-230.

But, far wiser than he, combustion fears,  
And, as it flies, eludes the chandeliers;  
Till, sinking gradual, with repeated twirl,  
It settles, curling, on a fiddler's curl;  
Who from his powder'd pate the intruder strikes,  
And, from mere malice, sticks it on the spikes.<sup>752</sup>

The extended simile underscores the cautionary tale's scribal associations: Icarus flew too close sun, melting the wax that coated his feathered wings and causing him to fall. The reference brings to mind wax seals, feather quills, flying sheets – the material accoutrements that bring the written world to life.<sup>753</sup> The presiding tension here is between flight and becoming 'stuck' in all its forms: on the spike, wall, window, cushion, album. Soane's archive demonstrates the various stages of apprehending ephemera – from newspapers collected and preserved in their entirety to loose clippings, clippings pasted onto loose sheets, and sheets bound into large volumes.

What was it, though, that prompted Soane's inclusion of the handbill on this already crowded album sheet, how does it relate to other elements on the page and to the wider practices of reading and remediation the museum? The clippings on the facing page are from 1815, the year of Eliza's death, suggesting that the page was composed many years after Soane may have attended the Eidophusikon, if indeed he did. The page also features four clippings of the same poem, 'Epitaph on Mrs Soane' by John Taylor.<sup>754</sup> These clippings form an array or reiterative column down the right-hand margin of the page, seemingly giving lie to the repeated appearance of the epithet 'original poetry'. The repetition creates an ornamental refrain on the page and has the effect of drawing attention away from the content of the short poem and toward their combined function and effects. Soane creates an architecture on and for the page that utilises the singular scraps as constitutive elements of a bigger piece – he 'builds a poem'. Three years earlier, in 1812, Soane designed a memorial for de Loutherboung that was erected in Chiswick; John Taylor also wrote an epitaph for de

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<sup>752</sup> 'The Theatre', *Rejected Addresses; or The New Theatrum Poetarium*, 7th edn (London: John Miller, 1812), pp. 104-109 (p. 106).

<sup>753</sup> See James Gillray, *The Fall of Icarus*, hand coloured etching, 1807. British Museum, J,3.46. For a discussion of the image's iconography and associations, see John Manning, *The Emblem* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p. 211.

<sup>754</sup> Soane Museum, NC/1 f. 14.

Loutherbourg. Much like the intertextual economies of poetic quotation in architectural lectures – for example, the circulation of choice lines from Pope, as discussed above – the album page participates in and documents a reciprocal network of print memorialisation, expanding what Gillian Russell has identified as the imbrication of print textuality and theatricality to encompass the realms of private life and different disciplinary domains of practice.<sup>755</sup>

Soane's correspondence suggests some reasoning behind the proliferation of epitaphs on this album page, and also some foundational context for what would become a central collaboration in the progress of the museum from private collection to public institution. Soane received a series of letters from his friend, the didactic novelist Barbara Hofland, regarding her own 'scribbling labours'. The two friends discussed the composition of epitaphs for Eliza, and touched on the preservation and destruction of manuscript drafts. Hofland wrote: 'I send you the account I had drawn up (or something very like it) for the magazines but which I burnt thinking it insufficient for I know nothing which requires equal delicacy of strength, but I am now vexed with myself.'<sup>756</sup> The letters reveal the many stages of drafting that went into composing epitaphs. For example, Hofland offered some criticism of an account of Eliza given by her husband and printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* – 'highly drawn' yet still deficient. In a separate letter, Hofland wrote:

I wish you to read the inclosed [sic] and in order that you may see whether it is better, I add the one I first sent you, I wish you to mark any word you do not quite like thus / where you approve it thus – it will assist me in feeling how it reads to another ear, for it is a very easy thing to read a thing quietly to ourselves which will not be so felt by another.<sup>757</sup>

This epistolary direction generates an approximation of presence in the process of authorial collaboration, and as such the simple and solitary act of 'read[ing] a thing quietly' is unsettled. Instead, the manuscript markings and epistolary 'inclosure' seek to recreate the sense of intimate association, 'feeling how it reads', and

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<sup>755</sup> Gillian Russell, "Announcing each day the performances", 242.

<sup>756</sup> Private Correspondence, Barbara Hofland to John Soane, Item 17. Soane Museum.

<sup>757</sup> Barbara Hofland to John Soane, 22 May 1813, in Bolton, *Portrait of Sir John Soane*, 185. Subsequent correspondence between Soane and Hofland is quoted from manuscript and not included in Bolton's *Portrait*, Soane Archive, Correspondence between Hofland and Soane, Item 21.

composing together. A further letter from Hofland implies either that she did not receive guidance from Soane or that she found it wanting: 'I now send you the lines which I should like Mr Moyes to print and which I have essayed my way [...] I have tried to vary my own epitaphs, that they might appear to be written by different people but I cannot by any study improve these lines given you last. Mr H thinks them very good and he is very rarely satisfied with anything I do, I hope they are so, or at least tolerable.'<sup>758</sup> This series of letters demonstrates one side of a process of collaborative self-fashioning for the periodical press. The illusion of variation and proliferation demonstrates a certain benchmark for popularity, perhaps, but also an expectation that newspaper poems were frequently repetitive. Soane's album page, in its repetition of Taylor's epitaphs seems to mimic this proliferation, taking the principles of periodical publication and bearing them out on the page of the album to create 'a new species' of memorial.

