

## TRADITIONS OF COLLECTING AND REMEMBERING

### Gender, class and the nineteenth-century sentiment album and photographic album

**Andrea Kunard**

*This paper will examine the previously unconsidered link between the photographic family album and the sentiment album. The sentiment album was popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was assembled mainly by young women. It contained poems, drawings and apothegms solicited from friends, family members and acquaintances. Little research has been undertaken on the sentiment album. However, an examination of the period's women's magazines reveals a substantial amount of information regarding this phenomenon.*

*The sentiment album consolidated a tradition of collecting and remembering. However, due to the open and public manner of its assembly, this early album ran the risk of being socially embarrassing. The photographic album was more private both in terms of its assembly and display. In addition, the family album was less distressing to view because studio imagery allowed individuals to present themselves publicly within the parameters of established, socially accepted visual codes.*

*Throughout the nineteenth century albums operated as a site for individuals to consolidate relationships on both a personal and social level, as well as acting as a repository for ideas, feelings, and memories. A discussion of the conditions surrounding both the sentiment and photographic album reveals the various means by which people communicated an understanding of their personal circumstances within larger social constructs.*

This article will examine the previously unconsidered link between the photographic family album and the sentiment album.<sup>1</sup> The sentiment album was popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was assembled mainly by young women. It contained poems, drawings and apothegms solicited from friends, family members and acquaintances. Although the sentiment album is largely unknown to modern researchers, an examination of the period's women's magazines reveals a substantial amount of information regarding this phenomenon. The sentiment album consolidated a tradition of collecting and remembering. However, due to the open and public manner of its assembly, this early album ran the risk of being socially embarrassing. The photographic album was more private both in terms of its assembly and display. In addition, the family album was less distressing to view because studio imagery allowed individuals to present themselves publicly within the parameters of established, socially accepted visual codes. Throughout the nineteenth century albums operated as a site for individuals to consolidate relationships on both a personal and social level, as well as acting as a

repository for ideas, feelings and memories. A discussion of the conditions surrounding both the sentiment and photographic album reveals the various means by which people communicated an understanding of their personal circumstances within larger social constructs.

The mid-Victorian period experienced a huge influx of photographic imagery largely due to the success of the *carte-de-visite*. The card-mounted photograph captured the public's imagination. Its widespread production allowed individuals to collect photographs of family members and friends, and preserve their 'likenesses' in specially manufactured albums. Although a number of scholars have examined the phenomenon of the photographic album, little research has been done on its precursor, the sentiment album.<sup>2</sup> The vogue of assembling these albums spanned a period of approximately thirty years from the 1820s to 1850s.<sup>3</sup> Women's magazines of the day display varied responses to the sentiment album. Many criticisms were often derogatory and misogynist in tone. These commentaries will be examined below, but it can be generally stated that contemporary debates about the value of these albums centred on their contents, and particularly the written entries. With the establishment of the commercial photographic industry in the 1860s, albums again became popular. However, the textual component dropped out; the album was now almost completely composed of visual imagery that included photographs, drawings, paintings and chromolithographs. The move from the sentiment album to the photograph album, therefore, represents a shift in society that places emphasis on the handwritten entry to one produced through technology.

This article will explore the sentiment album as expressive of the various mores and attitudes surrounding social and familial interests in the early nineteenth century. A small section will also be dedicated to the annuals and their relation to the sentiment album. This discussion will allow a further understanding of the interaction of the publishing industry and the domestic sphere, and provide an analysis of the changes in social sensibilities that occurred in the mid-Victorian period. By providing such a context, I will argue that, on the one hand, the photographic album gained popularity as a reaction to certain difficulties generated by the sentiment album. On the other hand, its format was continuous with that of its precursor. Like the sentiment album, the photographic album provided a way for individuals to respond to their understanding of social relations. It can be viewed as a composite of the cultural factors that dictated its contents and the limitations of such characterizations imposed by the demands of personal relationships and experience.

The sentiment album was a bound volume containing blank leaves on which friends were invited to write poems, draw pictures, paint watercolours or simply autograph. As Marc Lebel has written about the phenomenon in the Canadian Saint Lawrence Valley: 'As in France, it is essentially feminine and exclusive to young women of good families, with, it is true, a few male exceptions.'<sup>4</sup> Young women used the album as a means to consolidate both male and female friendships. Some women maintained such books throughout their lives. As one anonymous individual wrote in 1840: 'It is said that in Europe, in high society, that women distinguished in their rank, their talents or their taste, have an album that they send to their friends or acquaintances, painters, writers, speakers, musicians, inviting them to insert a thought or reminiscence.'<sup>5</sup>

