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Lady Caroline Lamb and Miss Elizabeth Spence: Limits of Femininity in Early Nineteenth-Century Salon and Album Culture

Zoe Baron and Beatrice Mossman

In November 1825 middle-class salon hostess and travel writer Elizabeth Spence contributed a short poem titled 'M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb' to Anna Birkbeck's album. Spence's choice of subject, Lady Caroline Lamb, was, in many ways, unusual. Coming from a very different world to Spence, the aristocratic Lamb was a household name, most well known for her much publicized personal life, which included a disastrous love affair with Lord George Gordon Byron. Through a close reading of Spence's poem, this article interrogates the 'friendship' between these two women of differing classes and backgrounds and considers the complex gender and social dynamics at play informing Spence's ambiguous poem. The album, like the salon, existed within the space between the masculine/public and the feminine/private worlds. It is in this space that it is possible to explore the limits of femininity in the early nineteenth century, as its semi-public position enables a view of the fringes of what society deemed acceptable, and what provoked dissent for overstepping. As one famed for her overstepping, Lamb demonstrated the risks and the penalty for pushing these boundaries, but Spence's poem offers a more complex, and even contradictory, picture of Lamb and by extension the limitations which condemned her.



In November 1825 Elizabeth Spence (1768–1832) contributed a short poem titled ‘M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb’ to Anna Birkbeck’s album.¹ Known personally to Spence, aristocrat and fellow author Lady Caroline Lamb (1785–1828) was a household name. Lamb was famed for her much publicized personal life, which included a disastrous love affair in 1812 with Lord George Gordon Byron (1788–1824) during her marriage to William Lamb (1779–1848). These two women came from very different worlds. Their relationship with the boundaries around accepted feminine behaviour reflects the range of differences and difficulties experienced by women of the middle and upper classes. Album keeping and salon culture were both seen as typically feminine realms, and yet also a space which existed between the masculine/public sphere and feminine/private world. It is in this space where it is possible to explore the limits of femininity in the early nineteenth century, as its semi-public position enables a view of the fringes of what society deemed acceptable, and what provoked dissent for overstepping. By focusing on Spence’s ‘M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb’ and interrogating the context surrounding the piece, we will explore how the poem, its creator, and its subject shed light on the limits of femininity in early nineteenth-century salon and album culture (Fig. 1).

M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb

Lovely as a fragile flower,
 Blighted in an evil hour
 Once in summer seen expending,
 Now, ah! now, no more condescending
 Secret adulation — — left to weep,
 Bitter tears thy couch to steep.
 No friendly voice to make thee glad,
 Solitary — desolate — and sad —
 Alas! how singular a lot,
 To be remembered — yet forgot.
 Who has not heard — who has not seen,
 Thy sparkling wit — thy graceful mien
 What true nobility of mind,
 Ever courteous, ever kind.
 Genius claims thee for her own

¹ We are extremely grateful for the help and guidance from Dr Luisa Calè in the drafting of this article. We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks for our peer reviewer for their time and their thoughtful feedback.

In all her varied fancies known
 Sweet sensibility bears the sway,
 Though empassioned be thy lay
 'Tis but the cold that cannot know
 The tenderness that sure must flow,
 From hearts w[h]ere feeling ever lives,
 And finely paints the scene it gives.

—
 Novber 20 1825 Elizabeth Isabella Spence²

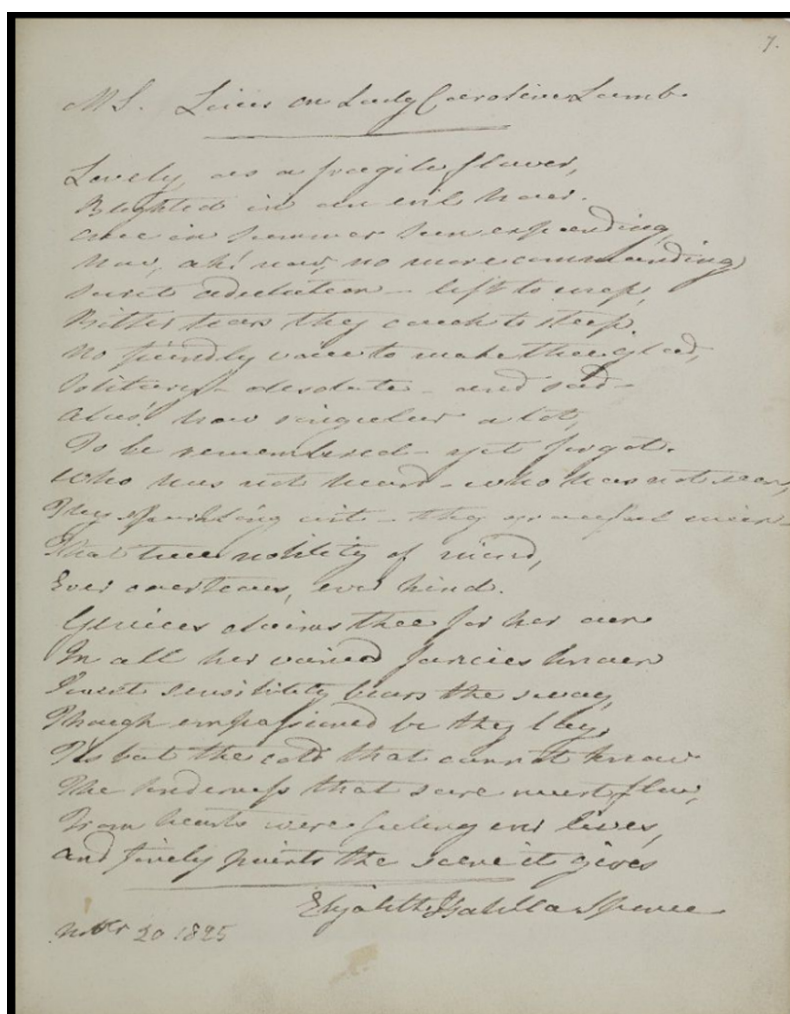


Fig. 1: Elizabeth Spence, 'M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb', in *The Album of Anna Birkbeck*, Birkbeck, University of London, p. 7.

² Elizabeth Spence, 'M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb', in *The Album of Anna Birkbeck*, Birkbeck, University of London, p. 7.

The central conflict between our two leading ladies lies in their different class backgrounds. A biographical sketch published in *La Belle Assemblée* in 1824 presents Spence as having been left orphaned, ‘unprotected’, and ‘nearly unprovided for’, forfeiting her childhood and turning to work at the tender age of 16. An engraving accompanying the sketch styles Spence as a sibyl, ‘*coiffée d’un Madras*, after the fashion of Madame de Staël’, a model for the magazine’s middle-class female readers.³ By contrast, in an obituary, *La Belle Assemblée* describes the aristocrat Lamb as having been born ‘blessed with every advantage of birth and education’.⁴ The assertion made by Henry Blyth — one of Lamb’s commercial biographers — that the members of Lamb’s family and class could (and often did) remain ‘spoilt children’ for life is evidenced by contemporary gossip columns.⁵ There is an abundance of news reports of balls, parties, and dinners at the residence of Lamb’s uncle and aunt — Devonshire House.⁶ One particular example in the *Morning Post* details that supper at these parties ‘consisted of every delicacy’, and ‘wines were various [...] and of excellent quality’.⁷ Although Spence’s family had links with the literary world, it came nowhere close to contending with the kind of access Lamb inherited.⁸

Lamb grew up immersed in the culture of the aristocratic literary salon, a meeting place for the exchange of cultural, literary, and political ideas. The salon’s model — the Parisian *soirée* — was founded as a more democratic alternative to the French court; however, it was always ‘at the very center of “le monde,” of the [...] elite’.⁹ Members

³ ‘Biographical Sketch of Miss Elizabeth Isabella Spence’, *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine Addressed Particularly to the Ladies*, March 1824, pp. 93–94 (p. 93); Alaric Alfred Watts, *Alaric Watts: A Narrative of his Life*, 2 vols (Bentley, 1884), I, p. 209.

⁴ ‘Recollections of Lady Caroline Lamb, *La Belle Assemblée*, March 1828, pp. 94–96 (p. 94).

⁵ Similar language was used by William Hazlitt in 1825 to describe Lamb’s aristocratic lover Lord Byron. Hazlitt — one of Lamb’s contemporaries — named Byron ‘the spoiled child of fame as well as fortune’. See Henry Blyth, *Caro: The Fatal Passion: The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb* (Granada, 1972), p. 2; William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age; or, Contemporary Portraits*, 3rd edn (Templeman, 1858), p. 283.

⁶ Parties at Devonshire House were often reported in the *Morning Post* (Conservative daily newspaper), *The Times* (centre-right daily newspaper), and *The Oracle*, among other papers (before and after the event). Articles often reported the ‘Fashionables’ in attendance, alluding to the fact that although these were often literary and political meetings, they were equally about showing off and further establishing their upper-class status. Devonshire House parties certainly succeeded as *The Oracle* announced on 7 December 1799 that it was the ‘resort of the *Hout Ton*’. These articles naming ‘Fashionables’ are also an early example of an emerging celebrity culture and a celebrity-focused press. Examples of such articles include, ‘Arts and Culture’, *Morning Post*, 28 February 1800, p. 3; ‘Arts and Culture’, *Morning Post*, 13 June 1800, p. 3; ‘Fashionable World’, *Morning Post*, 17 February 1806, p. 3; ‘The Duchess of Devonshire’, *Morning Post*, 17 January 1811, p. 3; ‘Fashionable World’, *Morning Post*, 1 April 1811, p. 3; *The Times*, 6 March 1789, p. 2; *Oracle*, 28 May 1799, p. 6; ‘News’, *Oracle*, 7 December 1799, p. 6.