The albums provide a contingent and provisional terrain on which to experiment with the work of compilation. They replicate the combinatorial and miscellaneous methods of the pasticcio in the archive by drawing together multiple sources and domains of practice and by clipping, excerpting, juxtaposing, arranging, and providing commentary on particular ideas, developments and events. The inclusion of poetry and the display of epitaphs within this first album demonstrates Soane's interests in the creative potentialities of bibliographic mediation and archival experimentation. Hofland's method of 'feeling how it reads to another ear' – at once deferential and collaborative – is a nascent version of a method that would develop into a more sustained venture with Soane. Her 'poetical remarks' would later be 'embodied' with Soane's narrative in the third edition of the official *Description to the House and Museum*, creating a hybrid and bifurcated description of the museum just as the pair aim to unify and preserve its status as a superlative national collection. As this chapter's final section will argue, the practice of compilation, and the particular usefulness of Hofland's proficiency and reputation, were central to the gradual coming-into-being of the museum as a national institution, a space in which the fugitive knowledge of spolia and scraps might finally be settled and preserved.

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<sup>758</sup> Soane Archive, Correspondence between Hofland and Soane, Item 24.

IV. 'Co-perusal' and museum-making in the *Description of the House and Museum*

i. 'Proximity becomes duet'

Soane's final *Description* re-uses and compiles multiple fragments, extracts and voices in order to establish, decode and preserve the collection and its particular arrangement. This volume serves as an official, authorised account of the collection and its arrangement, but it does so by the curiously interactive and disaggregated confluence of two distinct voices – Soane's and Hofland's. The reader is guided around the museum's entire collection – so far with one voice, and then back to retrace those steps with another, and so on, back and forth between the two interpretative aides. Importantly, the text is not a dialogue in which the two voices actively interact, but an assemblage of two divergent perspectives, registers, and frames of reference between which the reader must negotiate. This section explores the workings of this compilation within the museum and within this volume, and argues that in pursuit of the 'main object of keeping together in perpetuity the House, Museum, and Library' Soane relies on miscellaneous and fugitive materials.<sup>759</sup> This chapter has traced Soane's uses of fugitive papers in the making of his museum and its archive: at the museum's inception, *Crude Hints* was concerned with the imagined ruin's mediation of history, with the uses of the manuscript for organising the antiquarian's speculative knowledge and gothic conceits, and with the uncovering of the pasticcio and its importance to the work of instruction through miscellaneity; as the museum grew, the work of album making mingled manuscript and printed ephemera to document contemporary moments, and depict the museum as it sits at the intersection of multiple performative and commemorative practices. The *Description*, the final piece in this story, is a composite, co-authored, printed volume that is distributed as a gift to a select number of subscribers. The volume imitates the cut-and-paste logics of the pasticcio and scrapbook, preserving them for posterity in the more public-facing form of a printed book, yet still demanding that a reader trace the fault lines of spolia to discern the circulation of stories and objects and the predication of unity on disparate parts.

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<sup>759</sup> *D*, p. 100.



The *Description* renders the hierarchy between Soane's and Hofland's remarks typographically: Hofland's texts appear in smaller type, indented at the left and right margins, in the manner of a quotation, each signed 'B.H'. But these typographic demarcations are porous, and Soane's own remarks often move between the smaller and larger type and the different indentations. For example, Soane enumerates the works displayed on the 'movable planes' of his Picture Room, followed by a paragraph in the first person and in the smaller, indented type usually ascribed to Hofland's remarks. The passage begins: 'In composing this design, I laboured to avail myself of the advantages arising from the contemplation of the remains of the great works of the ancients, as well as of the observations and practice of the moderns. With these feelings, I endeavoured to combine magnificence with utility, and intricacy with variety and novelty.'<sup>760</sup> Here's Soane's reflections on his trademark combinatorial method and his union of ancient remains and modern practice is typographically distinguished from his earlier enumeration, while his next paragraph returns to the previous type and positioning, using the smaller type to render quotations. Readers are left to navigate a doubly fragmented text: it is not always immediately clear whether you are reading Soane's or Hofland's remarks, until you reach the 'B.H.' signature. This mode of attribution positions these texts as excerpts rather than the work of a co-author, but at the same time differentiates them from other quotations. The result tends toward the album-in-print, in which scraps and excerpts are assimilated onto the plane of single page, but typographically distinguished.