The sentiment album was a rich composite of writing and imagery descriptive of the social life of middle- and upper-class women in Europe and North America. For exam-

ple, the Lady Belleau (1811–1884) album depicts aspects of an upper-class woman's life in Québec.<sup>6</sup> It has a dark blue embossed leather cover and contains 73 folios, including 19 black lithographs of flowers and scrolls for inscription or painting. The album begins with a title page of hand-painted watercolours of flowers and a scroll in which is written the name of the album's owner and the date, 1843 (Figure 1). The following page displays a poem surrounded by an elaborate painted wreath of flowers. The next page shows a watercolour painting of lilies and a scroll in which a small photograph of a nun appears. Backing this page is a pencil drawing with gouache highlights of a man passing a cross while travelling through a snowstorm (Figure 2). Three pages of poems dedicated to the owner of the album follow this illustration, after which appears a blank page on which has been pasted a piece of tracing paper with painted flowers. Another page of painted flowers and a scroll with a poem appear next, after which a page containing two



**Figure 1** Lady Belleau Album LAC (Library and Archives Canada) 1982-100-1.1, 'Flower and Scroll, Title Page', lithography in black, hand-coloured with watercolour, heightened with gum. Inscribed in pen and blue ink on faintly ruled pencil lines, on scroll: 'J.G. Belleau' (Lady Josephthe Gauvreau Belleau), 'Québec. 9 février 1843'.

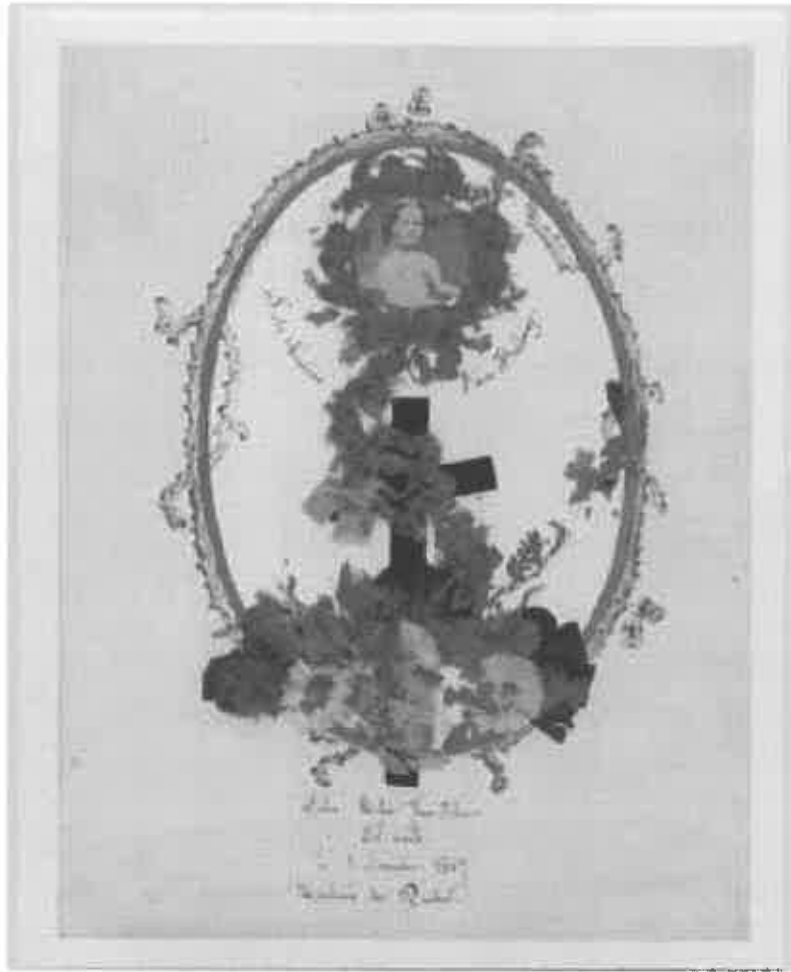


**Figure 2** Lady Belleau Album LAC 1982-100-1.4, 'Habitant with Sled', watercolour over pencil, with extensive scraping out (n.d.).

detailed pencil sketches—one of a bridge at Montmorency Falls, the other of a European scene—is seen. The following page displays a sketch of a woman surrounded by an elaborate embossed floral wreath. In all, the album contains 24 drawings, 41 watercolours, two collages, five photographs, as well as numerous poems and texts. Collages of pressed flowers sometimes supplement illustrations (Figure 3). In other cases, a delicate floral doily frames a detailed watercolour. The various materials used in the album, and the types of subject matter depicted—Niagara Falls (Figure 4), aboriginal types (Figure 5), mountain chalets, peasant scenes and views of Europe—indicate the various cultural and material means by which the social life of the assembler could be depicted.

