“Would You Write Something in my Album?” Social Customs and their Literary Depiction in Nineteenth-Century France and Spain

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2014
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The album phenomenon developed in France and Spain and lasted throughout the entire nineteenth century. Albums were books with blank pages in which the owner collected contributions in the form of poetry, drawings, and music scores. These works were created for album owners by friends, acquaintances, and sometimes even suitors, and were meant to pay tribute to them. It is possible to imagine the album as a space of intense social and economic rivalry, in which owners of the books competed with one another to obtain the most luxurious books, and to fill them with the greatest number of entries from renowned artists. Similarly, contributors implicitly competed with one another to create the highest quality entries and contribute to albums that advanced their status as artists. However, established writers did not need further publicity, and many complained about the hassle of the constant request for contributions. To highlight the scope of the album phenomenon, and the frustration it caused writers and artists, José Zorrilla denounced album entry requests, stating that he had been solicited for album contributions a total of 188,000 times in his life. Honoré de Balzac condemned the album fashion even more fervently, declaring: “To hell with all albums.”

I study the album as a practice that provides important information regarding gender, economic, and artistic exchanges in the milieus in which it flourished. My approach is based on the study of different types of texts. First, I analyze three essays on social customs that present the album from a perspective that mixes journalism and satire:
Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy’s 1811 essays “Des Album” and “Recherches sur l’Album et sur le chiffonier sentimental,” and Mariano José de Larra’s 1835 essay “El album.” I use these essays to formulate a contextual theory on the album. I also examine nineteenth-century albums that I consulted in archives in France and Spain. Studying both the material construction of the albums and the contributions included in them, I try to understand the social and economic determinants of this social custom. Through the album entries, I explore the artistic networks established through, and exploited by, the album phenomenon, which were essential for successfully collecting contributions. Finally, I analyze fictional texts in which the album serves as a pivotal plot element used to shape the development of the stories and the roles of the protagonists. In my analysis of literary texts that portray the album, I focus on the establishment of gender and economic exchanges in this practice. I explore the imposition of traditional gender roles in the album phenomenon, according to which women were exclusively album owners and men were contributors. In my analysis of fictional texts, I also examine the economic aspect of this practice, reflecting upon the social class of the fictional characters involved in it. The literary texts that I study are: Honoré de Balzac’s La Muse du département (1837), Manuel Bretón de los Herreros’ El poeta y la beneficiada. Comedia en dos actos (1838) and El cuarto de hora. Comedia en cinco actos (1848), Juan de Ariza’s “Historia de un album” (1847), Henri de Meilhac’s L’autographe. Comédie en un acte (1858), Antonio Flores’ “Cuadro cincuenta y uno. Placeres de sobremesa” (1863), José María de
Pereda’s *Pedro Sánchez* (1883), Juan López Valdemoro’s “El álbum” (1886), and Leopoldo Alas ‘Clarín’’s “Album-abanico” (1898).

The nineteenth century saw the rise of consumer culture and the proliferation of objects, such as cardholders, parasols, fans, pocket watches, and other trinkets. The album is at once part of this plethora of nineteenth-century objects and yet it is also distinct, in that it was a special piece of material culture that promoted a particular type of personal communication and required the creation of textual production. The album was established as a unique cultural manifestation, the study of which allows for a reconstruction of different types of social dynamics in its milieu.

Due to the complexity and richness of this object-centered practice, and the ways in which it developed, the album offers multiple analytical possibilities, as a social, historical, and literary phenomenon. One of the most significant contributions of this project lies in its transnational perspective and in its comparative analysis of different types of texts: essays on social customs, literary texts, and personal collections that survive in archival albums. The study of the exchanges that were fostered, and capitalized upon, through the album fashion is essential for understanding notions of private and public and collection as a practice. My analysis of the album yields invaluable insights into gender and class dynamics, ideas of art, and visual and material culture in nineteenth-century France and Spain.
Dedication

To my mother, who was not able to finish high school.