The movement of the text's two voices between typographical signifiers further plays with the reality of revelation and distraction: what, or who is it that we are looking at or reading? In what ways are they in conversation? Garrett Stewart's description of the visual form of 'double reading' in paintings of two or more people reading together elucidates the effects of the *Description*'s layout and the peculiar nature of its bifurcated perspective:

As in the idiomatic sense of seeing double, numerous scenes of reading materialise two agents of textual process where one would typically do – do fine, that is, for what it has to do: decode and envision. The other body might seem to be a mere appendage at first [...] but the instances of double

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<sup>760</sup> *D*, p. 17.

reader that genuinely grip the viewer tend to be those [...] [where the] annexed second body becomes a genuine supplement. In the purest examples, proximity becomes duet. [...] It is only when the balancing act fails, then, that the ‘power of the centre’ gives out, the book goes into remission as a binding force, and the satellite body drifts over into portraiture.<sup>761</sup>

Stewart’s analysis of the centripetal or ‘binding’ power of reading can be applied to the *Description*, which focusses our attention on the relationship between the two voices and between the book and the collection. Hofland’s voice upholds the ‘power of the centre’, asking in her concluding remarks: ‘Who shall say how much honour to the Arts, how much glory to the country, and increasing fame to the founder, may radiate from this centre, which in itself comprises examples of every age and country.’<sup>762</sup> In so doing she positions the book at the heart of the museum, and the museum at the heart of the nation. Hofland, as I will go on to describe, was well-suited to this positioning not so much because she was a woman nor a poet, but because of her particular cultural and reputational value as a prolific and avowedly patriotic writer – no accident at this particular moment in the museum’s history.

Positioning Hofland as an ‘agent of textual process’ in this way liberates the *Description* from scholarship that has dismissed the collaboration between the two writers as a simple – and simply gendered – ‘juxtaposition’ of the enumerative and the effusive. John Elsner writes, for example:

The lady, Soane’s female voice as it were (the voice that can, if necessary, be disowned but which speaks with a certain passion that the sober male must aver) can speak the sins that Soane’s own narrative dare not name. Whatever Hofland’s actual thoughts, B. H. as Soane’s ventriloquist doll, is the *Description*’s literary device for framing, upholding, and at the same time standing back from a series of desires unseemly in the professional architect.<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> Garrett Stewart, *The Look of Reading: Book, Painting, Text* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 235.

<sup>762</sup> *D*, p. 96.

<sup>763</sup> John Elsner, ‘A Collector’s Model of Desire: The House and Museum of Sir John Soane’, in *Cultures of Collecting*, ed. by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), pp. 155-176 (p. 167).

Rather, it is the case that poetic and architectural knowledge are taken up as mutually illuminating discourses in a method that works, as ever, by way of assemblage, juxtaposition and combination. Hofland's remarks are more than a 'framing' device to aid the ekphrastic representation of singular objects or works of art; they are central to the positioning of the museum itself in relation to the nation at large. While the *Description* could be read as an 'architectural autobiography centred on the ultimate object of [Soane's] creative entrepreneurialism: his house-museum', it can also be read as a more instrumental defence of the pasticcio method that underpins Soane's arrangement of the museum, and as an explicit caution against the impending threat of dispersing the collection upon Soane's death.<sup>764</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the use of compilation and supplementary text to assist 'feeling how it reads to another ear' took different material forms. Hunt formalised this bibliographic companionship a decade later in 1844, writing in his collection *Imagination and Fancy*:

It was suggested by the approbation which the readers of a periodical work bestowed on some extracts from the poets, *commented, and marked with italics, on a principle of co-perusal*, as though the Editor were reading the passages in their company. Those readers wished to have more such extracts; and here, if they are still in the mind, they now possess them.<sup>765</sup>

In Hunt's case, congenial 'co-perusal' has a didactic and canonising function: it guides readers in the apprehension of a superlative '*poetry of the most poetical kind*'; Hunt's volume works by combination and distillation to illuminate readers in the '*greatest form of poetry*'.<sup>766</sup> Soane's intention in publishing the *Description* was similarly didactic: the book was 'written chiefly for the advantage of the Architect, who will, I trust, become sensible, from the examination to which it leads him, that every work of Art which awakens his ideas, stimulates his industry, purifies his taste, or gives solidity to his judgement, is to him a valuable instructor.'<sup>767</sup> The book

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<sup>764</sup> Danielle S. Willkens, 'Reading Words and Images in the *Description(s) of Sir John Soane's Museum*', *Architectural Histories*, 4.1 (2016) < <http://doi.org/10.5334/ah.204> > [accessed: 12.12.20].

<sup>765</sup> Leigh Hunt, *Imagination and Fancy; or Selections from the English Poets* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1844), p. iii.

<sup>766</sup> Hunt, *Imagination and Fancy*, p. v.

<sup>767</sup> *D*, p. viii.

becomes a teacher by proxy, not a substitute for the museum but a supplement to it, assimilating an assemblage of fugitive forms into a great union. The interplay between Soane's and Hofland's texts within the *Description* does not stage a scene of instruction through dialogue or exposition in the manner of editorial notes such as Hunt's, but mediates it through juxtaposition and suggestive contrast. It is left to the reader to negotiate between the two visions and discern a meaning from the whole. Soane himself was explicit about the value of poetry to his practice, writing in his lecture notes in 1819 that the architect must 'think and feel as a Poet, combine and embellish as a Painter, and execute as a Sculptor.'<sup>768</sup> The union of arts, then, is a union of methods, a 'co-perusal'. This collusion of disciplinary practices gives rise to Soane's desire, nascent in *Crude Hints* but fully realised in the 1835 *Description*, to 'sketch a grace beyond the reach of art'; that is, to expand art's scope and limits to include a variety of methods, materials and sources. Hofland's 'poetical remarks' are leveraged specifically to this end, enabling the reader of the *Description* to 'think and feel as a Poet'.