Yet articles and fiction stories dedicated to the sentiment album phenomenon display a mixed response. It can generally be stated that contemporary debates about the value of these albums centred on their contents, and in particular written entries. Some authors sanctioned their social usefulness; others viewed them as a nuisance. There was apprehension that what was contained in the album would cause confusion about the proper relationship between the sexes, especially with respect to marriage. For example, as Mrs C.W. Denison wrote in 1856: 'Oh, did you know, ye album-keepers (especially young and blooming ones), the sorrows of a "poor young man" when called upon to contribute to your cherished mental herbals. ... Forth goes the emanations, and the darlings pass it around with a "sweet" and a "pretty". ... That young man is now in a fair way to matrimony.'<sup>7</sup>

The majority of writers, male and female, agreed with Mrs Denison: the album especially placed young men in a socially awkward position. A fiction story written in 1855 by A.E. Stewart entitled 'My Friend Muggins's Experience in Albums' describes



**Figure 3** Lady Belleau Album LAC 1982-100-1.92, 'Souvenir of the Death of Julie Hélène Van Felson, 1867', pressed flowers, ribbon, photograph, lock of hair, gold paint, ink drawing, with grey and pinkish-brown wash (n.d.).

the dilemma of Mulberry Muggins who must pen a verse for Miss Nelly Jones' album. Mulberry soon discovers he is in competition with a rival, Samuel Sawbuck. Although the latter has composed a rather bumbling poem for Miss Jones, he has, nonetheless, flattered her. In the end, Miss Jones rejects Muggins' entry, begins to court Sawbuck, and an exasperated Muggins can only proclaim: 'Confound the album!'<sup>8</sup> Album entries could also cause consternation on the part of female contributors. In 1830, Miss Anna Maria Porter described in gothic verse her dread of having to write in a friend's album. Rising from her bed in a half-wakened state she sees that what has appeared at her door is not some 'mocking fiend, with madd'ning laugh',

But my sister pale, with a gray-goose quill,  
And an ALBUM—sight of sorrow!



**Figure 4** Lady Belleau Album LAC 1982-100-1.76, 'Niagara Falls', watercolour and gouache, heightened with gum arabic, Guiseppe Fascio (1848).

'Get up!' she cried, 'and a long page fill,  
For this book must go back tomorrow!'<sup>9</sup>

One difficulty created by the album was that it was privately assembled yet open to public scrutiny. An ill-chosen verse could reflect badly on its owner, and reveal much about the character of the contributor. As one anonymous author wrote in 1827: 'The Album is a very pretty book; it catches many fine scraps of writing. The loving swain will sometimes select this mode to discover his affection: but you may go further, and detect the character of all men who write in it.' The author then proceeds to relate character to choice of verse with the admonition that: 'The Album is a valuable part of a lady's paraphernalia; it serves to relieve an hour's ennui ... and it affords the best and most delicate opportunity to become acquainted with any *favourite* they may wish, without risk of being charged with too much curiosity or fondness' (emphasis in original).<sup>10</sup>

To write in an album was obviously a delicate matter. In order to control what comprised its contents, poems were published in ladies' magazines and small handbooks. One such publication entitled *Original Album Verses and Acrostics* warns of the repercussions of indiscrete entries: 'A young lady's album should be approached with all the respect due its owner. In exhibiting it to any one of her friends, she virtually discloses in a great degree who and what are her chosen acquaintances.' In addition, badly written entries could embarrass the album's owner: 'Fulsome praise, if exaggerated or used without due discretion, becomes caricature; and, if misapplied, may be ridiculous and even suggest



**Figure 5** Lady Belleau Album LAC 1982-100-1.97, 'Zity, a Huron Indian', watercolour and gouache over pencil, Cornelius Krieghoff (n.d.).

the very opposite to that which was intended.<sup>11</sup> The album not only disclosed acquaintances, its contents also revealed both the owner's and the contributor's education and taste. To be considered well assembled, an album had to contain discriminating quotes and snatches of verse—not fripperies. The authors of *Original Album Verses* respected the album as a means by which individuals could display their social standing and sophistication; their publication was meant to provide a choice of verse that was 'strikingly appropriate, and abound[ing] in beauty of sentiment and wittiness of expression'. The authors justified their selection of poems with the assertion that: 'This book is unhesitatingly commended to the appreciation of all Album writers; and, through them, to the most discriminating and exacting portion of an intelligent public.'<sup>12</sup>

The contents of an album in this respect were subject to much commentary. To underscore the necessity of writing tasteful entries, the authors of *Original Album Verses* relate the story of a young lady whose album was viewed unfavourably by a 'gentleman caller'. He responded with the following poem:

I write not for your album, but to try  
How I your album writers can out vie.  
The task's not hard—it's mostly wretched dribble;  
And any shallow pate as well can scribble.  
As neither they nor I write well enough,  
Better write nothing than such maudlin stuff!<sup>13</sup>

The young lady, the authors noted, was humiliated. As for the gentleman caller, his 'love of truth was probably stronger than his respect for the fair sex'.<sup>14</sup> The authors' comment on the gentleman caller's disgruntlement with albums is revealing. In many cases, discussions concerning an album's contents circulated around the manner in which 'serious' literature suffered at the hands of women's 'sentiment'. As one anonymous author wrote in 1825: 'To define a Lady's Album were like analysing the alkahest of the old philosophers, which contains every thing, and destroys every thing. ... The only etymology which hits off its true description is *blank*, meaning white and vacant at the same time' (emphasis in original).<sup>15</sup> The lady's album confused the writing of accomplished poets with those of amateurs. The album contained, in the words of the same author: 'Verses on stilts, and prose run mad—elegant extracts without elegance, apothegms without instruction, epigrams without point, and repartees without meaning.'<sup>16</sup> For many, the album was too much a product of a young lady's whimsy. Young men, in desperation, would assemble a hodgepodge of lines to impress the lady whose album in which they had been asked to write: 'A line from one, a stanza from another. No need of trying to improve on Burns, or polish Shakespeare. Here are "blue eyes" and "tresses", plenty of "skies" and "blesses". ... He gathers them to his bosom ... and with dainty fingers ... spreads ambrosia in thin slices over scented pages.'<sup>17</sup> Such an activity, many lamented, was an embarrassment to all, and was certainly not literature.