⁷ ‘Supper at Devonshire House’, *Morning Post*, 27 March 1811, p. 3.

⁸ Spence’s family knew Dr Samuel Johnson and the Porter family.

⁹ Susanne Schmid, *British Literary Salons of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 4.

of the English aristocracy took up the model, forming salons like those found at Holland House and Devonshire House, which Lamb frequented.¹⁰ Discarding some of the formalities of the French *soirée*, English salons of the Romantic age adopted the tendency to revolve around a female hostess (securing the salons' feminized status), the art of polite conversation, the demand for social performance (from both their hostesses and their guests), and their reputation as 'veritable hothouses of political and cultural agitation'.¹¹ Additionally, the Romantic salon was an ideal setting for the emergence of 'a specifically modern form of fame' — the Romantic celebrity (or modern celebrity) — of which Lamb's lover Lord Byron is often labelled the prototype.¹² In response to this emerging modern celebrity culture, the success of salons often depended upon the appearance of celebrity guests or hosts to draw visitors in.

Modern celebrity depended on the rise of a culture that venerated figures not only for their work but also (and sometimes solely) for their tantalizing private lives. Incidentally, modern celebrity also came at a time when readers began to read an author's work in an attempt to uncover biographical details; as a result, literary characters were often viewed as a mirror image of their author.¹³ As Andrew Elfenbein states — in reference to the rise of Byron's celebrity — 'the celebrity' can be distinguished 'from merely famous people as a figure whose personality is created, bought, sold, and advertised through capitalist relations of production'.¹⁴ Chris Rojek identifies the rise of celebrity culture with urbanization, the rise of mass media, the death of traditional religion, and the fact

¹⁰ Lamb had obvious close ties to Devonshire House, being the home of her uncle and aunt, and her own home during an extended period in her childhood. However, Lamb was also intimate with the Holland family. In 1810 Lamb begun her first extramarital affair with Lady Holland's son (by her previous marriage) Sir Godfrey Vassall Webster. During this entanglement, Lamb exchanged many letters with Lady Holland. However, this friendship was often fraught, due to Lamb's improper relationship with her son. By 1811 Lamb felt the consequences of her actions when she was disinvited from a party at Holland House. See letters transcribed in Paul Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth: Selected Letters of Lady Caroline Lamb* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 52, 55–74.

¹¹ Schmid, p. 1.

¹² In *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity*, Clara Tuite summarizes the 'vital recent work' on the emergence of the modern celebrity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century studies. Tuite refers to Tom Mole's *Byron's Romantic Celebrity* (2007) as a prominent example: '[Mole's book is the] first monograph-length work devoted to Byron and celebrity, and the first systematic application of the contemporary theory of celebrity and commodity culture to Romantic-period literary production and reception' (p. xvii). Tuite also lists Ghislaine McDayter's *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture* (2009) as an important psychoanalytic approach to Byron's work and celebrity identity. Jerome McGann's *Byron and Romanticism* (2002), Andrew Elfenbein's *Byron and the Victorians* (1995), and *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750–1850*, edited by Tom Mole (2009) are also considered. See Clara Tuite, *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. xvii–xviii, doi:[10.1017/CBO9781316009666](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316009666).

¹³ Tuite argues that Byron 'modeled' and initiated the fashion of 'overlapping of the author's personality with that of his notorious protagonist' (p. xv). For instance, in 1825, William Hazlitt supposed that 'Lord Byron makes man after his own image' (p. 274).

¹⁴ Andrew Elfenbein, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 47.

that royal patronage began to be ‘supplanted by [...] new taste cultures’.¹⁵ Similarly, Clara Tuite acknowledges that due to the ‘rapid expansion of literary markets from the late eighteenth century, works of literature were no longer produced for a small audience, often known to the author, but for a vast, anonymous body known as the reading public’.¹⁶ The celebrity was cultivated to overcome this distance between creator and audience, creating an industry of false intimacy, otherwise known as *parasociality*, and defined by Rojek as the ‘relations of intimacy constructed through the mass-media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings’ (p. 52). Thus, celebrity culture often ‘replaced person-to-person contact [...] with a person-to-“personality” contact between consumer and fetishised subjectivity’ (otherwise known as human product).¹⁷ Lamb’s first contact with Byron — a fan letter — was an example of parasociality, as well as an early case of the reader envisioning the author as their protagonist. As Tuite conveys, Lamb’s first letter to Byron illustrated a cross between ‘the genres of fan letter and love letter’.¹⁸ The letter was unsigned — ‘this is the first letter I ever wrote without my name’ — and refers to Byron/Childe Harold without distinction; for instance, Lamb coyly invites Childe Harold/Byron to find out who his mystery letter writer is: ‘I shall think less well of Child[e] Harold if he tries — though the greatest wish I have is one day to see him & be acquainted with him.’¹⁹

It is important to note that mass media often ‘focused public attention on aristocrats’ private lives’ as the dominant form of celebrity culture. This was then consumed mainly by the aspirational middle classes — who enjoyed hearing explicit gossip about the upper class from gossip columns to silver fork novels — partially as a means of self-education to ‘get in’ with the upper class, and also because being in the know gave ‘the consumer the privileged sense of being above the merely commonplace’.²⁰ Spence’s embrace of the traditionally upper-class salon culture captured the initial democratization of the salon in the 1820s, as well as the success of a celebrity culture that aimed to enrapture the middle classes.

¹⁵ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 111; Tuite, *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity*, pp. xviii, 253. For interdisciplinary surveys on the subject of celebrity culture (and its offspring — fandom studies), see Rojek; *The Celebrity Culture Reader*, ed. by P. David Marshall (Routledge, 2006); Mark Duffett, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2013); Routledge’s quarterly *Celebrity Studies* journal (2010–present); and Intellect’s *Journal of Fandom Studies* (2012–present).

¹⁶ Clara Tuite, ‘Tainted Love and Romantic Literary Celebrity’, *ELH*, 74.1 (2007), pp. 59–88 (pp. 62–63), doi:[10.1353/elh.2007.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2007.0009).

¹⁷ Elfenbein, p. 49.

¹⁸ Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 64.

¹⁹ Lady Caroline Lamb to Lord Byron, 9 March 1812, transcription of letter in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, p. 77.

²⁰ Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, pp. 71–72; Elfenbein, pp. 50, 51.

Through the middle-class salons hosted at her second-floor flat in Quebec Street, Portman Square, Spence played an important role as one of the ‘essential supporters of a network connecting women authors with each other and with male editors’.²¹ Her salon offered an environment conducive for female writers to meet with male publishers, and ‘provided women writers with a rare space where they could pleurably flaunt their literary identity without fears that they might incur disapproval or stir up feelings of inferiority’.²² Anna Birkbeck’s album accrued entries from attendees of Spence’s salons: the well-known writers Emma Roberts, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Jane Porter, and Amelia Opie. Notably, Spence’s salons and Anna Birkbeck’s album also share appearances by male editors William Jerdan (*Literary Gazette*, 1818–50), Alaric Watts (*The Literary Souvenir; or, Cabinet of Poetry and Romance*, 1825–34), and Samuel Carter Hall (*The Amulet; or, A Christian Remembrancer*, 1826–36). Katherine D. Harris draws a direct link with the ‘impromptu writing in albums’ and the ‘printed materials in literary annuals’ (such as Watts’s *Literary Souvenir*), claiming that it is ‘almost as if the albums provided an intermediary space in which authors could practice their poetry before submitting it to editors’.²³ A more complex dynamic is added when, as evidenced in Anna Birkbeck’s album, contributions were copied by authors of their already published works, such as examples of Letitia Elizabeth Landon’s poems from Jerdan’s *Literary Gazette*.²⁴ It is through Spence’s salon and contributions to Anna Birkbeck’s album that these dynamics of the middle-class salon and album culture of the 1820s are captured.

The Romantic album was ‘structured around the idea of polite conversation’; it required the construction of a ‘persona to be shared with others’ (a social performance).²⁵ Samantha Matthews defines the album as ‘a personal miscellany or scrapbook which usually began as a blank volume purchased from a stationer or bookseller’.²⁶ Unlike its ancestor, the commonplace book, the album was a social exercise marked by entries filled up by different hands. An article titled ‘The Lady’s Album’, published in *La Belle Assemblée* in 1825, criticized its structure as a ‘micro-chaos’, an incongruous

²¹ Cynthia Lawford, ‘Turbans, Tea and Talk of Books: The Literary Parties of Elizabeth Spence and Elizabeth Benger’, *CW³: Corvey Women Writers on the Web*, para. 4 <<https://researchprofiles.herts.ac.uk/en/publications/turbans-tea-and-talk-of-books-the-literary-parties-of-elizabeth-s>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

²² *Ibid.*, para. 9.

²³ Katherine D. Harris, *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual, 1823–1835* (Ohio University Press, 2015), p. 105.

²⁴ For L. E. L’s poems appearing in Jerdan’s *Literary Gazette* before being copied in Anna Birkbeck album, see [Isobel Armstrong’s article](#) in this issue of 19.

²⁵ Corin Throsby, ‘Byron, Commonplacing and Early Fan Culture’, in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750–1850*, ed. by Tom Mole (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 227–44 (pp. 229–31).