Hofland demonstrates the imbrication of art and poetry by describing the centrality of fugitive colour to the museum's arrangement. Soane was keen to replicate the painter's combinatorial skill in his approach to interior design in the museum, which features 'bright red and yellow walls, green alcoves, and of course, the butter-yellow glass that fills the otherwise labyrinthine building with faux-Mediterranean sunshine.'<sup>769</sup> This aspect of the museum is most keenly rendered in Hofland's text, and explicitly in relation to Hunt. Describing the beauty of the statue of Apollo beneath the museum's central dome, Hofland writes of the 'exquisite distribution of light and colour which, often from undiscovered sources, sheds the most exquisite hues, and produces the most magical effects'.<sup>770</sup> Soane's use of colour is mystifying and immersive. She goes on:

Life and colour are so intimately conjoined, that we cannot separate them without losing one: even the most breathing sculptures "that Art has

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<sup>768</sup> Soane Archive: Lecture 1 Transcripts (1819), p. 25, quoted in Dorey, "'Exquisite hues and magical effects'", p. 30.

<sup>769</sup> Rose London, 'Colouring the Past: Homer, Soane & Klein', *The Courtauldian* (28 March 2019) <<https://www.courtauldian.com/single-post/2019/03/28/Colouring-the-Past-Homer-Soane-Klein>> [accessed: 01.07.20].

<sup>770</sup> *D*, p. 44.

bequeathed to Time”, require some aid from those ethereal tints [...] A writer of acknowledged genius, who has deeply studied the subject, thus speaks of colour: “We feel as if there were a moral as well as material beauty in colour, an inherent gladness [...]”<sup>771</sup>

Hofland continues the quotation, drawn from Hunt’s entry on colour in *The Seer* and incorporating Hunt’s quotation of Marlowe, at length. In his passage, Hunt makes the distinction between the mechanical philosopher superciliously dissecting rainbows and the child, or ‘real philosopher [...] who feels the immensity of what he does *not* know.’<sup>772</sup> For Hunt, real and moral beauty lies beyond the ‘dry line of knowledge’ marked out by the materialist.<sup>773</sup> Hofland acknowledges that the relationship between colour’s ‘moral’ and ‘material beauty’ as expressed by Hunt had ‘undoubtedly influenced Sir John Soane when he introduced coloured light into this, and in various other parts of his mansion.’<sup>774</sup> Soane, then, is not merely concerned with reproducing and compiling poetry within the museum, but with a dynamic and reciprocal exchange between and within the worlds of poetry and architecture.

The imitation and preservation of material colour sits at the heart of Soane’s museum project. Soane returned from his two-year Grand Tour in 1780 with a small souvenir from Pompeii, a fragment of red stucco that appears in a museum inventory in 1837, found wrapped in paper ‘amongst a group of miscellaneous small items stored in the drawer of a table in Soane’s Library but noticed as having been found in “different places” around the house.’<sup>775</sup> Modelled on this little piece, Soane had the walls of his library and study painted ‘Pompeian red – a deep, intense shade which Soane had discovered on a piece of plaster.’<sup>776</sup> Not only does Soane assimilate ancient objects within the wider logic of his museum, but the museum itself is modelled on fragments. Dorey notes that Hofland describes the museum’s red

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<sup>771</sup> Ibid.

<sup>772</sup> Leigh Hunt, ‘IV. On Colour’, in *Essays by Leigh Hunt: The Indicator and The Seer* (London: Edward Moxon, 1841), pp. 7-8 (p. 8).

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> *D*, p. 45

<sup>775</sup> ‘A stucco fragment from Pompeii’, Soane Museum, L130, <<http://collections.soane.org/object-1130>> [accessed: 10.07.20].

<sup>776</sup> Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 262.

staircase as evoking ‘unquenchable fires’, a nod to Soane’s vivid recollection of Pompeii, to this little fragment of stucco, but also perhaps to W. H. Pyne’s 1832 description of a famous scene from the *Eidophusikon*: ‘a vast temple of gorgeous architecture [...] seemingly composed of unconsuming and unquenchable fire.’<sup>777</sup> The museum’s logics of display are part of a wider economy of representational techniques, each mediated by writing, quotation and the circulation of fugitive pieces.