A number of observations can be made concerning the derogatory and often misogynistic comments expressed in these articles. It can be seen that many authors believed young middle-class women lacked discernment with respect to literature and the arts. In part this can be considered a reaction to the rise in popular literature and young women's choice of reading material. Entries that mimicked romantic and sentimental novels were considered inferior; such writing lacked the 'high seriousness' of accepted

literature and what was considered the 'proper' treatment of important moral issues. In a larger societal sense, the reaction of writers to the sentiment album was also linked to concerns about women's education. At this point, most young women received instruction in the home by family members or hired tutors.<sup>18</sup> Education was designed to prepare them for their future occupancy of the domestic sphere in the roles of wives and mothers; it did not include acquiring skills to allow them to seek gainful employment in the competitive world of business.<sup>19</sup> Their moral instruction, however, was paramount. Women were to provide a refuge from materialist concerns by embodying the period's ideals of femininity including innocence, self-sacrifice, purity, patience and submissiveness.<sup>20</sup> In reality, however, this feminine ideal was often at odds with a society divided along class, economic and political lines. The majority of young women had to balance societal expectations with personal circumstances.<sup>21</sup> Some could receive a superior education and rise to social prominence if their familial circumstances and native intelligence allowed. Most, however, received only cursory instruction and had little opportunity to pursue other routes. As education for young women was not standardized; learning could range from excellent to abysmal.<sup>22</sup>

With such varied backgrounds, the proper moral and intellectual development of young women could not be assured. Writings on the sentiment album reveal an anxiety as to whether the album distracted them from attaining the necessary skills needed for their future roles as mothers and wives. In one sense, men and women who wrote for magazines understood their function as providing guidance and instruction to young women to enhance their social sophistication. In another sense, women's magazines were profit-based. Articles dedicated to albums reveal a variety of stances indicating a need to appeal to a broad public in order to maintain a large readership.<sup>23</sup>

The public alternative to the privately assembled album was the literary annual and keepsake, such as *Friendship's Offering*, which first appeared in the early decades of the nineteenth century. These publications contained the works of well-known poets and authors and included high-quality engraved illustrations. The books were bound in either silk, plush, Moroccan leather or gilt cloth.<sup>24</sup> At first they were published annually as gift items for the Christmas season, but soon became available for events occurring throughout the year.<sup>25</sup> The annuals, keepsakes and sentiment albums share much in common. All were a mixture of writing and pictures indicative of young women's taste and education. The annuals had the advantage in that their contents were pre-selected; as gifts they would incur little embarrassment on the part of the receiver.<sup>26</sup> For example, in the preface to the 1831 *Friendship's Offering* the publisher upheld the instructive and cultural aspects of the annuals by stating that the works chosen represented: 'solid literary excellence, rather than the showy trifling of genius ... it has been his ambition to qualify them in a moral, as well as physical, point of view ... he imagines that a work like "Friendship's Offering" may be rendered fit to impress the mind, and to assist in forming the taste, exercising the judgement, and improving the heart.'<sup>27</sup>

Yet the annuals, like the sentiment album, were also subject to criticism. Although publishers promoted the instructional value of their contents, they also included works designed to appeal to a young lady's romantic imagination. The popularity of the annuals indicates that by the early nineteenth century young women were seeking literature more reflective of their social circumstances. Many who benefited from the rising standard of living were little content to devote their leisure time to reading manuals of

strict conduct dedicated to the promotion of womanly ideals. The enormous popularity of annuals indicates that young women wished to be entertained.

One must also consider how the annuals corresponded to aspects of women's education. In terms of a young woman's education, it was also accepted that familiarity with art, poetry and music was considered beneficial. However, women were never to pursue cultural activities as ends in themselves. A woman's cultural sophistication was understood to enrich the lives of men whose business careers afforded them little opportunity for such pursuits. Women were to complement, not compete with, the male's role. Therefore, women could not appear over-zealous in their interests. It is precisely on this point that many commentators took issue with the sentiment album: young women were not demonstrating proper social decorum in their unabashed enthusiasm to assemble albums.