²⁶ Samantha Matthews, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture: Poetry, Manuscript, Print, 1780–1850* (Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 2.

juxtaposition of ‘an epigram on Rousseau in bad French, a recipe for Circassian wash of roses in bad English, [...] and directions for making a lady’s shoes with cork and packthread’ composed in close proximity to one another.²⁷ Matthews points out that the album’s ‘*controlled circulation* within the owner’s social circle’ safeguarded its contributors from full exposure, while supporting their sense of belonging to a select group.²⁸

The first poem entered in Anna Birkbeck’s album intends to set the tone for the album as a model of polite femininity, describing the ‘virgin Page’ of the book waiting for a ‘pencil trace’.²⁹ The contributor plays with the fact that the etymology of the word album leads us back to *albus*, meaning white or a blank slate, typically synonymous with purity and virginity.³⁰ Authored anonymously by the gentleman geologist Gideon Mantell, whom the Birkbecks visited in Lewes in September 1825,³¹ this entry sets the feminine parameters for the ‘blank book’ to be filled ‘through a series of transactions with contributors, which embodied (and paralleled) the accumulation of friends, culture, and memories by the female album keeper.’³² As Patrizia Di Bello states, ‘women’s consumption of culture collapsed into the commodification of themselves as culture, to be exhibited in domestic spaces, used to entertain guests.’³³ *La Belle Assemblée* captures the lady’s album’s different, but equally important, contemporary associations in the year Anna Birkbeck started her own. In contrast to the polite associations set up in Mantell’s poem, *La Belle Assemblée* insists that a lady’s album is ‘neither a *white day*, nor a *white garment*, nor a *white stone*; it is too coquettish and variable to have much to do with *white faith*’.³⁴ The more promiscuous implications of the Romantic album gleaned from this article capture associations more explicitly articulated in a range of contemporary terms with distinctive connotations: for example, the ‘Lady’s Pocket-book’ — an earlier eighteenth-century term that is still alive when Charles Lamb used it in the late 1820s — had ‘deliberately pejorative’ connotations evocative of the female sex organ.³⁵

²⁷ ‘The Lady’s Album’, *La Belle Assemblée*, September 1825, pp. 106–07 (p. 106).

²⁸ Matthews, pp. 2, 8, emphases added.

²⁹ MW, ‘Lines written under a Print, for the Frontispiece of An album intended to designate the Sister Arts’, in *The Album of Anna Birkbeck*, p. 1.

³⁰ See the entry ‘album’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d., <<https://www.oed.com>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

³¹ Mantell’s authorship of this poem was identified by Birkbeck alumna Wendy Jones. For the visit of the Birkbecks to Mantell in Lewes in September 1825, see Thomas Kelly, *George Birkbeck: Pioneer of Adult Education* (Liverpool University Press, 1957), p. 187. On Mantell’s contributions, see [David McAllister’s article](#) in this issue of 19.

³² Matthews, p. 5.

³³ Patrizia Di Bello, ‘Mrs Birkbeck’s Album: The Hand-Written and the Printed in Early Nineteenth-Century Feminine Culture’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 1 (2005), pp. 22–23, doi:[10.16995/ntn.435](https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.435).

³⁴ ‘The Lady’s Album’, p. 106.

³⁵ Charles Lamb to Bernard Barton, 23 August 1827, cited in Matthews, p. 169; Peter Fryer, *Mrs Grundy: Studies in English Prudery* (Dobson Books, 1963), p. 51.

Anxiety around the gender dynamics of a feminized salon and album culture that threatened the male-dominated public sphere can be detected in Canto IV of Byron's *Don Juan* (1822): 'That taste is gone, that fame is but a lottery, | Drawn by the blue-coat misses of a coterie.'³⁶ Byron's discontent is directed at the bluestocking circle, a prominent group of 'innovative literary hostesses whose salons allowed women to flourish and be brilliant in every sense of the word'.³⁷ In Byron's comment the bluestocking association identifies 'women writers and intellectuals in general, irrespective of whether they had participated in one of the early salons'.³⁸ By the 1820s, 'bluestocking' was a term still 'greeted with suspicion and disgust by many men', often directed at the female readers and writers.³⁹

Women's mental cultivation raised concerns about virtue and the corrupting effects of contemplation. Conduct books saw in novels 'at once the *offspring* and the *food* of idleness'.⁴⁰ It was perhaps Lamb's own intellectualism, growing celebrity, or interest in novels, which encouraged Henry Luttrell (1768–1851) to write in her own album from 1810, 'An idle woman is the Devil's play-fellow.'⁴¹ Luttrell, a well-known social wit, may well have been jesting with the equally witty Lamb in adapting the original proverb 'an idle man is the Devil's play-fellow'.⁴² However, his evocation of Christian doctrine, an area about which he apparently felt strongly, echoes the religious doctrine

³⁶ Lord Byron: *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Clarendon Press, 1980–93), V: *Don Juan* (1986), p. 238 (IV. 109. 871–72), cited in Lindsey Eckert, *The Limits of Familiarity: Authorship and Romantic Readers* (Rutgers University Press, 2022), p. 19.

³⁷ Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings* (Yale University Press, 2008), p. 16. For further information on the bluestocking circle, see Moyra Haslett, 'Becoming Bluestockings: Contextualising Hannah More's "The Bas Bleu"', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33.1 (2010), pp. 89–114, doi:10.1111/j.1754-0208.2009.00256.x; and contemporary writer Hannah More's sparkling poem 'The Bas Bleu' (Bluestocking), in *Florio: A Tale, for Fine Gentlemen and Fine Ladies: and, The Bas Bleu; or, Conversation: Two Poems* (Cadell, 1786).

³⁸ Eger and Peltz, p. 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴⁰ Jane West, *Letters to a Young Lady, in which the Duties and Character of Women Are Considered*, 3 vols (Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806), II, p. 453, emphasis in original.

⁴¹ Lady Caroline Lamb's Album, 1810, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (NLS), John Murray Archive, 1810, MS. 43365, p. 5. Instances of Lamb's interest in reading and novels can be seen in her personal letters, such as, for instance, her letter to Lady Bessborough, where she comments, 'I have also read the Modern Philosophers [novel by Elizabeth Hamilton, 1800] which in spite [sic] of a little vulgarity & too much sameness, I like extremely' (24 April 1808); and to Lady Holland in which she discusses her feelings over the death of Clarissa, the eponymous character of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748), (18 October 1810). Both letters published in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*.

⁴² Use of this proverb can be seen in the popular pamphlet written by George Dyer, *A Dissertation on the Theory and Practice of Benevolence* (printed for Kearsley, 1795). Thomas Seccombe and K. D. Reynolds note Luttrell's 'great reputation as a wit', in 'Luttrell [formerly King], Henry (1768–1851), wit and poet', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, entry dated 2004, rev. 2014), doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-17222.

which influenced thought regarding idleness of both women and the upper classes.⁴³ Monika Fludernik comments that ‘early modern (Puritan) notions about the sinfulness of idleness and the necessity of constant labour’ remained prominent in the early eighteenth century, with such discourses frequently inflecting their ‘criticism of the laxity of current mores with class-related prejudices and preconceptions which indicated that leisure was perceived to be a privilege of the higher classes’.⁴⁴ Although an illegitimate son of the 2nd Earl of Carhampton and ‘always financially insecure’, Luttrell held a secure place in fashionable aristocratic circles which may have taken exception to the implication of their idleness generally.⁴⁵ Therefore — jest or not — the emphasis of his comment rests on Lamb’s gender. This gendered amendment significantly changes the meaning of ‘Devil’s playfellow’ from the more generalized implication of ‘man[kind]’s’ immorality and corruption to the Devil’s implied sexual relationship with a woman, and in particular, Lamb.⁴⁶ The basis of his sentiment is echoed in conduct books for women in the period, which emphasized the importance of dedicating time to domestic duties, personal improvement, and devotion, and of the dangers of vice and idleness.⁴⁷ As Sarah Jordan notes, with the exception of novels, activities which were seen as engendering vice and idleness typically included ‘an element of [public] self-display’ (p. 116). A letter by Charlotte Lennox in the *Lady’s Museum* condemns the business of the ‘gay part of my own sex so improperly called fine ladies’ which is ‘to dress, to play at cards, to simper in the drawing-room, to languish at an opera, and coquet at a play’.⁴⁸ As with Luttrell’s comment, the condemnation of such behaviour reveals that concern about female idleness and dissipation is associated with anxiety about the position of women in public life. This tension between the female domestic and private sphere and the typically masculine public arena can be seen in the dynamics of album keeping and salon culture.

As expressions of feminine spheres of influence, salons and album keeping document a social world that negotiates the boundaries of femininity.⁴⁹ Amanda Vickery, citing C.

⁴³ According to diarist Charles Greville, Luttrell was ‘a philosopher in all things, but especially in religion’. *The Greville Memoirs, 1814–1860*, ed. by Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, 8 vols (Macmillan, 1938), II, pp. 425–26.

⁴⁴ Monika Fludernik, ‘Spectators, Ramblers and Idlers: The Conflicted Nature of Indolence and the 18th-Century Tradition of Idling’, *Anglistik*, 28.1 (2017), pp. 133–54 (p. 133) <<https://angl.winter-verlag.de/article/ANGL/2017/1/10>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

⁴⁵ Seccombe and Reynolds.

⁴⁶ See the entry ‘playfellow’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d., <<https://www.oed.com>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

⁴⁷ Sarah Jordan, ‘Idleness, Class and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century’, in *Idleness, Indolence and Leisure in English Literature*, ed. by Monika Fludernik and Miriam Nandi (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 107–28 (pp. 114–15), doi:10.1057/9781137404008_6.