And to my sister, for being a great friend.
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Introduction

La moda de los albums fue general en Francia en la época de la Restauracion, y recordamos haber visto una caricatura de aquel país, representando un cuerno de la abundancia, del que se escapaban multitud de albums, y un gran número de hombres leyendo, resguardados bajo paraguas.
(The album fashion was widespread in France during the Restoration, and we remember having seen a caricature of that country, representing a cornucopia from which emerged a multitude of albums, and a great number of men reading, protected under umbrellas.)

Javier de Palacio, “Origen de los albums” (1859)

Album: Registre personnel servant à consigner les autographes ou autres traits caractéristiques de personnes connues et plus spécialement d’artistes.
(A Album: Personal register which serves to record the autographs or other strokes characteristic of well-known people, and more specially of artists.

“Album,” Le Trésor de la langue française

Fans, umbrellas, hats, visiting cards, dancing cards, purses: the nineteenth century was a period of extensive proliferation of objects that signified their owners’ private and public constitution. The album, which arose in this context, was a book with blank pages in which the owner collected contributions in the form of poetry, drawings, and music scores created for them by friends, acquaintances, and sometimes even suitors. The album, as an object, was the material representation of a fashion that spread throughout France and Spain during the nineteenth century. It is possible to imagine the album practice as a space of intense rivalry, in which owners of the books competed with one another to obtain the rarest, most exquisite, and greatest number of entries for their books. Similarly, contributors implicitly competed with one another through creating high quality entries and contributing mainly to albums that advanced their status as artists. In this milieu, the album fashion had such an impact that important writers complained frequently about the annoyance of the constant request for contributions.
Honoré de Balzac, for example, once declared: “To hell with all albums” (Pakenham 113). Similarly, José Zorrilla denounced album entry requests, stating that he had been solicited for album contributions a total of 188,000 times in his life, and obvious exaggeration, but one that emphasizes the point (Gahete Jurado 60).

While tracing the genealogy of the album as an artifact that promoted particular types of written communication, it becomes clear that its use was not exclusive to the nineteenth century. Having its etymological origin in the Latin word *albus* (opaque white), the idea of the album has evolved over centuries. For instance, in Latin Antiquity the *album praetoris* was the white board upon which the praetorian edict was publicly announced. Later, in the sixteenth century, German students developed the *album amicorum*, or “friendship album,” to collect their friends’ signatures.

In the nineteenth century, the existence and ownership of albums transformed notably, causing this personal object to serve a much more individualistic purpose for both owners of and contributors to the book. The owner of the album became the addressee and the recipient of all the praises included within. According to the texts I have discovered that present this cultural practice, the album was widespread in Europe from the beginning of the nineteenth century to its very end. The French essay on social customs that depicts the practice is from 1811, while there is also an 1898 Spanish short story that portrays it. Like all social phenomena, this practice surely went through different phases in its development as a means of communication and space for artistic expression. Thus, it is impossible to approach this social custom in a linear way or to
impose an exclusive or definite notion of how the album functioned in its milieu. On the contrary, the very multiplicity of possible interpretations of this fashion, and the constant alterations and deviations of its general rules, add richness to the study of the album.

In this dissertation, I identify the album as an important social, cultural, artistic, and personal practice, the study of which reveals significant information about the milieus in which it flourished and the participants in it. The analysis of the album allows us to reconstruct the different types of transactions present in the practice, and establish the ways in which they are emblematic of the era’s broader circumstances. First, this craze offers evidence about the nature of social dynamics, as it required the formation of networks through which participants materialized the process of requesting and creating contributions. The exploration of the album practice also helps us understand the constitution of gender-based exchanges in the nineteenth-century context. Specific gender roles were assigned in this trend, in which women were exclusively album owners (the book becoming a representation of their body) and men album contributors (responsible for the creation of entries). Considering that the books themselves were usually expensive, elegant, leather-bound objects, the study of the album also allows us reconstitute the function of economic structures in this context. Only women who had the economic means to purchase the book would be able to participate in this craze, which made it into a marker of class. The analysis of the album phenomenon also fosters the understanding of ideas of art in its milieu. Due to its detailed and sophisticated material construction, the album itself could be considered an art object. Once its pages were full
of contributions, the album would be even more valuable, depending on the quality of the entries and the status of the contributors. As a social custom that defined the needs and desires of its nineteenth-century participants, the album also reveals the particularities of the gesture of collection, as well as the intention to memorialize both the album owners and contributors.