Hofland’s ‘poetical remarks’ fashion a particular manner of apprehending art within the museum, one that is reminiscent of the practice of unfolding that mediates the reading of the albums. Describing Hogarth’s paintings and the use of folding shutters, she writes: ‘They have the power of enchaining every faculty within their own awful sphere – compelling us to gaze on that which we fear to behold, and to think of that from which we desire to fly’.<sup>778</sup> This mode of attention – ‘enchaining’ and compulsive as it is – seems at first to resist the pull of the fugitive. Yet, in the space of a sentence, the reader is harried along to consider the works of Piranesi, Clerisseau, Zucchi and Canaletto. The large wooden shutters that enclose the paintings work to disaggregate the crowd and bring its simultaneous tumult into a more linear order, enabling the viewer to ‘remove’ certain paintings from view before moving on to another. In so doing they regulate the ‘horrible display’ and allow the spectator to focus on certain ‘beauties’ unimpeded.<sup>779</sup>

i. Describing displacement in the ‘land of freedom, arts and arms’

Little-known today, Hofland was a prolific writer in her time. Between 1805 and her death in 1845, she published one volume of poems, twenty-one novels, and forty-three works for children, many of which were translated into French, German and Spanish.<sup>780</sup> Many of her didactic works were topographical descriptions and geographical primers, such as *A Panorama of Europe* (1813) and *Africa Described*

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<sup>777</sup> Quoted in Dorey, “Exquisite Hues and Magical Effects”, p. 38.

<sup>778</sup> *D*, p. 23.

<sup>779</sup> *D*, p. 23.

<sup>780</sup> See Stephen C. Behrendt, ‘Barbara Hofland and Romantic-Era Provincial Poetry by Women’, *Women’s Writing*, 20.4 (2013), 421-440; and Stephen C. Behrendt, ‘Women Without Men: Barbara Hofland and the Economics of Widowhood’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 17.3 (2005), 481-508.

(1828). As Anne Frey has argued, many of Hofland's novels 'present a sustained defence of her own authorship' and that of other women.<sup>781</sup> For example, the *Panorama* stages a familial conversation in which both the mother and father of the Davenport family laud the achievements of a considerable host of women authors and 'test the limits of female sovereignty' on the imperial stage.<sup>782</sup> Ironically, with her reception in Elsner's scholarship in mind, this text embraces ventriloquism as an agent of nationalist learning in the midst of the Napoleonic wars: each of the children participate in a game in which they must personify commercial and cultural features of given countries. Through the use of performance, costume and props, Hofland guides a kind of learning that relies on interaction and imagination; colonial contexts and global aggressions are played out within a tableau that maps a classification of national stereotypes onto familial hierarchies. Hofland's works also presents a defence of the book as site of knowledge production and placemaking that would remain apposite in the publication of the museum *Description*. In *Africa Described*, Hofland privileges her own research and book learning over first-hand reports from travellers, praising one's mastery of materials over one's range of experience.<sup>783</sup> The inclusion of Hofland's remarks in the *Description* played a very specific role in leveraging patriotic spirit in Soane's favour, as controversy raged over the ethics of museum acquisition and, more particularly, the relation of Soane's museum to the nation at large – its purse and its public.

Hofland's remarks draw explicitly on her didactic and topographical oeuvre. Debates over the origin and ownership of bought, borrowed and stolen fragments and works had been central to the public discourse on museums, reaching a peak when Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin (1766-1841), sold the Parthenon Marbles to the British Museum in 1816.<sup>784</sup> Hofland's contributions extended the curatorial voice and emphatically defended the politics of imperial accession. Her 'poetical remarks', like her novels and primers, are notably orientalist in their description of

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<sup>781</sup> Anne Frey, 'Barbara Hofland's Profession: Questioning the Calling', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 36.3 (2005), 110-112 (p. 110).

<sup>782</sup> Megan A. Norcia, *X Marks the Spot: Women Writers Map the Empire for British Children* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), p. 114.

<sup>783</sup> Barbara Hofland, *Africa Described in its Ancient and Present State* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1828), p. 242.

<sup>784</sup> See Emma Peacocke, *Romanticism and the Museum* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 112-15.

‘eastern luxury’ and ‘British valour’; her descriptions are as polemical as they are poetic – indeed, the latter enables and amplifies the former. Writing of a collection of cinerary urns held in the museum’s sepulchral chamber she argues:

To remove, however, is not to desecrate; and if the spirits of the departed hover round their ashes, neither the matron nor the warrior whose dust reposes here have cause to bewail their destination; - in the land of freedom, arts, and arms, they rather have regained than lost the country worthy of their love and adoration.<sup>785</sup>

Soane outsources these ethical entanglements by co-opting the voice of a trusted friend and public figure famed for her piety and fortitude. As Eric Gidal has written of the British Museum: ‘Converting the displacements of history and the fragmentation of knowledge into the motivations of aesthetic mediation, the imaginative spectator in the national museum pursues an elusive goal of cultural consummation.’<sup>786</sup> This was the case too for institutions such as Soane’s museum of architecture, which – even as it refused to be subsumed within the auspices of a ‘national museum’ such as the BM – worked to valorise and inscribe imperial values through the presentation of foreign objects.<sup>787</sup> In the museum of architecture, Hofland’s remarks rehabilitate the fugitive knowledge of fragments and displaced artefacts, and bring the political, aesthetic and militaristic inflections of spolia simultaneously into view: ‘freedom, arts, and arms’.