⁴⁸ Cited in Jordan, p. 116.

⁴⁹ Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), pp. 383–414, doi:10.1017/S0018246X9300001X.

Dallett Hemphill, describes the intermediate space between the private and the public as ‘the social sphere’, which she notes as ‘an important arena for intermingling between the sexes’ that was ‘in some ways a female sphere, but it was neither private nor domestic’.⁵⁰ Just as the salon provided a feminized environment for this ‘intermingling between the sexes’, so a woman’s album captured a physical manifestation of such exchanges, which could often take the form of the romantic or sentimental poem exchanged between lovers or close friends. In representing an intermediate social sphere, the album prompted speculation as to whether the sentiment might be genuine or merely performative.

The opening line of Spence’s contribution to Anna Birkbeck’s album raises the expectation for a romantic encomium from a male poet on a female subject. This expectation is encouraged by Spence’s invocation of the classical trope of woman as flower; a trope more commonly used by men on the female subject. However, the romantic expectation is overturned by the following line which indicates that this flower is ‘Blighted’. The word *blight* literally refers to ‘any baleful influence of atmospheric or invisible origin, that suddenly blasts, nips, or destroys plants, affects them with disease, arrests their growth, or prevents their blossom’; however, the word can also be used figuratively to stress a ‘malignant influence’ that causes the destruction of beauty and innocence.⁵¹ Additionally, Spence’s line — ‘Blighted in an evil hour’ — is a direct reference to the temptation of Eve in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.⁵² This allusion to the fall of Eve and the image of the ‘blighted’ flower is sexually suggestive. Byron’s anti-hero and libertine image was often linked to ‘Milton’s heroic republican conception of Satan’; Lamb’s sexual fall and rise in notoriety are associated with Byronic celebrity ‘as the initiating allegory of scandalous self-reflexive celebrity’ that linked notoriety with glamour.⁵³ Spence appears to reference Lamb’s well-publicized sexual promiscuity — namely her extramarital affair with Byron — and Lamb’s resulting social death. This apparent allusion of Spence’s is consolidated by the Byronism in Spence’s poem.

The term *Byronism* indicates a variety of Byron-inspired phenomena: namely, a certain ‘lifestyle’, the Byronic hero, and the ‘developments that allowed Byron to become a celebrity in Britain’.⁵⁴ However, in this case Byronism refers to specific literary

⁵⁰ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (Yale University Press, 1998), p. 196.

⁵¹ See the entry ‘blight’ in *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d., <<https://www.oed.com>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

⁵² ‘Eve, in evil hour didst thou’, in John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Douglas Bush (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 395 (IX. 1067).

⁵³ Libertinism itself — ‘a political and philosophical ethos that had long promoted free-thinking and experimentation in fields as diverse as science, religion, politics, and sexuality’ — was also linked with Satanism. See Tuite, *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity*, pp. xx–xxii; and Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 78.

⁵⁴ Ana-Karina Schneider, ‘Byronism’, *Literary Encyclopedia, Volume 1.1.1.06: English Writing and Culture of the Romantic Period, 1789–1837*, ed. by Daniel Cook, Daniel Robinson and Emily Rohrbach (Literary Dictionary Company, 2008).

themes or technical devices that Byron famously used; as Andrew Elfenbein states, ‘writers have used “Byronism” to refer to a set of traits supposedly characterizing Byron’s texts’ (p. 9). Spence emulates Byron’s well-known ‘promiscuous use of dashes’ in her poem on Lamb.⁵⁵ Jane Stabler identifies Byron’s extensive use of the dash as both unprecedented and controversial.⁵⁶ The appearance of many dashes on a page, or in one poem, can give a ‘hyperventilated appearance’, as dashes can often signify pauses or an intake of breath; Spence’s poem certainly has this effect with her use of seven dashes peppered in a short 22-line poem.⁵⁷ Additionally, the two-em or double-em dash, whether it is expressed as two dashes (— —) or an extra-long dash (— — —), can be used to signify ‘that a speaker *nearly* said something, but was then stopped or thought better of it’, otherwise known as a case of ‘*aposiopesis* — the mark of knowing self-censorship’. It is intriguing that Spence’s single use of the double-em dash is in the line: ‘Secret adulation — — left to weep’; the reader can easily determine that Spence almost stated, ‘Secret adulation [of Byron], left to weep’, but censored herself with the telling use of a double-em dash. As well as a telltale sign of self-censorship, the ‘ambivalence’ of the double-em successfully solves the puzzle of the missing word (or name).⁵⁸ The ‘Byronisms’ in the poem enhance the reader’s suspicion that Spence’s dedication to Lamb was self-serving; remarking on the capitalist celebrity culture Byron helped inspire, Elfenbein noted that, particularly to the middle (and aspiring) classes, ‘having an opinion about Byron [or celebrity culture] marked one as belonging to the privileged social group’ (p. 50). Therefore, Spence’s poem alerted readers to the fact that she was in-the-know. The use of dashes and their *aposiopesis* invited biographical allusions and contributed to an ambiguous reading of Spence’s poem.

Spence’s use of dashes are not the only Byronisms in her poem; the influence of Byron’s *The Bride of Abydos* (1813) is significant too. A tale of love and loss, Byron’s poem charts the love between the Pascha’s daughter, Zuleika, and his supposed son, Selim, and their tragic deaths. At the beginning of his poem, Byron describes Zuleika as ‘Fair — as the first that fell of womankind — | When on that dread yet lovely serpent

⁵⁵ Jane Stabler, ‘The Dashes in Manfred’, *Romantic Circles Praxis*, June 2019, para. 3 <<https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/manfred/praxis.2019.manfred.stabler.html>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

⁵⁶ Stabler explains that although dashes were frequently used by Percy Bysshe Shelley and Jane Austen (it is interesting to note that one of Byron’s editors, William Gifford, also edited Austen’s works), ‘Byron’s editors seem to have allowed a higher proportion of his manuscript dashes to appear in printed form.’ Stabler notes that Gifford had a ‘significant role’ in the production of Byron’s poems, and although he mostly reduced the number of dashes, there were instances where he added long dashes. See Stabler, paras 4, 9, 11, 13, 23.

⁵⁷ Stabler notes that reviewers often complained about Byron’s overuse of dashes in his poetry. However, as well as an example of Byronism, Spence’s use could also be seen as replicating Lamb’s own excessive use of the dash, particularly found in her letters. However, Lamb’s own use was potentially her own emulation of Byron (paras 4, 7).

⁵⁸ Stabler, para. 9.

smiling', invoking the temptation of Eve and her subsequent fall.⁵⁹ As discussed above, Spence invokes a similar image with her allusion to Eve in *Paradise Lost* by her use of 'evil hour'. Spence's use of this reference and its early position in her poem hint at the association between Lamb and the figure of Zuleika. This is strengthened by Spence's imitation of Byron's encomium of Zuleika's beauty which he introduces with, 'Who hath not proved — how feebly words essay | To fix one spark of Beauty's heavenly ray?' (I. 170–71). Correspondingly, Spence echoes not only Byron's form (rhyming couplets and use of dashes), but even his phrasing: 'Who has not heard — who has not seen, | Thy sparkling wit — thy graceful mien'. However, whereas Byron focuses on the physical beauty of Zuleika, Spence introduces Lamb's intellect. This difference in emphasis is substantiated by Spence's repurposing of Byron's lexis. Zuleika's 'graceful arms in meekness bending' (I. 182), are shifted from a merely physical and feminized meekness to a broader depiction of appearance and character of Lamb's 'graceful mien'. The implication of Lamb's mental superiority is clarified by the following line: 'What true nobility of mind'. Equally, Spence's praise of Lamb is altered from Byron's romantic and physical image of Zuleika embracing Selim, 'At one kind word those arms extending | To clasp the neck of him who blest' (I. 184–85), to, once again, a more nuanced depiction of Lamb, her kindness weighted towards mental character rather than physicality: 'Ever courteous, ever kind'. Spence's allusion to Byron can be seen as admiration for his work, however she repurposes his poetry to form a more nuanced picture of Lamb, and significantly emphasizes the superiority of mental ability to merely physical beauty.

Spence's use of the imagery of 'a fragile flower, | Blighted in an evil hour' recalls the use of various flower tropes in both Lamb's and Byron's works. In his translation of the Spanish and Arabic poem, 'A Very Mournful Ballad' (1818), Byron invokes the popular woman-as-flower trope. In this ballad an 'aged Moor' Alfaqui exclaims his loss: "I lost a damsel in that hour, | Of all the land the loveliest flower".⁶⁰ This 'hour' is in reference to the slaughter of the Abencerrage earlier in the ballad, with 'old Alfaqui' condemning the 'Moorish King' for his murderous actions: "By thee were slain, in evil hour, | The Abencerrage, Granada's flower" (ll. 46–47). Spence's 'evil hour' recalls Byron's own use, likening Lamb's social fall to a form of death. Furthermore, Spence's utilization of a trope known to be used by Byron in turn implies the source of this fall: Byron himself.

⁵⁹ Lord Byron, *The Bride of Abydos: A Turkish Tale* (Murray, 1813); see also, *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by McGann, III (1981), pp. 107–47 (l. 158–59). Subsequent references to this edition are given in parentheses in the main text.

⁶⁰ Lord George Gordon Byron, 'A Very Mournful Ballad', in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Canto IV* (Murray, 1818), pp. 241–55 (p. 253); see also, *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by McGann, IV (1986), pp. 103–08, ll. 96–97.