My interpretations of the album’s manifestation in nineteenth-century France and Spain are based on the analysis of the three different types of text that I include in my dissertation. In my first chapter, I study essays on social customs that present the album from a perspective that mixes the journalistic and the satirical. In 1811, Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy wrote an account of the effects that the emergence of the album had on the Parisian neighborhood of the Marais. Writing twenty-four years after Jouy, in 1835, Mariano José de Larra reflects upon the impact of the album in the Spanish context. Notwithstanding the chronological distance between these two essays, both Jouy and Larra depict the album as a custom that was in vogue at the moment they write about it. Because of their almost sociological character, I approach Jouy’s and Larra’s essays as a type of contextual theory of the album. However, I also take into account the humorous elements that add something of a fictional angle to their portrayal of the fashion. One of the most interesting aspects of Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on the album, which I analyze extensively in my first chapter, is that they insist on presenting this fashion as it was generally perceived as an exclusively female practice. I problematize the notion that only women owned albums, as well as other observations Jouy and Larra make, based on my
archival research on nineteenth-century albums, and on other literary texts that depict the practice. Through my examination of the intertextuality that exists between these two essays on social customs, I am able to demonstrate the importance of the album phenomenon in nineteenth century.

In the first chapter of this study, I also introduce Jean Baudrillard’s notions of objects as a theoretical frame for my approach to the album. As an object that signified a widespread cultural practice, the album reflects many of Baudrillard’s observations about the purpose and symbolism of objects in society. I am particularly interested in the link he establishes between objects and the social class they represent and are represented by, considering the ways in which social classes determine the importance of certain objects. This cyclical dynamic is present in the album exchange, through the centrality that social elites gave to the book, and the ways in which it ultimately signified members of those elites and their access to the networks that facilitated the collection’s completion. Baudrillard also points out that objects are a metaphor for the desire of their owners to belong to a specific social group. The album clearly represented this dynamic, allowing both owners and contributors to fulfill this desire and establish the connections that would offer them the possibility to construct a specific identity in public space.

My second chapter takes as its object of study the surviving nineteenth-century albums that I was able to consult in archives in France and Spain. Considering the value of these albums as historical objects, I analyze their material construction and the contributions they include, as the two elements that allow for a contemporary
understanding of the particularities of this practice. In terms of albums’ physical appearance, I identify the aspects that reveal information about their value and workmanship, in order to analyze the function of class in relation to the socio-economic dimensions of the album practice.

In my archival analysis, I also study the contributions included in the historical albums, focusing on the gesture of artistic creation and on the types of exchanges the albums reveal. Among the albums I consulted, I was able to verify the presence of literary, pictorial, and musical contributions. My analysis, focused predominantly on literary and poetic entries, revolves around stylistic tendencies and subject matter of album compositions. One of the most interesting tendencies that I study of album contributions is the creation of self-referential entries that mentioned the owner’s request, the process of creation of the work of art, or the album exchange in general. In my examination, I include contributions that fulfilled the common objective of the album, namely to compliment a female album owner. However, I also acknowledge the instances in which this basic dynamic was altered, for instance those in which the husbands of album owners became the object of the entries’ praise.

In the second chapter, I maintain a constant dialogue with both Jouy and Larra, which allows me to point out the instances in which my observations do not correspond with their theorization of the album. For example, among the albums I consulted several belonged to men. Similarly, I also discovered contributions created by women. This proves that the gender determination of the album practice was not as strict as Jouy and
Larra represented it. Certainly, the most significant contribution of this chapter to the study of the album is my identification of important nineteenth-century French and Spanish literary and artistic figures as participants in it. Many female album owners were married to writers who, in turn, were also album contributors. The social and artistic networks revealed through the study of the album prove that this fashion required the establishment of personal relationships that would ensure the success of the gesture of collecting contributions.