If the museum and the archive seek to gather, collect, combine and preserve both artefactual and bibliographic materials, they are also sites that represent degrees of displacement, dispossession and destruction. Soane’s efforts at building a museum are not so much threatened by dilapidation as they are comprised by it, constantly wrestling with the generative potential of ruins, fragments and spolia. Antoine-Crysotôme Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) – whose ‘ideas played a significant role in encouraging Soane’s deviance’ – leveraged the analogy between architecture and language in *Letters to Miranda* (1796), his polemic against the spoliation of

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<sup>785</sup> *D*, p. 37.

<sup>786</sup> Eric Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 17.

<sup>787</sup> See Inderpal Grewal, ‘Constructing National Subjects: The British Museum and its Guidebooks’, in *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture*, ed. by Lisa Bloom (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 44-58.



cultural sites in Italy by the French.<sup>788</sup> Quatremère figured ‘modern research’ as conjectural recuperation, a work of conservation undertaken upon the carelessly shorn book, and compared the pillaging of antique fragments to the destruction of the book into textual vignettes:

What is the antique in Rome if not a great book whose pages have been destroyed and dispersed by time, and whose voids and lacunae modern research continually fills and repairs? The sovereign power that chose, exported and appropriated a selection of the most curious of these monuments would be doing no other than an ignoramus tearing out of a book all those pages on which he found vignettes.<sup>789</sup>

The image of the dilapidated book – from *dilapidare*, to scatter as if throwing stones – is an especially apt symbol for Soane’s museum. If, for Quatremère, it is only the ‘ignoramus’ who tears from the book, for Soane the act of tearing might be met by the act of reconstitution in new form; in the museum, ‘voids and lacunae’ are performative and suggestive, rich with meaning. As the conjectural poetics of the ruin gestures to the manoeuvres and occlusions of imperial spoliation, the museum harbours a tension inherent in fugitive knowledge – an anxious sense of alienation from one’s origin and assimilation into one’s new context. The materialisations of fugitive knowledge within Soane’s museum - from manuscript to album to book – map directly onto moments of the museum itself coming into being.

Hofland directly addresses the relationship between the ancient site, the book and the viewer or reader. She is almost given the final word, and writes in her conclusion (which precedes a poem of hers, and the Act of Parliament):

Stranger and countryman, he who views the place and he who reads of it,  
will alike be sensible of the extent of its value as a gift to posterity; and the  
mind capable of estimating munificence and benevolence guided by

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<sup>788</sup> Sylvia Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy and the Invention of the Modern Language of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 177-8. Soane owned seven works by Quatremère and used his own partial translations in preparing his first course of Royal Academy lectures in 1809. Soane’s translation of passages from Quatremère’s *De l’architecture Égyptienne* can be found in Soane Case 171. Soane owns three copies of the book, copy 1 and copy 2 have interleaved pages and marginal notes.

<sup>789</sup> Quoted in Nancy Karrels, ‘Spolia and Memory in Post-Revolutionary France’, *Athanos*, 26 (2018), 35-43 (p. 36n7).

wisdom, will find the concluding pages of this book most interesting. On this subject I am forbidden to dilate, therefore – farewell.<sup>790</sup>

Hofland references degrees of alienation from the nation – ‘stranger and countryman’ – and from the museum itself, vicariously experienced through a reading of the *Description*. This sense of attenuated presence recalls the distinction she made in *Africa Described* between the first-hand account and the traversal of vicarious texts. The *Description* behaves as a proxy, a bibliographic interface between the reader and the museum that serves to regulate and the scope of fugitive materials and to bring order, meaning and unity to the disparate collection. Despite Hofland’s centrality to the museum’s work of cohering this body fugitive of knowledge within the museum, and of positioning the museum in relation to the nation, there are certain subjects on which even she remains ‘forbidden to dilate’, and here the *Description* gives way to the inclusion of the Act of Parliament itself. The Act that follows was not as universally well-received as Hofland’s praise might imply. The conditions and regulations laid out in this Act were widely criticised in the contemporary popular and trade press. A writer in *The Civil Engineer and Architects’ Journal* argues that the museum is a gift that is rescinded in the giving: ‘[T]he public would have reason to be grateful for [the museum] [...] had it not pleased the “munificent donor” himself to lay a “touch not”, “taste not” embargo upon it.’<sup>791</sup> Having ‘embodied’ Hofland’s remarks with his own, Soane fails – by this standard at least – to properly incorporate the public. Soane retains a posthumous control over his collection, one which places limits on the circulation of objects and the frequency of visitors.

The inclusion of the Act works together with Hofland’s ‘poetical remarks’ to shore-up the value of the museum as it is and where it is, against contemporary critics who would prefer to see the collection subsumed into another national institution: ‘Some worthy has suggested the annexation of Sir John Soane’s museum to the National Gallery’, but to disturb it in this way ‘would be to rob it of its charms. The ingenious contrivances by which seeming obstacles have been converted into positive excellencies [...] the *accidental* beauties that everywhere

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<sup>790</sup> *D*, p. 96.

