

The fantasized female figure has absolutely no language, no written text from which to infer her meaning. She is a ghost figure that does not even have a corporeal existence. The hair becomes the singular representation of her self, and the male figure interpolates that self into a body that has no agency, constricted by its ephemeral and incorporeal state. The male figure in the woman's memory at least has a face and eyes, but the female here has only a forehead and a relic of her own sexuality in that lock of hair. Unsupervised and mute, she appears to him in the most sexualized place, his bedroom. His vision, a fantasy really, passes over him in an orgasmic moment.

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As discussed in chapter 2, when the annuals first appeared on the market, publishers and editors borrowed particular elements from other successful genres, including the album and the almanac. Much like an album, the 1824 *Friendship's Offering* includes blank diary pages that invite the reader or consumer to mark and incorporate herself into the textuality of the annual. Through writing, this person becomes an agent in the physical production of the work—very similar to that agency offered by an album's blank pages. During 1824, Alaric Watts produced his 1825 *Literary Souvenir*, purposefully excluding blank pages and information. Interestingly, the *Forget Me Not* never included blank diary pages for its consumer. Ackermann always excluded the reader from the physical production of his annual; however, the *Forget Me Not* evolved to allow the reader to assert her own ideology, especially with the inclusion of poems by Landon or Hemans.

After Watts's changes, the only remaining blankness appeared on the inscription page: an area embellished and partially controlled by someone other than the final recipient. Unlike the dedication page, which is preproduced and printed simultaneously on all copies, the inscription page gestures to a unique relationship between presenter and recipient (fig. 7.3). The dedication page, though, signals a larger, more public homage to one particular individual—almost as if the printed dedication page provides an example for an inscriber's inscription.<sup>9</sup> The 1825 *Friendship's Offering* and 1826 *Literary Souvenir* were the first to offer dedications to various entities, usually inscribed to the current monarch or some patron. Interestingly, the *Forget Me Not* never contained dedication pages, whereas a dedication page was included with every volume of both *Friendship's Offering* and *The Literary Souvenir* except their first (1824 and 1825, respectively).<sup>10</sup> Commanding attention on a full page immediately following the verso of the title page, the dedication in the 1826 *Literary Souvenir* reads as follows:

to  
her grace the  
DUCHESS OF BEDFORD  
this volume  
is most respectfully inscribed  
by her grace's  
obliged and very obedient servant  
the editor

When present, the dedication page replicates supplications reminiscent of the patronage system. The page itself was protected from possible excision during the rebinding process because of its protected positioning behind the title page. However, because the inscription page precedes both the title page and the frontispiece, it could fall victim to a binder's cut during rebinding. In addition, the inscription page is not authorized or codified by being included in the table of contents. This makes the inscription page dispensable regardless of its ability to engender a unique textuality for each volume.

Gerard Genette categorizes both of these types of pages as paratexts: "devices and conventions" that mediate "between book, author, publisher and reader" (i). According to Genette, an inscription "enhances the work's material value by making this book different" (142). With a signature and/or a date inscribed on the opening pages of an annual, the inscriber authorizes him/herself into the life of the work as well as the life of the recipient. A relationship is actuated, and the inscriber grants himself/herself agency through the authority of a handwritten annotation. The inscriber writes the relationship into existence on this page.

Alternatively, the inscribee is, according to Genette, "always a potential reader at the same time that he is a real person, and one of the presuppositions of the inscription is that the author expects, in exchange for the gratification, a reading" (141). Though marked upon the page and thereby becoming part of the archive that is a literary annual, the inscription necessitates another agent, the recipient (the inscribee). The inscribee will then become the possessive and meaningful reader who will interact with the work in all of its bibliographic, linguistic, and paratextual modes (fig. 7.3).

In this scenario between inscriber and inscribee, gender inherently dominates the exchange. Regardless of the actual biological sex of the two, the recipient accepts the inscription without alteration ideally—a



Figure 7.3 Embossed inscription plate, 1826 *Forget Me Not* (from the Katherine D. Harris Collection)



250 relationship that mirrors the masculine and feminine roles inscribed into the literary annual itself. However, even these gendered actions are interrupted by an editor's instructions. In the 1829 *Anniversary*, editor Allan Cunningham includes instructions for constructing the best inscription, complete with a sample of script:

The Vignette on the opposite page is intended to suit the PRESENTATION of the Volume with the recurrence of ANY PARTICULAR DAY in the Year. It will be observed that the ancient "ANNIVERSAIRE" has been taken to adapt it to the purpose. . . .

It will be better to use the pencil, rather than the pen, for the purpose of inserting the names of the parties required.

As the first inspection of a design, of the conundrum class, sometimes occasions a momentary misconception or perplexity, it may be as well to remark that the wording, *when found out and filled up*, will resolve itself into something similar to the following:

TO LADY TEAZLE, on the ANNIVERSAIRE of HER WEDDING day, from  
SIR PETER.

Sir Peter Teazle is a cuckold in Richard Sheridan's 1777 farce, *A School for Scandal*. Married to a country squire's young daughter, Teazle becomes the victim of deceit, affairs, and gossip among the city's fashionable crowd. This inscription, though genuine in its instruction, invokes Sheridan's facetious and revolving relationships.

By using a pencil, the inscriber does not commit to a permanent mark, in reference to the numerous trysts portrayed in Sheridan's play—even if using the apparatus to avoid mistakes. Pencil markings will temporarily identify the writer but are in danger of fading or being replaced. Using pencil also creates a volume that is eternally transferable through a chain of recipients and presenters. And on this page, a physical palimpsest of erased names records the provenance of the volume. By encouraging readers to write inscriptions in pencil, Cunningham encourages the infidelity of the female recipient, who will pass it on to others rather than keeping it forever. However, the erasability of the inscription sets up the durability of the volume as it is passed from hand to hand. Despite being represented in the pejorative, then, this feminine object has longevity and historical presence, attributes rarely afforded to "feminine" forms.