In this scenario, Byron's behaviour towards Lamb is likened to the Moorish King and his unjust actions in destroying 'Granada's flower'.

Byron's use of the end rhyme 'flower' | 'hour', can be seen in other examples of his work, such as *The Bride of Abydos*. In this poem Byron again activates the woman-as-flower trope. Throughout the poem Byron establishes a relationship between Zuleika and a rose, first mentioned by her in a desire to 'calm my brother's [Selim's] cares.' (I. 285). At the end of the poem, a rose grows on Zuleika's grave that cannot be touched yet 'storms and blight assail' (I. 627). Unlike the flower in Spence's poem, Zuleika's rose is impervious to blights, signifying her love and constancy for Selim and his for her. It is also symbolic of rebellious strength, echoing Zuleika's rebellion against her father, enduring 'Ev'n in that deadly grove. —' (II. 661), which is 'sad' and 'stamped with eternal grief' (II. 656, 658). Spence uses similar imagery in her poem, repeating the word 'sad' and conjuring up a sense of 'eternal grief' in her image of Lamb being 'Solitary — desolate — and sad'. Spence inverts the image of Zuleika's rose, however. The flower in her poem is not impervious to the blight and it is not standing in defiance of its deadly environment; instead, it appears it has been overcome by it. This may once again be a reference to Byron and his role in Lamb's social death; unlike the undying love of Zuleika and Selim which feed the rose, the loss of his affection towards Lamb has contributed to her downfall. However, once again Spence's allusion is complicated by Byron's use of the end rhyme 'flower' | 'hour'. At the end of *The Bride of Abydos*, Byron repeats the rhyme twice and both in reference to Zuleika's rose. This is first utilized to reinforce the supernatural relationship between Zuleika and the flower, and to show its strength, 'That this can be no earthly flower, | Which mocks the tempest's withering hour' (II. 674–75); and then in the penultimate couplet, to once again reinforce its resilience and constancy, 'Where first it lay — that mourning flower | Hath flourished — flourished this hour —' (II. 719–20). Although this imagery appears in contention with Spence's image of the blighted flower, it chimes with the latter half of Spence's poem (the last twelve lines). In this image Lamb is no longer the 'mourning flower', but is flourishing, with her 'sparkling wit' and the 'tenderness that sure must flow, | From hearts w[h]ere feeling ever lives'. Spence's use of the end rhyme 'flower' | 'hour' in the opening of her poem anticipates the sentiment in the latter half. This is consolidated by the influence of *The Bride of Abydos*, implying that although there has been sorrow, Lamb's death is not as final as the Abencerrage damsel; in fact, she could be flourishing.

Through her poem, a dialogic play of allusions involving Lamb's and Byron's writing is revealed. The image of the 'blighted flower' is found in Lamb's 1812 album: 'Loves cherish'd gift the rose he gave is faded — | Loves blighted flower can never

bloom again'.⁶¹ The phrase and sentiment is echoed in another poem, potentially from the same year, 'Oh Sing Again!', from a gift book. In this poem Lamb writes,

The slightest note can draw from memory's store
 Of Hope the cherish'd, but the blighted flower,
 Of Time, the gilded — but neglected hour,
 And scenes of bliss, that must return no more.⁶²

The first ten lines of Spence's poem echo these two poems in sentiment, focusing on feelings of loss, hope, and time, as well as using the image of the 'blighted flower' and the 'flower' | 'hour' end rhyme. There is uncertainty around the composition date of 'Oh Sing Again!', but Lamb's poem in her 1812 album positions it as predating the publication of either of Byron's works discussed above. It is hard to know what works may have been shared between Byron and Lamb, and even harder to know whether Spence ever had access to Lamb's album or the gift book from where 'Oh Sing Again!' originates. Yet it is possible that Spence's use of this imagery in her poem dedicated to Lamb could be seen as an homage, with the first ten lines recalling poems such as these, and the final twelve lines expounding on Spence's elevated opinion of Lamb. This would explain the uneven tone of Spence's poem, but as it is impossible to know whether Spence ever saw Lamb's poems, this uncertainty encourages an ambiguous reading of Spence's poem.

Spence's ambivalence towards Lamb is reflected in the uneven tone and structure of the poem. What appears to be conventional thematic use of sentimental tropes popular in album literature is undercut after line 3 by the rhyming couplets, which with the iambic tetrameter stressing the end rhyme ('glad' | 'sad'; 'a lot' | 'forgot'), come across as sharp, snappy, and spiteful. This tension between sentiment and meaning is seemingly resolved in the tribute of the last twelve lines, which encourage the reader to review their perception of the first half of the poem and read it sympathetically. The lines 'Alas! How singular a lot, | To be remembered — yet forgot' act as a resolve, combining the disparate temporal strands of the 'remembered' past and Lamb's present 'forgot[ten]' position; a position which is the main theme of the first ten lines. Subsequently, any following lines would sit uncomfortably, but this is exacerbated by the rhythmically disruptive trochaic 'Who', and then consolidated by the distinct shift in sentiment and tone. The poem's final twelve lines therefore come across as an

⁶¹ Lady Caroline Lamb's Album, 1812, NLS, John Murray Archive, 1812, MS. 43366, p. 42.

⁶² Entered in a gift book, now in the Hertfordshire Archives, transcribed in *The Works of Lady Caroline Lamb*, ed. by Leigh Wetherall Dickson and Paul Douglass Jr, 3 vols (Pickering & Chatto, 2009), II, p. 117.

afterthought, tacked on to encourage a more sympathetic interpretation of the first ten lines, which would reflect not only badly on Lamb, but also on Spence. This semi-public display of spiteful, even gleeful, dislike would disturb the ideal of the polite feminine album-keeping realm. Nevertheless, if Spence's intention was to be hateful towards Lamb, and to gossip about her, with the amendment/addition of the final twelve lines, Spence is able to voice her less publicly acceptable sentiments without jeopardizing her social position.

Spence's poem registers the ambivalent class dynamic at the heart of Lamb's appearances at her salons in presenting Lamb 'no more condescending'. The word 'condescending' recalls a statement Spence once made about Lamb, stating that when attending Spence's middle-class salons, Lamb 'condescends to honour it with her presence'.⁶³ The implication here is that Spence believes that Lamb thinks her (as an upper-class celebrity) attendance at Spence's salons is an act of charity, and that she is above such middle-class events. However, Lady Rosina Lytton remembered that '[Spence] never harpooned any one for her parties without the peroration "if they would condescend to honour her humble abode"'.⁶⁴ Thus Spence's line about Lamb condescending to her salons was perhaps not intended as a scrutinization of Lamb specifically. In other words, this line may reveal more about Spence's social anxiety and fears of inadequacy rather than any malicious feelings towards Lamb. Furthermore, one could argue that Spence does not refer to Lamb at all when she spitefully penned: 'Once in summer seen expending, | Now, ah! now, no more condescending'. Spence could be referring to Byron here: his love-bombing of Lamb during the start of their relationship ('Once in summer' [of 1812, Byron] was 'seen expending' [his love to Lamb]) and then his sudden abandonment of her (his 'no more condescending' to her) leading to her fall. This reading becomes particularly convincing if we were to read it alongside an illuminating letter Lamb sent Byron at the start of their affair in March 1812.⁶⁵ In the letter Lamb refers to herself as a sunflower (again an example of Lamb/Byron using the woman-as-flower trope) and to Byron as the 'Sun that for one moment *condescended* to shine upon it [Lamb]'.⁶⁶ The sun/Byron obviously eventually stopped 'condescending' and giving the flower/Lamb attention; Spence could be portraying this end of Byron's love in her line 'no more condescending'. This echo is intriguing; however, it is a giant leap to assume that Spence may have seen or heard of this private and revealing letter

⁶³ Louisa Devey, *Life of Rosina, Lady Lytton* (Swan Sonnenschien, Lowrey, 1887), p. 44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶⁵ Lamb to Byron, 27 March 1812, transcription of letter in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, pp. 78–80.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80, emphasis added.

(that has an especially interesting place as a model of celebrity worship as religious).⁶⁷ Nevertheless, even without the letter, one could argue that Spence is referring to Byron's behaviour to Lamb in these two lines in her poem (ll. 3–4); therefore, the sarcastic and unpleasant description may not be evidence of Spence's dislike of Lamb, but instead her dislike of Byron.

Spence's difficulty in composing in a style which favoured the male poet contributes to the uncertainty in interpreting her poem. The first line evokes the familiar heteronormative trajectory of the flower trope activated by Lamb and Byron, but re-genders it within an exchange between women, shifting from the apparent romantic sentimentality in the first line to the transitory nature of youth, grief, and loss in the final twelve. The uneven tone, deliberate rhyming couplets, and poetical shortcomings indicate Spence's difficulty in taking up a romantically sentimental poem associated with male composition, which made sentimental album verse significantly more difficult for women writers and perpetuated the 'overriding tendency [...] to construct album-keeping as a female practice, and album verse-writing as male'.⁶⁸ This notion of female dependency on men and unbridled desire for their contributions led to the stereotype of the 'young woman album-keeper [...] as an imperious harridan demanding contributions from a cowering yet resentful man'.⁶⁹ Such explicit demands pushed the boundaries of accepted feminine behaviour and led to concerns about female propriety.