<sup>791</sup> Pro Patria, ‘The Soanean Museum’, *The Civil Engineer and Architect’s Journal*, 30 vols, (London: Printed for the Proprietor, 1837-8), I, 44.

present themselves would be at once sacrificed.’<sup>792</sup> The rumoured proposal to ‘annexe’ one collection within another would be tantamount to spoliation, would ‘rob’ the space that is itself stacked with displaced artefacts. An article published in the *Spectator* 23 March 1833, pasted onto one of Soane’s unbound sheets, bundled with many others that contain clippings respecting the Museum Bill, argues: ‘The major part of this collection of relics would be lost if scattered among that accumulation of curious objects in the British Museum. It is a precious cabinet of curiosities to be preserved entire.’<sup>793</sup> The museum, a discrete and intentional body of knowledge, must tread a line between the stasis of preservation and the beautiful chaos of the accidental; it must preserve its own structural integrity even as it rests itself on scattered, fragmentary and fugitive knowledge.

The fugitive condition of being ‘scattered’ is both the condition and the limit of the museum, as its collector seeks both to gather and order spolia and scraps and to protect his own emergent institution from collapse and diffusion. Compilation serves a range of speculative, expressive, and unifying functions within Soane’s museum. It is not simply a way of record keeping or acquisitive hoarding, but a means by which the space of the museum itself is produced and preserved, and a site of knowledge production in which new meanings and ‘accidental beauties’ are generated. The twentieth-century Italian archaeologist Salvatore Settis locates a demand for co-production within architectural spolia: ‘The ancient fragment, enclosed within a new system of values, immediately tends to occupy the centre; but its imperfect, mutilated states invite you [...] to complete it, beginning an exegetical process of conjecture.’<sup>794</sup> Soane’s compilations create a fresh context and dynamic set of associative possibilities for shorn architectural and textual fragments, beginning with the quintessentially antiquarian practice of conjecture and developing into the wholesale embodiment or incorporation of parts into the whole that we see enshrined in the final *Description*. Soane’s fugitive materials shape and enrich his method and teachings as an architect, rooting the value and virtue of aesthetic unity in composite forms.

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<sup>792</sup> ‘Chit Chat. – Artistical and Miscellaneous’, in *Arnold’s Magazine of the Fine Arts, and Journal of Literature and Science*, 3 vols (London: M. Arnold, 1834), III, 585-592 (p. 588).

<sup>793</sup> Soane Museum NC/20.

<sup>794</sup> Quoted in Kinney, ‘The Concept of Spolia’, p. 245.

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored some of the ways in which the lines drawn by Enlightenment encyclopaedism were taken up, tangled and reconnected by Romantic-period poets, philosophers, painters and architects. It has exposed fault lines in the ambition of a period known as ‘the age of systems [...] and booklearning’, and shown how encyclopaedic method, emergent disciplinarity and the pursuit of complete knowledge was shaped by the fugitive nature of materials:<sup>795</sup> variously the flying leaves of periodicals and manuscript plans; waste-books, diagrams and detachable paper tables; fading pigments and paper specimens; scrapbooks and scattered fragments. In each case I have located a tension between totalising and fugitive forms at the heart of the organisation of knowledge. I would like to conclude by briefly considering the legacies of the fugitive knowledge discussed in this thesis.

‘I want to send you something’, John Berger wrote to Rosa Luxemburg in 2015 (or rather, to her ‘example’, almost a century after her death in 1919).<sup>796</sup> The description that follows serves here as a reflection on three problems that have been central to this thesis: compilation, mediation and transmission.

The object I want to send you she [Janine, Berger’s friend] placed on her kitchen windowsill.

“The goal of an encyclopaedia is to assemble all the knowledge scattered on the surface of the earth, to demonstrate the general system to the people with whom we live, and to transmit it to the people who will come after us, so that the works of centuries past is not useless in the centuries which follow, that our descendants by becoming more learned, may become more harmonious and happier . . .”

Diderot is explaining, in 1750, the encyclopaedia he has just helped to create.

The object on Janine’s windowsill has something encyclopaedic about it. It’s a thin cardboard box, the size of a quarto sheet of paper. Printed on its lid is a coloured

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<sup>795</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth to Jane Marsall, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, Chester L. Shaver, 8 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), I, 180.

<sup>796</sup> John Berger, ‘A Gift for Rosa’, in *Confabulations* (London: Penguin, 2016), pp. 9-25 (p. 12).

engraving of a Collared Flycatcher, and underneath it two words in Cyrillic Russian: SONG BIRDS.

Open the lid. Inside are three rows of match-boxes, with six boxes to each row. And each box has a coloured engraving of a different sing bird. Eighteen different songsters. And below each engraving in very small print the name of the bird in Russian. You who wrote furiously in Russian, Polish and German, would have been able to read them. I can't. I have to guess from my vague memories of sporadic bird-watching.<sup>797</sup>

