Gillian Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability, and the Cultures of Collecting.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 303. 24 illus. £75. ISBN 9781108487580.

Gillian Russell's prize-winning monograph offers a meticulous, comprehensive, and often dazzling exploration of eighteenth-century printed ephemera, ephemerology, and ephemerality as they shaped the modern concept of the everyday, Romanticism, and the codex-form book. Re-orienting book history, Russell traces 'how the categories of the book and ephemera as we know them created each other in the long eighteenth century' (4), making visible the formative role of print ephemera in defining literary value. She argues that the collecting of print artefacts – sales catalogues, tickets, playbills, visiting cards – was itself 'a form of Enlightenment knowledge-making' (188) that attempted to understand the paper economy that transformed eighteenth-century associational culture. After 1800, evanescent ephemera became the 'antithesis of the literary' (3) book, even as the novel came to function as an affective compendium of the everyday. Russell unfolds this long history, exposed in part by digitisation, in nine lucid sections that make a compelling case for the durability of ephemera.

The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century extends Russell's interests in theatre, war, and sociability from her previous four field-changing books. Chapter 5 on theatre playbills, playbill collecting, and the emergence of the poster addresses the centrality of the theatre to ephemera collecting and concludes with the global reach of the 1796 Sydney playbill for the penal colony production of *Jane Shore*. Chapter 7 analyses the ephemera of the 1814 Jubilee celebrating the temporary peace with France. Sociability provides stitching to bundle together the examples across all the chapters; ephemerology – 'the body of knowledge about quotidian life, associational culture, customs and amusements, the mundane and the marvellous, as documented in fugitive print and visual culture' (148) – is its science.

The invention of ephemera and its connection to the everyday (ch. 1) began with Joseph Addison's idea of accidental reading and Samuel Johnson's framing of fugitive texts as 'ephemerae'. The political deployment of the handbill in the 1790s paper wars consolidated it. Early ephemera collectors, George Thomason, Anthony Wood, Narcissus Luttrell, created their own unique assemblages (ch. 2), 'bundles' of ephemera (68) that were 'the means whereby the diversity and scope of the print revolution of the early Enlightenment was apprehended' (62), especially a new awareness of time.

At the centre of Russell's argument (chs. 3, 4; parts of 6, 7) is the fascinating, understudied ephemerologist, Sarah Sophia Banks (SSB as she signed her collections), sister of Sir Joseph Banks and cohabitant of No. 32 Soho Square, where her 'collectanea' (101), described by Russell as a Benjaminian and Deleuzian 'assemblage' (103), lived in tandem with her brother's scientific ones, creating a kind of 'sociablarium' in the manner of the herbarium (123). In her vast collections of tickets and cards, SSB not only documented polite social life after 1760 – frost fairs, ballooning, social visits, balls – but also created her own 'natural history of sociability', 'an informal, expansive, science of the present' (107). Situated in the context of past and contemporary ephemerologists, SSB appears as the 'first historian of fashionable sociability' (103).

Eighteenth-century print ephemera, like the ticket and the visiting card, raised questions of what and who belongs, from home to public event to museum archive. Russell interprets the visiting card (ch. 6) as a liminal contact zone, invested with affective meanings that (con)figure eighteenth-century hospitality. Prefiguring text messaging, the visiting card 'act[s] as a prosthesis of individual identities and a filter of relationships between people' (186-7), producing a 'virtual

sociability' (194) that regulates polite culture. Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* remediates the visiting card to explore 'the scope and potential of print as a medium of information and sociality' (208), gathering '"withinside"' (213) the full range of paper products of the everyday.

Another example, Wordsworth's Book 7 of *The Prelude* (ch. 5), reveals Romantic poetry as a 'supermedium' for assimilating ephemera to a 'poetics of everyday sociality' (165). Jane Austen's *Persuasion* provides Russell's final literary example, an 'ephemerography' (216) that embodies the novel's transcendence of its own ephemerality through its representation of the everyday (ch. 7). Situated in the forgotten ephemeral history of 1814, particularly during two key public events, the February frost fair and the Jubilee fair, Austen's novel illustrates 'how ephemerality and ephemerology were constitutive of the Romantic everyday and remediated by it' (216).

Publishing an academic monograph on ephemera performs a similar role as the novel in remediating, elegantly, the ephemeral social encounter in the codex-form of the book, a print form that is itself on the verge of becoming ephemera. This reviewer recognises, too, the irony of writing a digitised review of a book on ephemera as well as the violence she does trying to encapsulate the rich experience of reading Russell's monumental work – a reminder of what Russell calls the 'absolute ephemeral' and itself an experience, like the ephemerologists', of 'the exhilaration of preserving the traces of what was already lost' (254).

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