⁶⁷ As noted, Byron and Lamb's play with the 'woman as flower' trope and the allusion to the fall of Milton's Eve extends into this private letter. In the letter to Byron (transcribed with Lamb's own spelling mistakes) that Lamb wrote early on in their affair, Lamb predicts her eventual fall and heartbreak. Lamb speaks of a 'Rose' given to her by Byron that sadly 'died in despite of every effort made to save it; probably from regret at its *fallen* Fortunes.' Lamb continues to speak on the echo between the fallen flower/Eve and a woman's broken heart: 'Hume at least, who is no great believer in most things, says that many more die of broken hearts than it is supposed.' The 'Rose', however, she declares, is not the flower Lamb wishes to emulate. Lamb states that she has sent for the 'Flower she wishes most of all others to resemble' to be dispatched to the 'Cabinet maker' who will flatten and preserve this flower for Byron. If the flower represents Lamb, with this gift, she offers herself to Byron entirely, sacrificing/flattening herself to become a perfect image for him to consume. The flower Lamb chooses is a sunflower. Like her, Lamb notes, the sunflower has been 'punished for its temerity', but according to Lamb – in an allusion that casts Byron as the godly sun – the sunflower is the finest due to it 'having once beheld in its full lustre the bright & unclouded Sun that for one moment *condescended* to shine upon it'. To Lamb, this 'worship & Admiration' speaks to the sunflowers/devoted woman's worth. Lamb casts herself as a pious disciple to the Byronic religion and the god Byron. The flower/Lamb is 'envied' most as it was 'permitted to gaze though at the humblest distance, on him who is superior to every other'. The idolatry of Byron uncovered in Lamb's letter evokes the often religious aspect to celebrity and fandom culture. As Tuite explains, in a society that is increasingly secularized, 'As the gods fall, the celebrity rises'; and 'Byron – as work, life, and reception – is the initiating figure, allegory, and apocalyptic event of celebrity as secular divinity'. See Lamb to Byron, 27 March 1812, transcription of letter in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, pp. 78–80, emphases added; and Tuite, p. 1. For further reading on celebrity culture's link to religion, see Rojek, pp. 51–100; and Duffett, pp. 141–53.

⁶⁸ Matthews, p. 131.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Women's demand for male contributors to their albums was often seen as overly *familiar*. Lindsey Eckert, in her study on the limits of familiarity, adopts an insightful definition of the word by George Crabb, who interprets *familiarity* as the interpersonal closeness 'produced by daily intercourse, which wears off all constraint, and banishes all [social] ceremony'. Paradoxically, while familiarity could be portrayed as a 'social virtue', 'indiscriminate' or *overfamiliarity* could be seen as 'dangerous', 'uncouth', 'boring', 'vulgar', and 'immoral'.⁷⁰ The term is further complicated by its associations with sexual intimacy. Consequently, album demands were often thought to be promiscuous. Women album keepers, in other words, were not only asking for men to enter their album, but also figuratively to 'enter' them. After all, the album was often perceived as an 'extension' of or 'substitute' for its female owner.⁷¹ A woman's album might be laid out on the table at salons, pages splayed, ready to receive a man's pen(is). The album's potential for libertinism comes across in 'The Duchess's Album', a newspaper poem published in the sensationalist and Tory paper *The Age*. The poem unveils aristocratic profligacy in referring to the album contributions as ejaculatory, like the 'stock of a true gent'.⁷² Women's requests for men to enter their space(s) unsettled men if they were ill prepared. Arguably, male performance anxiety contributed to the violent *albophobia* of the Romantic age.⁷³ Commentary about album culture — like many other feminine arts — is rife with examples of men feeling belittled by their inability to dominate the form. This led many men to divert attention from their mediocre performance by insulting the art form itself — much like they tended to do with popular novels (where the abundance of women readers gave women the commercial power to make a novel successful). Lamb presented a double threat given her power to make inadequate male writers squirm with her appeals for contributions and her status as a successful writer herself who often outwitted her contemporaries at parties and salons.⁷⁴ Take, for instance, Lamb's impromptu description of Byron as 'mad — bad — and dangerous to know', a phrase that is still reiterated today.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Eckert, p. 2.

⁷¹ Matthews, p. 16.

⁷² 'The Duchess's Album', *Age*, 29 November 1829, p. 381. A footnote identifies the 'true Gent' as Lord Erskine.

⁷³ Matthews adopted the term *albophobia* from the poet Robert Southey (1774–1843). Southey used the term in an 1826 letter to describe the hostility he felt towards those who demanded he write poems in their albums. As Matthews states, 'the specific word "album" became ideologically freighted in Romantic narratives about diminishing creative energies and cultural feminization' (p. 18).

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Lady Caroline Lamb* (Cardinal, 1974), pp. 19–20.

⁷⁵ Lamb is said to have written the line in her journal after her first meeting with Byron. Sadly, this journal entry is lost, so we must rely on Lady Sydney Morgan, *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, 2 vols (Allen, 1862), II, p. 200.

However, instead of accepting Lamb's intellect, attention was diverted to accusing her of overfamiliarity, much like how instead of acknowledging the commercial success of album culture, female album keepers were labelled overfamiliar.

Lamb's overfamiliarity and resulting fall are clearly traced in Spence's poem: once 'lovely as a fragile flower', but 'Now, ah! now, no more condescending'. If we interpret lines 3–4 as describing Lamb rather than Byron, Spence's line 'once in summer seen *expending*' suggests a range of meanings, including 'to pay away, lay out, spend (money [...] blood, care, labour time)' and 'to use up (material or force)'.⁷⁶ Therefore, Spence's line refers to Lamb's *excess*, which could be taken as a derogatory comment on her upper-class lifestyle (overspending/expending). If we follow this reading, the line echoes the theme of disillusionment and bitterness towards the upper class often found in Byron's own poetry.⁷⁷ However, the word *expending* also has sexual undertones, as it evokes a common sexist phrase, describing a woman as 'used up' or 'spent'. According to contemporaries, Lamb was known to be overfamiliar in the sexual sense. This opinion stemmed from her well-reported extramarital affairs; however, the accusation of overfamiliarity (or over-'expending' as Spence states) was also due to her outspokenness. Although Lamb frequently regretted her verbal and written ejaculations, her suffocation by the expectation of limited familiarity is evident. Frustrated, Lamb decried these expectations, once begging Lady Melbourne (Lamb's mother-in-law) not to 'tax' her for 'too much openness', insisting 'that which is not spoken is more to be dreaded than that which is seen'.⁷⁸ Attempts to suppress Lamb's overfamiliarity involved brutal shaming in the gossip columns, friends and acquaintances snubbing her, threats of a legal separation from her husband William Lamb, his family's attempts to get her institutionalized, and arguably Spence's chastising line in her poem.⁷⁹

Lamb's troublesome extramarital affair with Byron in 1812 is captured in her semi-autobiographical Gothic novel *Glenarvon* (1816), which some called a kiss-and-tell novel

⁷⁶ See the entry 'expending' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d., <<https://www.oed.com>> [accessed 3 September 2024].

⁷⁷ Complaints of excess appear often in Byron's poetry and is a Byronism that could well have inspired Spence's poem. Specifically, Spence's 'expending' line recalls a similar one found in Byron's mournful poem 'To a Youthful Friend'. In this, Byron grieves an old friend he has lost to corruption and overconsumption: 'There dost thou glide from fair to fair, | Still simpering on with eager haste, | As flies along the gay parterre, | That taint the flowers they scarcely taste.' The vision of a friend flitting around causing destruction (either to themselves, like Lamb as the 'fragile flower') or causing harm to others (Byron's friend as a fly that 'taint[s]' flowers it 'scarcely taste[s]') is shared by both Spence's poem on Lamb and Byron's poem on his friend. See *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by McGann, I (1980), pp. 218–21 (p. 221, ll. 61–64).

⁷⁸ Lady Caroline Lamb to Lady Melbourne, 15 October 1812, transcription of letter in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, p. 89.

⁷⁹ Malcolm Paul Douglass, 'Lady Caroline Lamb', *The Literary Encyclopedia*, Volume 1.2.1.06: *English Writing and Culture of the Romantic Period, 1789–1837*, ed. by Cook, Robinson, and Rohrbach, para. 6.

but Byron ‘crudely’ called a ‘— and publish’ (the dash standing for an expletive).⁸⁰ The book was published just weeks after Byron had fled from England due to the spreading rumours of his sexual liaisons with men, as well as reports of an incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta Maria Leigh (née Byron). Therefore, *Glenarvon* managed to ‘blacken’ Byron’s ‘already-sullied name’.⁸¹ The book helped immortalize Byron as the Gothic villain Glenarvon, and in turn aimed to portray Lamb as an innocent victim through the protagonist Calantha (although Lamb was instead read as vindictive, corruptive, and hysterical by the press and high society).⁸² By the time of *Glenarvon*’s publication, Byron was already an ‘unprecedented cultural phenomenon’ in the popular press, a Gothic and tortured character associated with the heroes of his own poetry. At a time when there was no book-length biographical material to feed such a curiosity about Byron’s life, readers interpreted *Glenarvon* as a theatricalized but semi-reliable first biography.⁸³ Its success also rested on its scathing depictions of other upper-class society celebrities.⁸⁴ Although the book assisted in tarnishing Byron’s reputation, it primarily damaged Lamb’s. It fed ‘a Peeping Tom public hungry for sordid biographical details’, which rewarded authors with accusations of exhibitionism.⁸⁵ As Tuite explains, although the Byron–Lamb affair had caused some controversy before the publication of *Glenarvon*, the publication of the book was her greatest sin:

⁸⁰ Both Douglass and Tuite determine that the long dash stands for ‘fuck’; therefore, Byron calls *Glenarvon* a ‘fuck and publish’ novel. See original source: Lord Byron to John Murray, 1816, transcription of letter found in *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols (Murray, 1973–82), V: ‘*So Late into the Night*’, 1816–1817 (1976), p. 85. See also, Douglass’s and Tuite’s commentary: Malcolm Paul Douglass, ‘Caroline Lamb, *Glenarvon*’, *The Literary Encyclopedia*, Volume 1.2.1.06, ed. by Cook, Robinson, and Rohrback, para. 1; and Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 74.