With respect to their imagery, annuals received less criticism. Improvements in printing techniques allowed publishers to include high-quality reproductions of famous artworks in their annuals—a phenomenon which in itself was a novelty and thus a selling point for a curious public.<sup>28</sup> Such works also had the added value of educating young women as to what comprised good taste without incurring the stigma of appearing a bluestocking.<sup>29</sup> As with women's magazines and lady's books, works of moral value were also included. The instructional value of such imagery was considered critical. As one anonymous author wrote in 1845: 'Next to subjects of religious interest, we consider scenes in domestic life as most pleasing for the "Lady's Book". The moral power of pictures is of great importance, both as it regards instruction of the young and the self-improvement of the more advanced in life ... far the greater part of the original designs introduced have been. calculated to induce this sweet spirit of domestic love and social peace and happiness.'<sup>30</sup>

The sentiment album, literary annuals and articles published in women's magazines all reveal how young women negotiated the social sphere, and the sometimes contradictory demands placed upon them. Young women desired representation of their personal relationships through knowledge gained within their restricted circumstances. A case in point is a piece of short fiction written in 1834 by a 'Miss Leslie'. The story concerns a young officer: Lieutenant Sutherland, who is in conversation with his current romantic interest, Orlinda Melbourne. The latter wishes Sutherland to make an entry into her album. Sutherland refuses and recounts a story of his previous encounter with an album, one owned by a lady with whom he had a passing amatory preoccupation:

The lady in question had a splendidly bound album, which she produced and talked about on all occasions, and seemed to regard with so much pride and admiration, that if a lover could possibly have been jealous of a book, I was, at times, very near becoming so. It was half filled with amatory verses by juvenile rhymesters, and with tasteless insipid drawings by boarding school misses: which drawings my Dulcinea persisted in calling paintings.<sup>31</sup>

At the heart of Sutherland's comments, and those of others writing about the sentiment album, is an annoyance with the audacity of young women to persist in assembling albums more suited to their tastes than those of society. To argue that women of the period had little or no access to academic training and instruction to create acceptable artwork is to miss the point. Dulcinea assembled her album through choices predicated

on personal relationships that overrode literary, aesthetic and moral boundaries. As such, she was accused of lacking sufficient knowledge and appreciation to distinguish 'good' and 'bad' art and literature. Young men who displayed little talent with their artistic entries also suffered derision. However, it appears that the focus of commentaries in this respect resided in the embarrassment young men endured at being put in a position whereby their lack of talent could be made so manifestly obvious.

By the 1850s interest in the sentiment album had waned. Although this can be understood as the passing of a fad, consideration must also be given to societal changes that occurred in the mid-Victorian period. The sentiment album belonged to an age affected by the repercussions of social dislocation and economic uncertainty due to industrialization and urbanization. By mid-century, the middle class had become increasingly more self-assured and economically stable. This group consolidated their values through codes of personal behaviour and conduct. The role of commercial photography in this process was complex. For the most part, the studio portrait, in terms of pose and lighting, varied little from individual to individual. However, the studio photograph also allowed individuals to express differences in social rank. In some cases, this would be a true expression of the social status of the sitter. In others, it would be a fantasized or desired presentation. The studio provided individuals with props, backdrops and costumes that would make it appear that the sitter was more affluent than perhaps was the case in reality. The photograph, in this sense, reflects the period's belief in social mobility. One could begin at a lower level in the social hierarchy and, through the efforts of hard work, achieve a higher, more prosperous state.

The studio produced imagery expressive of how an individual wished to appear publicly. In the family album, assemblers used these same photographs to express more intimate and personal bonds. As with the sentiment album, most assemblers were women. However, in contrast to the sentiment album, the family album was assembled within the confines of the home. Its contents, therefore, could be more controlled as it was not distributed among the assembler's friends and acquaintances. In addition, as little was written down, assemblers could limit or cautiously convey information pertaining to the photographs. Portraits of wives, mothers, sisters, brothers, children, aunts and uncles could be sorted through and grouped in presentations keeping with the assembler's view of family history. In this sense, the photographic album, unlike the sentiment album, did not confuse social roles. Rather, it allowed assemblers to present the individual as integrated into larger social structures, such as the family, where their relationship to other individuals could be affirmed.

The photographic album first appeared on a large scale in the early 1860s as a means to collect *carte-de-viste* photographs of both family members and friends and celebrities of the day.<sup>32</sup> Albums were available from photographic studios, which, in turn ordered them through catalogues published by photographic warehouses. These warehouses also collected hundreds of *carte-de-visite* photographs whose subjects included portraits of royalty, politicians, artists, actors, actresses and celebrated musicians. The general public would buy such photographs through local studios and insert them into their family albums. Although the *carte-de-visite* was extremely popular, writers responded with a variety of comments. Some sardonically greeted the phenomenon with relief. As one author pronounced: 'Albums have once more claimed their place on "the Centre-Table"; not those of the persecuting order, that made the visitor tremble as he surveyed the touching tributes of affection therein

recorded, lest he should, in turn, be bored for an "original" contribution which robbed Moore and Byron of much of their well earned fame; but the album photographic, which all delight to honor, inasmuch as few people are averse to seeing their faces or names in print!<sup>33</sup> For this writer, the photographic album, unlike the sentiment album, was less distressing to view as it contained little text and did not submit the integrity of works published by renowned poets and writers to any disgrace. Another author agreed, writing that collections of photographs 'are very useful; they supply a fund of talk to people who have nothing to say'. In comparison, the sentiment album provoked too much anxiety:

Thirty years ago, young ladies used to keep albums, and people used to be decoyed or frightened into writing in them. Authors of all sizes and degrees of reputation were entreated to add their mite. ... But the weak point of albums was that, where they were not occupied by magnificent watercolor representations of perfectly round roses in the fullest bloom, they were too intellectual. People in an ordinary drawing room think there is a sort of plot to find them out if any demand is made on their intellect; and to write verses, or even to copy correctly a piece of poetry out of a standard author, is dangerous and embarrassing.