My approach to the essays on social customs as journalistic depictions of the album phenomenon punctuated by humor, and to the albums themselves as historical objects, serves as basis for my study in the third and fourth chapters of this study of literary texts that present the phenomenon. The cultural practice that I study as a general nineteenth-century trend is fictionalized in French and Spanish novels, plays, and short stories. In these different literary genres, the album exchange becomes a plot element that impacts the development of the story and defines the characters involved in it. The album was considered by writers as important as Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, José María de Pereda, and Leopoldo Alas ‘Clarín’ to be an element that captured the reality of their milieu, sufficiently to merit inclusion in their work. These authors’ fascinating approach to the album fashion, combined with the particularities of the fictional story narrated in each text, results in a unique representation of the practice in each case.

In the third chapter, I analyze scenes from literary texts that present exchanges that result in the mutilation of albums and the addition of pages to these books. I examine
this aspect of the album dynamic as portrayed in Juan de Ariza’s “Historia de un *album*” (1847), Manuel Bretón de los Herreros’ *El cuarto de hora. Comedia en cinco actos* (1848), and Henri de Meilhac’s *L’Autographe. Comédie en un acte* (1858). The album scenes in these texts become sources of information that allow for a better understanding of the conditions that might have led to the physical alteration of several of the historical albums that I consulted in my archival research.

The fourth chapter focuses on the literary depiction of gender and economic transactions in the album practice. I identify how gender roles and social class affected album exchanges through my analysis of Honoré de Balzac’s *La Muse du département* (1837), Manuel Bretón de los Herreros’ *El poeta y la beneficiada. Comedia en dos actos* (1838), Antonio Flores’ “Cuadro cincuenta y uno. Placeres de sobremesa” (1863), José María de Pereda’s *Pedro Sánchez* (1883), Juan López Valdemoro’s “El álbum” (1886), and Leopoldo Alas ‘Clarín’’s “Album-abanico” (1898). The multiple personal, emotional, economic, and artistic motivations and functions of the album encounters in these texts enrich the study of the practice, offering an insiders’ perspective of the actual interactions that led to the materialization of album contributions.

In my approach to the development of the album in nineteenth-century France and Spain, I consider its multiple analytic possibilities as a social, historical and literary phenomenon. Due to the richness of this practice and the multiple angles of study it offers, one might be surprised that it has not been investigated more thoroughly by literary scholars. In fact, I have not found a single critical text that compares and
contrasts the manifestation of the album in nineteenth-century France and Spain, while simultaneously examining the portrayal of albums in fictional texts and essays in social customs, not to mention analyzing archival albums.

There are more articles written about the album in Spain than in France. The first of the Spanish articles, published in 1859, is Javier de Palacio’s “Origen de los albums.” Due to its publication in the context of the development album as a social practice, de Palacio’s article naturally does not have the historical perspective of articles written a century after the development of the phenomenon. De Palacio briefly refers to the etymology of the word “album” and to some important albums, such as the one inherited by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. After de Palacio, Julio Puyol wrote a 1915 an article about an album that had belonged to don Antonio Marfa de Ojeda. More than merely cataloguing, Puyol describes in detail the physical appearance of this album, which had been bought in Paris more than 80 years before he wrote about it.

Three of the articles published in Spain about the album are written by Leonardo Romero Tobar, whom I met in person in Spain, while conducting my research. In “Los álbumes de las románticas,” Romero Tobar gives a historical account of the album, in which he refers to Jouy as Larra’s predecessor in the presentation of this phenomenon. Romero Tobar dedicates the last part of this article to analyzing a selection of album poetry. This analysis fosters a reflection from Romero Tobar upon the scarce interest of specialists in the topic of the album. In the specific case of Spain, Romero Tobar affirms that the reasons for the generalized lack of awareness about the album phenomenon are
the indifference among philologists toward the study of Romanticism and the low value assigned to albums as historical documents (85). In his second article on the subject, “Manuscritos poéticos del siglo XIX,” Romero Tobar simply offers an index of twelve albums, specifying their owners, contributors, and the title of the poems added to each album.¹ “Dibujos y pinturas en álbumes del siglo XIX: Una variedad del ut pictura poesis,” the third of Romero Tobar’s articles on this subject, focuses on the album as a register of pictorial and graphic works of important artists of the era, and also includes an index of types of drawing and materials used in art entries.