⁸¹ John Clubbe, ‘*Glenarvon* Revised — and Revisited’, *Wordsworth Circle*, 10.2 (1979), pp. 205–17 (p. 206), doi:[10.1086/TWC24040915](https://doi.org/10.1086/TWC24040915).

⁸² An example of contemporary commentary on Lamb’s vindictiveness is found in the *Theatrical Inquisitor*: ‘In her attempt to astonish, the authoress frequently becomes turgid and incomprehensible; and her delineations of certain individuals in exalted life, are more remarkable for their malignity than their correctness.’ See ‘*Glenarvon*’, *Theatrical Inquisitor*, and *Monthly Mirror*, August 1816, pp. 122–25 (p. 123). It goes on: ‘The picture of fashionable manners, abounds in traits of immorality and folly, degrading to human nature, and to the female who thus unconsciously describes them.’ On reading *Glenarvon*, ‘the gratification of irregular passion [...] will inevitably corrupt the young and the virtuous, who have the misfortune to peruse them’ (pp. 124, 125). The *British Lady’s Magazine* referred to *Glenarvon* as a ‘raving absurdity’. See ‘*Glenarvon*’, *British Lady’s Magazine*, and *Monthly Miscellany*, August 1816, pp. 101–03 (p. 103). Douglass notes in his edited collection of Lady Caroline Lamb’s letters that ‘Lady Caroline seem[ed] to have been unprepared for the beating she was about to take, and that she would narrowly avoid the strait-jacket and incarceration’ (*The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, p. 149).

⁸³ For instance, Goethe read *Glenarvon* in the hope that it would provide trustworthy biographical details about Lord Byron (Clubbe, p. 208). As Clubbe states, ‘Such notoriety assured the success of the book; talk about it spread like wild-fire. By June 22, the public had called for a second edition. A third appeared within the year, a fourth in 1817’ (p. 205).

⁸⁴ *Glenarvon* included a particularly unflattering depiction of Lady Holland as the ‘Princess Madagascar’.

⁸⁵ Eckert, p. 7.

Glenarvon was seen to be an attack on those networks that sustained and protected Lamb throughout the ignominy of her very public pursuit of Byron. In addition to the perceived attack, the publicity breached the unspoken social code that an extra-marital affair would be tolerated as long as it was conducted discreetly.⁸⁶

When Spence writes of the ‘evil hour’ that ‘blighted’ Lamb, her allusion to the temptation of Milton’s Eve identifies both Lamb’s sexual trespass *and* the lure of celebrity culture. Celebrities were both pushed to give out their personal details, to be consumed by the hungry public, and then slammed for providing the public with a juicy meal. Lamb captured the attraction of celebrity culture in her correspondence:

Women who shudder at the thought of vice like to venture to the edge of the precipice down which so many of their frail companions have been thrown [...] & then go home to their Lords pleased like the Pharisee of old that they are not like this sinner whom passion & feeling alone impelled reluctantly to ruin & infamy.⁸⁷

The moral inconsistencies of Romantic celebrity culture harmed women to an even greater degree. Lamb herself acknowledged that ‘these transactions [of personal details for fame and fortune] [...] raise the Man in the opinion of some but they lower the Woman to the very dust of the earth’.⁸⁸ For instance, *Glenarvon*’s male publisher, Henry Colburn, ‘a leading purveyor of fashionable fiction’, felt secure bragging that ‘his authors were famous and that the characters in their novels were real and of the nobility’. Meanwhile, his female author was treated severely for exposing the upper class: contemporary reviews ‘suggest a campaign to brand the novel as grossly indecent while also dismissing it as negligible’.⁸⁹ Furthermore, even though Lamb took the biggest hit from the publicity of their affair, Byron was the first to expose the relationship, by sharing Lamb’s letters with his ‘coterie of readers, making Lamb’s private overtures public’.⁹⁰ As Tuite illustrates, Byron used Lamb’s ‘love as a form of currency to lubricate and consolidate social bonds with the Queen Mothers’.⁹¹ However, the difference was that while Byron revealed the relationship to a ‘tightly circumscribed private circle’ to ‘consolidate his position within Whig aristocracy’, *Glenarvon* worked

⁸⁶ Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 72.

⁸⁷ Lamb to Lady Holland, 29 May 1811, transcription of letter in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth* p. 66.

⁸⁸ Lamb to Lady Holland, 4 June 1811, transcription of letter in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, p. 68.

⁸⁹ Paul Douglass, ‘Twisty Little Passages: The Several Editions of Lady Caroline Lamb’s *Glenarvon*’, *Wordsworth Circle*, 40.2–3 (2009), pp. 77–82 (p. 78), doi:[10.1086/TWC24043447](https://doi.org/10.1086/TWC24043447).

⁹⁰ Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 66.

⁹¹ The ‘Queen Mothers’ refer to Lady Melbourne (Lamb’s mother-in-law) and Lady Devonshire (Lamb’s aunt). See Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 67.

to ‘shame Byron by publicising the affair beyond his coterie circle’.⁹² Still, the fact that the publication eventually worked in Byron’s favour, while ruining Lamb’s legacy, is an indication of a frustrating double standard.⁹³ Even recent scholarship treats the autobiographical material in *Glenarvon* as pure scandal and gossip, while treating Byron’s autobiographical work as a ‘sophisticated game with his audience [...] making them guess whether this is truth or fiction’, despite its inclusion of similar material.⁹⁴ In the eyes of many, including her biographers, Lamb never truly recovered from her extramarital affair with Byron and the publication of *Glenarvon*. Lamb was shocked and horrified by the public’s reaction to the book; the reaction led her to alter much for its second edition. Clubbe was the first to notice such changes, finding that Lamb had ‘carefully revised’ the second edition ‘to eliminate passages that had hurt others or shocked public taste’.⁹⁵ These major revisions are a testament to how distressed Lamb was by the reaction to her first novel, a novel many saw as an ‘act of social suicide’ and evidence of her ‘insanity’.⁹⁶

The timing of Spence’s poem offers us vital evidence that it may have been written in defence of Lamb. Spence’s line ‘To be remembered — yet forgot’ evokes Byron’s scathing poem ‘Remember Thee’, which was posthumously published in Thomas Medwin’s *Conversations of Lord Byron* in autumn 1824, alongside Medwin’s withering details of Lamb and Byron’s illicit relationship. Byron’s poem responded to an incident that occurred soon after the couple’s separation (the incident possibly occurred in late January or February 1813). Byron had refused to see Lamb after their break-up; as a result, Lamb broke into Byron’s home and scrawled on one of his books the words

⁹² Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, pp. 66, 67, 75.

⁹³ Tuite notes: ‘As the libertine plot has different outcomes depending on the gender of the player, so too does the transition from scandalous celebrity [or notoriety] to literary posterity. Byron also experienced forms of social ruin — causing him to flee England and never return — ‘however, where the scandal of the Lamb–Byron affair translates for Byron into the symbolic capital of the posthumous reputation as a fatal [or tragic] man, Lamb’s social death has been translated into posterity as abjection’ (‘Tainted Love’, p. 82). Tuite quotes the Romantic John Mitford, who referred to the male poet’s sexual liaisons as his ‘private life’ (*Private Life of Lord Byron* (1836)); whereas, in the same book and referring to these same relationships, for Mitford, the women’s sexual partnership with Byron becomes their ‘blight’ (‘Tainted Love’, p. 81). It is interesting that Spence also uses the word ‘blight’ in her poem.

⁹⁴ Monika Coghen presents *Glenarvon* as ‘scandalous’, whereas the male Byron’s *Manfred* is clever ‘irony’. See Monika Coghen, ‘Of Byron’s Manfred, Lamb’s Glenarvon, Pantomime and the Liberation of the Byronic Hero’, *B.A.S. British and American Studies*, 11 (2005), pp. 149–59 (pp. 149, 151) <<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=172798>> [accessed 4 September 2024].

⁹⁵ Clubbe provides a detailed analysis of the major alterations. In overview, the second edition’s amendments include: making Calantha (Lamb) a pious Roman Catholic; ‘render[ing] platonic Calantha’s guilty passion for Glenarvon’ (Byron); depicting Lord Avondale (Lamb’s husband William Lamb) as more heroic and sympathetic; as well as deleting any reference to sexual intercourse between Calantha and Glenarvon (pp. 209, 211–13).

⁹⁶ Douglass, ‘Twisty Little Passages’, p. 77.