With photographic collections, the author concludes, 'all is plain sailing. All that has to be done is to make gossiping remarks about other people, and this is a duty to which the most timid intellects feel competent.'<sup>34</sup>

However, other writers found less worth in photographic albums: 'A dismal parallel might be drawn between photographic albums and catacombs', one author wrote in 1862. In the album, 'there is no barrier or rank, no chancel end; the poorest owns his three inches of cardboard, and the richest can claim no more'.<sup>35</sup> For this writer, the contents of a photographic album relegated all to the same dull status. Other authors mourned the loss of the sentiment album and its usurpation by the photographic album. One commentator blamed the sentiment album's demise on its popularization and the indiscretion of assemblers to include entries displaying a woeful lack of talent. The article underlined the importance of certain sentiment albums as they contained works of well-known authors and poets and gave testament to the cultured lives of the upper classes and aristocracy:

Those who can look back for a half century will remember the rage there was in their youthful days for albums. ... It has been truly said that legion was not a name multitudinous for them; literary men wrenched under their tyranny, young maidens wielded them as rods of iron. ... Splendid books they were in their day, bound in rich morocco and gold and containing contributions from Scott, Moore, Montgomery, and Praed; whilst Proust's beautiful sketches adorned their pages side by side with other artists. The photographic albums have superseded them, a much less interesting thing to those who turn over the books on a drawing-room table.<sup>36</sup>

For some, the photographic album was too plebeian in its contents. Magazines dedicated to the edification of their readership were particularly dismayed as they deemed the photograph only a superficial rendering of an individual:

We all know how little trust is to be placed in a mere exterior, in the look and outward fashion; and this untrustworthiness is almost infinitely aggravated in a photograph which does not even give an ordinary and unaffected exterior, but merely a sham-copy of a man as he appears in a particularly inconvenient moment, got up for the occasion, awkwardly self-conscious, theatrically posed, and perhaps indelibly labelled with an ill-concealed look of impotent rage and disgust at the impertinent adjustments of an officious photographer.<sup>37</sup>

The author found it incomprehensible that these images were eagerly sought after and preserved in albums as such instantaneous and contrived portraits could never portray the deeper and subtler aspects of human character.

The author's indignation with the commercial photograph's superficiality was part of a larger argument as to whether photography was an art, a science or simply a mechanical recording device. Although the intricacies of these debates are beyond the confines of this article, certain general observations can be made. The massive social upheaval created by the Industrial Revolution created both faith in and distrust of technical innovations. Charles Baudelaire viewed photography in terms of the latter. He regarded the continued interest in photography as a product of the 'stupidity of the multitude' with the result that it corrupted the arts and their ability to express the 'domain of the impalpable and the imaginary'.

Could you find an honest observer to declare that the invasion of photography and the great industrial madness of our times have no part at all in this deplorable result? Are we to suppose that a people whose eyes are growing used to considering results of a material science as though they were the products of the beautiful, will not in the course of time have singularly diminished its faculties of judging and of feeling what are among the most ethereal and immaterial aspects of creation?<sup>38</sup>

However, another writer, Marcus Aurelius Root, was more generous. He argued that photography 'conferred various and important benefits on society'. As he stated: 'In the order of nature, families are dispersed, by death or other causes; friends are severed; and the "old familiar faces" are no longer seen in our daily haunts. By heliography, our loved ones, dead or distant, our friends and acquaintances, however far removed, are retained within daily and hourly vision. . . . The cheapness of these pictures brings them within reach, substantially, of all.'<sup>39</sup> Although many commentators found little instructional and moral value in commercial photography, it is precisely in terms of Root's remarks that the general public found such images, and their ready availability, suited to their own tastes and needs.

The photograph album functioned in much the same manner as its precursor, the sentiment album, as it provided a means for individuals to both make sense of and order aspects of their personal lives. In addition, as occurs with the photograph album, through the assembler's solicitation of entries and drawings, the sentiment album partakes of a tradition of collecting and remembering. The album, both photographic and sentiment, operated as a site for individuals to consolidate relationships on both a personal and social level; it also acted as a repository for ideas, feelings and memories. Even though they differed in terms of their constituents, and more importantly, their manner of assembly, the sentiment album and photographic album reveal the various

means by which people communicated an understanding of their personal circumstances within larger social constructs. Both the sentiment album and photographic album, therefore, allowed assemblers to construct and display their idea of a larger community of shared interests. In return, the pages of the album reflected back to their assembler evidence of their personal relations and values. The album, in this sense, operated as an imagined space in which the assembler negotiated their desired identity with the codes of behaviour that defined larger social, professional and familial spheres.