Berger's essay – 'A Gift for Rosa' – lilts dialogically between his own meditations on the object described above and passages from Luxemburg's own letters, sent from prison. Fused together in this way, Berger appears to be writing *with* rather than *to* her, conjuring an interlocutor from a combination of memory, speculation and excerption. Everything about the 'object' he wishes to send – its quarto size, engravings, partitions and captions, even its thinness and heteroglossia – encourages us to read it like a book; it demands and resists comprehension. The quotation from Diderot intervenes almost exactly halfway through the essay and is the only excerpt from a third party. His remark, seemingly somewhat out of place, offers a touchstone for the auratic and approximate 'something encyclopaedic' that characterises the matchboxes and engravings, and positions these otherwise diminutive and ephemeral objects in relation to the *Encyclopédie* (1751), the superlative Enlightenment precedent for the organisation of 'scattered' knowledge. Diderot's encyclopaedism sits uneasily alongside the fragments from Luxemburg, which emphasise a struggle located not in 'a plan set out in some book or theory' but in 'the middle of history, the middle of progress'.<sup>798</sup> Yet Berger situates his gift – 'something encyclopaedic' – precisely in this medial space. He does this by drawing a line of connection from the 'weird, momentary intimacy' of recognising a particular species of bird flying overhead, to the diligent, mischievous birdsong that Luxemburg noted from her prison cell, to 'a whole history of bird life', and to the impossible missive of the 'collection of matchboxes' passed between friends.<sup>799</sup> In the range of his excerpts and examples, passing and personal moments, Berger connects the 'middle of history' to the 'whole history', the individual to the composite and to the collective.

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<sup>797</sup> Berger, *Confabulations*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>798</sup> Berger, *Confabulations*, p. 18.

<sup>799</sup> Berger, *Confabulations*, p. 20.

The work of classification is figured through the work of affective experience and everyday encounters gathered together in a resonant, even ‘harmonious’ compilation.

Between inspecting the matches harboured in the coloured boxes and his own ‘pages’ of reflections, Berger reminds us that, for Luxemburg, there was a great deal at stake in the dialectic between materials and method: ‘the masses [...] are in reality their own leader, dialectically creating their own development procedure’.<sup>800</sup> His gift is imbued with revolutionary volition in the closing quotation – ‘I was, I am, I will be’.<sup>801</sup> His turn to Diderot activates a long history of revolutionary associations. Coleridge’s own encyclopaedic project, with which this thesis began, had been intended as a corrective against the ‘infected bales [...] imported [from France] under the neutral flag of scientific instruction’; the encyclopaedia had been converted into ‘a vehicle for the contraband wares of licentiousness, materialism and infidelity’.<sup>802</sup> Despite its imperious heft, the encyclopaedia had all the radicalising potential of fugitive pieces, ‘republican and revolutionary doctrines circulated every month, every week, every day, in flying leaves and penny publications’.<sup>803</sup> Its revolutionary potential lay in its investment in empiricism, in the connection it proposed between the interplay of materials and the development of method. Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* showed that ‘knowledge was ordered, not random [...] This message permeated the book, even the technical articles, for the details about grinding pins and constructing water wheels took on larger significance if seen in the light of the Preliminary Discourse and certain key articles’.<sup>804</sup> This thesis has made a return to the elements and orders of the book to explore encyclopaedism’s legacies in the Romantic period, taking Coleridge’s invective against ‘infected bales’ as its starting point, and further exploring the vehicular, recalcitrant and combinatorial qualities of print, manuscript and visual media.

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<sup>800</sup> Berger, *Confabulations*, p. 22.

<sup>801</sup> Berger, *Confabulations*, p. 23.

<sup>802</sup> *SWF*, I, 582. On the ‘contradictory forces’ of Encyclopaedism in Britain see Judith Hawley, ‘Encircling the Arts and Sciences: British Encyclopaedism after the French Revolution’, in *Ordering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Diana Donald, Frank O’Gorman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 216-246.

<sup>803</sup> Unsigned review of *History of the Peninsula War*, by Southey, *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany; a New Series of the Scots Magazine*, 12, Jan-June 1823, 208-222 (p. 212).

<sup>804</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 539-40.

Berger's compilation of textual fragments, and his meditation on evanescent birdsong and its evolution, classification and display through the printed matchboxes is a fitting metaphor for the workings of fugitive knowledge. Meaning arises from juxtaposition and contingent connection, in the space between 'the middle of history' and 'the whole of history'. I have shown the organisation of knowledge to be predicated on compilation in a wide range of practices: excerption, anthologization, bookkeeping, the collection of data and specimens, extra-illustration and scrapbooking. From the flying leaves of paper to the flying colours of pigment, the materials with which books were made were unstable; they necessitated dynamic processes of disciplinary mapping and what Coleridge described as a bookish 'bird-liming'.<sup>805</sup> The aim of this thesis has been to chart the compilation of fugitive materials across a range of bibliographic formulations, exploring the relationship between these materials and the methods designed to bring them to order. The resulting picture is one of densely composite assemblages, and of 'something encyclopaedic' that is harder to put into words than Diderot implies. His 'goal' follows a clear teleology: to 'assemble', to 'demonstrate' and to 'transmit'.<sup>806</sup> But the compilations discussed in this thesis chart a different path, constantly oscillating between the poles of what is gathered and scattered. In these texts, fugitive knowledge is produced through the dynamic interaction between points of origin and present assemblages, and in the interplay between historical specificity and material contingency.

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<sup>805</sup> *N*, V, xlix.

<sup>806</sup> Quoted in Berger, 'A Gift for Rosa', p. 12.