‘Remember Me!’.⁹⁷ In retaliation, Byron wrote the lines ‘Remember thee! Ay Doubt it not. | Thy husband too shall think of thee!’, referring to the trouble Lamb caused both Byron and her husband William.⁹⁸ This trouble included multiple incidents of Lamb’s stalkerish behaviour; her threats of suicide if ignored by Byron; her public burning of Byron’s effigy; and, of course, the publication of *Glenarvon*. Byron curses Lamb in the poem, wishing that ‘Remorse and shame shall cling to thee.’⁹⁹ This poem was never read by Lamb before its posthumous publication in Medwin’s *Conversations*. Lamb was mortified: in a letter to William Godwin, she described the impact of the publication of the book: ‘the part respecting me gives me much pain [...]. I have been deservedly — no doubt — deeply & painfully humiliated.’¹⁰⁰ Soon after, William Lamb filed for legal separation from his wife, and Lamb became ill and never truly recovered. Spence’s poem in Anna Birkbeck’s album responds to Lamb’s heartbreak after the recent resurrection of the drama surrounding Lamb and Byron’s affair that resurfaced as a result of Medwin’s *Conversations*. Lamb’s downfall may have been particularly painful for Spence, who had been a witness to Lamb’s most creative and productive years, with the release of *Graham Hamilton* (1822), *Ada Reis* (1823), and *Penruddock* (1823), all published around the time Lamb attended Spence’s literary salons.

Leigh Wetherall Dickson complains about the ‘lack of curiosity’ Lamb’s biographers have when it comes to the last decade of her life; ironically, her most creatively productive period. Arguably, this neglect to emphasize the creative productivity of Lamb’s latter years arises from the inclination to portray her last years as her post-*Glenarvon* social downfall. To those that align with this representation, Lamb’s attendance of middle-class salons such as Spence’s becomes evidence of her social ‘downgrading’. However, Lamb’s creative output during the period she attended these salons suggests that their positive ‘intellectual support’ replaced a ‘superficial’ upper-class circle.¹⁰¹ In *Graham Hamilton* Lamb indicates ‘preference for the middle-rank’.¹⁰² Lamb and Spence’s relationship had mutual interest at its core. Spence took advantage of the publicity that Lamb’s appearances brought to her salon. Spence’s appreciation for Lamb is indicated by her comment on Lamb’s graciousness (compared to other salon attendees who were

⁹⁷ Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, 2nd edn (Colburn, 1824), p. 329; ‘Remember Thee, Remember Thee!’, in *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by McGann, III, p. 84.

⁹⁸ Medwin, pp. 329–30.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁰⁰ Lamb to William Godwin, December 1824, transcribed in Douglass, *The Whole Disgraceful Truth*, p. 206.

¹⁰¹ Leigh Wetherall Dickson, ‘The Construction of a Reputation for Madness: The Case Study of Lady Caroline Lamb’, *Working with English*, 2 (2005–06), pp. 27–46 (p. 34) <<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documents/working-with-english/volume-2/wetherall-dickson-the-construction-of-a-reputation-for-madness-the-case-study-of-lady-caroline-lamb.pdf>> [accessed 15 September 2024].

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

ungenerous).¹⁰³ The spreading of aristocratic secrets isolated Lamb from her own class: one of the greatest upper-class sins is to be so overfamiliar that gossip crosses social class divisions and consequently allows those of a lower class to question the status of the aristocracy.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Lamb's participation in the silver fork novel genre was cause for scandal as it was not a genre upper-class writers traditionally worked in.¹⁰⁵ However, *Glenarvon's* participation in this middle-class genre, and its exposure of the ugliness of the aristocratic society (which rejected middle-class figures like Spence), may have brought genuine appreciation from Spence; and this may have provoked her to pen this poem as an angry reaction to Medwin's *Conversations*.

Spence's choice to address her poem to Lamb rather than the album owner departs from album conventions. Album tributes are usually addressed to the owner, or, as was also common, left enticingly ambiguous or blank. In Anna Birkbeck's album, the only other tribute poem dedicated to a fully named living individual, who is not Anna or George Birkbeck, is to an infant who is a likely relative. Consequently, Spence's choice of dedication and subject seems questionable when viewed in comparison with other contributions, especially considering the reputation of Lady Caroline Lamb in contrast to the child 'so tranquil, so beloved'.¹⁰⁶ Spence's poem perhaps exhibits the ill-assortment of contributions which end up jumbled in the 'micro-chaos' of 'The Lady's Album' captured in *La Belle Assemblée*.¹⁰⁷ However, another poem added by Spence to Anna Birkbeck's album, but not composed by her, clarifies her logic. It is written by the popular author Letitia Elizabeth Landon (L. E. L.), and above the title Spence has written, 'MS Lines presented to Miss Spence by Miss Landon author of the Improvisatrice [*sic*]'.¹⁰⁸ This desire to display her close relationship with Landon echoes Spence's insinuation of her close relationship with Lamb, implying she has seen Lamb's 'sparkling wit' and 'graceful mien'. Spence's two contributions to Anna Birkbeck's album establish her network, exhibiting her connection with two Romantic celebrities. Taken together, Spence's entries come across as advertisements for her salon, where the 'lovely' and yet 'blighted' Lady Caroline Lamb may condescend to visit, or where Miss Landon might present another poem, implying to the reader of

¹⁰³ Devey, pp. 52–53.

¹⁰⁴ Eckert, p. 86.

¹⁰⁵ Tuite notes that Lamb was the most aristocratic author represented by the silver fork and 'fashionable fiction' publisher Henry Colburn ('Tainted Love' pp. 71–72).

¹⁰⁶ Anna Birkbeck's maiden name was Gardner, so it is possible Captain Valentine Gardner is writing about a shared relative in her album. See Honourable Captain Valentine Gardner, 'Lines on the infant Elizth William Green', in *The Album of Anna Birkbeck*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁷ 'The Lady's Album', p. 106.

¹⁰⁸ [Letitia Elizabeth Landon], 'Lights and Shadows', in *The Album of Anna Birkbeck*, p. 5.

the album the desirability of attending her salons. If so, Spence's entries are part of a marketing strategy, which takes advantage of the limitations of the album as a device to reach out to those with whom she may not otherwise come into direct contact and to establish herself further in the fashionable world. In other words, Spence pushes the boundaries of feminine limitations with a material device that consolidates them.

This close study of 'M.S. Lines on Lady Caroline Lamb' captures early nineteenth-century gender dynamics, highlighting difficulties in navigating the fluid and often contradictory boundaries of 'acceptable' feminine behaviour, from the complexities of composing poetry in a style suited to men's ease to the contradictory expectations of women to walk a line, which was to be familiar and yet not overly so. Lamb's treatment demonstrates the risks and the penalty for pushing these boundaries, leaving women open to blame, judgement, and even social ostracism. However, despite these difficulties, for aspirational women such as Spence, these limitations could still be used to good advantage. Spence used Anna Birkbeck's album to publicize her salon through her association with Lamb. The impact of Spence's salons, and albums such as Anna Birkbeck's, can arguably be seen in the publication of works by Landon, Jane Porter, Roberts, and Opie in literary annuals edited by Watts.¹⁰⁹

The contents of annuals such as these echo the Romantic album's miscellany of poetry, prose, pictures, and ephemera, with an emphasis on 'originality' angled at a female audience.¹¹⁰ Whereas the album existed in its semi-public, privately dedicated form, its printed cousin, the annual, made available such miscellany to a much wider audience. Published yearly between 1822 and 1860, annuals proved highly popular with a quickly expanding middle-class audience. Priced between twelve shillings and three pounds, they were 'marketed as "wholesome literature" for the entire family that moved beyond the quick entertainment of a broadside or a daily'.¹¹¹ The early annuals often attempted to recreate the personal, unique, and friendship-driven Romantic album in this new medium. Watts notably introduced facsimiles of famous authors'

¹⁰⁹ For example, in Alaric Watt's annual *The Literary Souvenir; or, Cabinet of Poetry and Romance* (1826), works by Landon, Roberts, and Jane Porter were published; as are works by Landon, Opie, and Roberts in S. C. Hall's annual *The Amulet* (1826). See, respectively, 'Advertisements & Notices', *Examiner*, 24 December 1826, p. 829; and 'Monthly View of New Publications', *La Belle Assemblée*, November 1826, p. 218.

¹¹⁰ 'To convey an idea of the nature of the pieces which compose the bulk of this volume, it will be sufficient to state that they will consist chiefly of original and interesting Tales and Poetry', from the advertisement at the conclusion of *Forget Me Not* (1823), cited by Katherine Harris, who notes: 'This claim of originality will plague the editors of the annuals through the 1830s, but most continue the declarations of originality that [Rudolf] Ackermann set up in this initial advertisement for the 1823 *Forget Me Not*.' See Katherine D. Harris, 'Feminizing the Textual Body: Female Readers Consuming the Literary Annual', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 99.4 (2005), pp. 573–622 (p. 582), doi:10.1086/pbsa.99.4.24296.

¹¹¹ Harris, *Forget Me Not*, p. 55.

signatures to his *Literary Souvenir* (from 1826), and early annuals included blank diary pages, to 'invite the reader or consumer to mark and incorporate herself into the textuality of the annual'.¹¹² The popularity of annuals in a quickly expanding section of society meant a wider readership for lesser-known authors, or like Lamb, writers of the previously inaccessible 'expensive "corrupting" novels'.¹¹³ According to Eckert, it was through contributions to literary annuals such as these that Lamb 'attempted to reinvent her reputation'. She argues that the association with 'respectable people who contributed to and consumed them' displayed Lamb's desire to distance herself from her 'earlier reputation for unfeminine, unaristocratic overfamiliarity' (p. 97). As Spence used Anna Birkbeck's album to promote her salons and prestige, Lamb's use of its published relation, the annual, as a device for her own form of promotion, indicates the ongoing adaptivity of women to use spaces which could be seen as limiting to their own advantage.

¹¹² Harris, 'Feminizing the Textual Body', p. 582.

¹¹³ Harris, *Forget Me Not*, p. 54.