### Note on contributor

**Andrea Kunard** received her doctorate at Queen's University, in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. She presently teaches at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, as a Contract Instructor in the area of photography (historic and contemporary), Canadian Art (historic and contemporary) and museology. She is also an Assistant Curator at the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, an affiliate of the National Gallery of Canada. Recent publications include the 'Canada' entry in *The Encyclopedia of 19th Century Photography* (London/New York: Routledge, forthcoming); 'Relationships of Photography and Text in the Colonization of the Canadian West: The 1858 Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition', *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. 26 (Fall 2002); 'Review: "Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums"' by Martha Langford', *Journal of Canadian Art History*, vol. 23, nos 1&2, 2002; and 'The Mechanical Art: Some Historic Debates on Art and Photography', in *Photography: Crisis of History*, Joan Fontcuberta, ed. Actar, Barcelona, 2004. She has also recently published catalogues on two contemporary Canadian artists: Susan McEachern and Michael Semak. Address: Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, 1 Rideau Canal, PO Box 465, Station A, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 9N6, Canada. [email: AKunard@Gallery.ca]

### Notes and references

1. This article is drawn from my research done for Kunard, A. (1996) *Assembling Images: Interpreting the Nineteenth-century Photographic Album with a Case Study of the Sir Daniel Wilson Album*. Unpublished MA thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa.
2. Other writings on the photograph album or domestic uses of photography include: Blunt, A. (2003) 'Home and Empire: Photographs of British families in the Lucknow Album, 1856–57', in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, J. Schwartz and J. Ryan, eds. I.B. Tauris. London/New York, pp. 243–260, 339–341; Chambers, D. (2003) 'Family as place: Family photograph albums and the domestication of public and private space', in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, J. Schwartz and J. Ryan, eds. I.B. Tauris. London/New York, pp. 96–114, 317–318; Siegel, E. (2003) 'Talking through the fotygraft album', in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, pp. 239–253; Langford, M. (2001) *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal; Hirsch, M. (1997) *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; Stokes, P. (1992) 'The family photo-

- graph album: So great a cloud of witness', in *Portrait in Photography*, Reaktion, London, pp. 193–205.
3. It should also be noted that the terms 'commonplace book' and 'sentiment album' were both used to describe the albums under consideration. Loosely speaking, these were similar to scrap books as they contained disparate material of personal interest to the assembler. I will defer to the term 'sentiment album' as a descriptor for these objects, because even though they share certain traits in common with the commonplace book, they also differ from it in key respects. The commonplace book originated in the Renaissance. The book was a bound volume in which individuals would copy their favourite poems or literary passages. Often, these excerpts were chosen for their inspirational, instructive or moral content. As the assemblers of such books were well educated, the commonplace book mainly reflects the interests of the aristocracy and upper classes. In this respect, they contain much information about certain cultural aspects of the times. For more on the commonplace book, see Toor, R. (2001) 'Commonplaces: From quote books to "Sig" files', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 May, electronic resource; Darnton, R. (2000) 'Extraordinary commonplaces', *New York Review of Books*, 21 December, pp. 82–89; Hobart, M.E. and Schiffman, Z. (1998) *Information Ages: Literacy, Numeracy and the Computer Revolution*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD; Dyck, P. (1997) 'Reading and writing the commonplace: Literary culture then and now', *(Re)Soundings* [online] Available at: [http://marauder.millersville.edu/~resound//\\*vol1iss1/index.html](http://marauder.millersville.edu/~resound//*vol1iss1/index.html); Benedict, B. (1996) *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ; Blair, B. (1992) 'Humanist methods in natural philosophy: The commonplace book', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 541–551; Ong, W.J. (1991) *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge, London; Mohl, R. (1969) *John Milton and his Commonplace Book*, Ungar, New York; Lechner, Sister Joan Marie O.S.U. (1962) *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces*, Pageant, New York. In contrast, as I discuss below, because entries for the sentiment album were solicited, they do not necessarily reflect the interests or personality of the assembler.
  4. Lebel, M. (1984) 'Trois poèmes inédits de François-Xavier Garneau', *Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada français*, vol. 7, pp. 50–51: 'Tout comme en France, elle est essentiellement féminine et le propre de jeunes filles de bonnes familles, avec, il est vrai, quelques exceptions masculines.' (My translation.)
  5. 'L'on me dit qu'en Europe, parmi le beau monde les dames distinguées soit leur rang, leurs talents ou leur goût, ont un album qu'elles envoient à leurs amis ou à leurs connaissances, peintres, écrivains, orateurs, musiciens, les priant d'insérer une pensée, un souvenir.' (My translation, quoted in Lebel, 'Trois poèmes', p. 51.)
  6. The Lady Belleau Album, Library and Archives Canada, 1982–100. Mme Narcisse Fortunat Belleau, née Marie Reine Josephpte, married Narcisse Fortunat Belleau (1808–1894) in 1835. Her husband was elected Prime Minister of Canada in 1865 and became the first Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec from 1867 to 1873.
  7. Denison, C.W. (1856) 'Writing for an album', *Godey's Lady's Book*, no. 52, p. 55.
  8. Stewart, A.E. (1855) 'My friend Muggins's experience in albums', *Godey's Lady's Book*, no. 50, pp. 399–401. The story also relates that after Miss Jones reads Muggins' poem, she leaves the room and appears with a paper cutter. Muggins realizes that either his contribution or Sawbuck's, is about to be deleted from the album. This incident is mentioned for the benefit of modern researchers who come across an album in which sections have been cut out; its incompleteness might be a result of a young

woman's displeasure or embarrassment with respect to certain entries. In 1847, the Hon. Richard Henry Wilde composed a poem on this very subject. 'Lines Written in an Album' is subtitled 'On Pages Between Which Several Leaves Had Been Cut.' The poem opens with the anguished question: 'What leaves were thus so rudely torn away?', and continues in this tormented tone: 'Whose immortality thus roughly foiled? ... What was the subject it doomed to fame?/Whose knife or scissors did that doom reverse?' (Wilde, R.H. (1847) 'Lines written for an album', *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book*, vol. 35, p. 80).

9. Porter, A.M. (1830) 'Tribute to an album', *Godey's Lady's Book*, vol. 1 (July), p. 64.
10. Anonymous (1827) 'Ladies' Albums', *Graham's Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 4.
11. Anonymous (c.1800) *Original Album Verses and Acrostics*, Toronto/Clifton, Toronto News Co., n.p.
12. Anonymous, *Original Album Verses*, n.p.
13. Anonymous, *Original Album Verses*, n.p.
14. Anonymous, *Original Album Verses*, n.p.
15. Anonymous (1825) 'The lady's album', *La Belle Assemblée*, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 106.
16. Anonymous, 'The lady's album', pp. 106–107.
17. Denison, 'Writing for an album', p. 55.
18. Gorham, D. (1982) *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, p. 21.
19. Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, p. 24.
20. Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, p. 24.
21. Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, p. 24. See especially Chapter 7 where Gorham discusses five women of different social backgrounds in this early period and the manner in which they integrated feminine ideals with personal circumstances. The case studies reveal how the period's notions of femininity could be both restrictive and a source of strength depending on the personality and intelligence of the woman involved.
22. Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, p. 24.
23. Advice given to readers in women's magazines often takes a condescending and rather self-righteous tone. In terms of rules of moral conduct, however, what is generally evident is that the magazines were attempting to provide some kind of standard for women and the popularity of the magazines indicates that women were seeking such instruction. As Leonore Davidoff has written about the magazines of the time: 'These publications often seem to be sheer fantasy-peddling for profit, and yet the number turned out from the 1830s onwards indicates that they were fulfilling a need for guidance' (Davidoff, L. (1973) *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season*, Croom Helm, London, p. 18).
24. Renier, A. (1964) *Friendship's Offering: An Essay on the Annuals and Gift Books of the 19th Century*, Private Libraries Association, London, p. 11.
25. Renier, *Friendship's Offering*, p. 12.
26. Renier, *Friendship's Offering*, p. 17.
27. Anonymous (1831) *Friendship's Offering: A Literary Album and Christmas and New Year's Present for MDCCCXXXI*, Smith, Elder & Co., London, n.p.
28. Renier, *Friendship's Offering*, p. 13. Renier also notes that the public had never seen many of these works as they were contained in private collections.
29. Renier, *Friendship's Offering*, p. 17. Knowledge of and the ability to recognize famous works associated purchasers and owners of the annuals with the concerns and taste of the wealthy. One defining characteristic of the middle class throughout the century was that it assumed many values of the aristocracy, such as taste, etiquette and

decorum, but attributed their worth as resulting from the rewards of hard work rather than acquisition through lineage.

30. Anonymous (1845) 'A hard subject to paint', *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book*, no. 30, p. 60.
31. Miss Leslie (1834) 'The album — A sketch', *Godey's Book and Lady's Magazine*, no. 9, p. 79.
32. The *carte-de-visite* was an albumen photograph mounted on a card backing that measured approximately 2.5 by 4 inches. They were available until about 1885. The other card photograph, the cabinet photograph, was popular from 1880 to 1906 and measured 4.25 by 6.5 inches. Both types of photographs are found in family albums (Pilling, A.R. (1974) 'Dating early photographs by card mounts and other external evidence: Tentative suggestions', *Image*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 11–16).
33. Anonymous (1862a) 'Photographic albums', *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, vol. 64, p. 208.
34. Anonymous (1862b) 'Photography as an art', *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, vol. 65, no. 8, p. 97.
35. Anonymous (1862c) 'Photographs', *London Review and Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature and the Arts*, vol. 5, no. 110, p. 432.
36. Anonymous (1873) 'Albums', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature*, 12 July, p. 553.
37. Anonymous, 'Photographs', p. 432.
38. Baudelaire, C. (1981) 'The salon of 1859', *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, Vicki Goldberg, ed. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, pp. 125–126.
39. Root, M.A. (1981) 'The camera and the pencil, 1864', *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, Vicki Goldberg, ed. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, pp. 148–149.