Another important essay on the development of the album in Spain is Amparo Quiles Faz’s “Los álbumes de señoritas: sujetos y objetos femeninos en el siglo XIX.” In addition to quoting Larra and the two nineteenth-century Spanish novels in which the album appears (which I analyze in the third chapter of this study), Quiles Faz proposes in this article that the album is a symbol of the power of the women, who personally asked their admirers for their contributions. This approach represents an interpretation opposing the idea that women were passive in the album exchange, since their role in the practice did not imply any creative responsibility. I argue that, in some ways, each one of these interpretations might be true. In the nineteenth century, women did not have as much power and agency as men in terms of their public presence. Thus, the album offered women a space that, even though it was limited, signified for them the possibility to

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¹ In addition to this information, Romero Tobar mentions in which library or private collection each one of these albums is kept, which was extremely useful for the archival work that I did in Spain.
initiate social interactions and catalyze artistic production. In my analysis of the gender connotation of the album, I examine how in this practice gender boundaries were both enforced and also transgressed.

Certain articles I consulted about the album phenomenon in France and Spain present it from an individual perspective, analyzing albums that belonged to specific historical figures. This is the case of Ramón Esquer Torres’ “Dos álbumes inéditos del romanticismo,” Joaquín de Entrambasaguas’ “Una olvidada antología poética,” Madeleine Cottin’s “Autour d’un album romantique,” Catulle Mendès “L’Album de Philoxène Boyer,” and Manuel Gahete Jurado’s “La concepción del paisaje en el álbum romántico de los marqueses de Peñaflor.” Of these essays, I use only de Entrambasaguas’ directly in my study, since it is useful for my analysis of the Conde de San Luis’ album, which was published as a book.

I have found few articles that treat the subject of the development of the album practice in France. The most important of these articles is Michael Pakenham’s “Albums littéraires.” Notwithstanding its brevity (it is only four pages long), Pakenham’s article has key references to the historical context of the album phenomenon and specific details about the content and physical appearance of the object. In his article “Un album,” Philippe Hamon, analyzing Flaubert’s L’Education sentimentale (1869), focuses on a

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2 There are some other articles that follow this same pattern and that I did not consult for this project. In his article “Los álbumes románticos poéticos,” Carlos Miguel Pueyo offers a review of existing scholarly works and mentions briefly many of the articles focused on specific album owners.
different type of album: Frédéric Moreau’s sketchbook. Hamon does reference the album that Madame Arnoux has in the novel. However, Hamon’s mention of the type of album that I study serves only to establish a difference between it (what he identifies as “album amicorum”) and the one that Frédéric uses for his drawings.\(^3\)

Going beyond to the existing works published on the album, my project proposes a broader perspective on this craze. I do not study the album as an isolated phenomenon. Instead, I approach it as a significant practice which holds a great deal of explanatory power, the analysis of which yields insights into social, gender, class, and artistic constructions in nineteenth-century France and Spain. My comparative analysis of essays on social customs, fictional texts, and personal collections in surviving historical albums reveals a diversity of circumstances for the manifestation of the album practice. Analyzing the album phenomenon in its various iterations and in all its full complexity, allows for a thorough understanding of its multidimensionality. The uniqueness of my project ultimately lies as well in its transnational perspective, which makes it an important contribution to the field of nineteenth-century European studies.

\(^3\) Hamon makes a detailed literature review about the autograph album, which was very useful for my research.
Chapter 1: “Between Journalism and Fiction: The Depiction of the Album in Essays on Social Customs”

Au diable tous les albums.
(To hell with all albums.)
Honoré de Balzac

Le besoin d’accumuler est un des signes avant-coureurs de la mort chez les individus comme dans les sociétés. On le constate à l’état aigu dans les périodes préparalytiques. Il y a aussi la manie de la collection, en neurologie, “le collectionnisme.”
(The need to accumulate is one of the early warning signs of death in individuals as well as in societies. One can see it in its most intense state in pre-paralytic periods. There is also the mania of collection, in neurology, “collectionism.”)


One of the most interesting aspects of the album is that this phenomenon transcended the limits of reality and fiction. In my exploration of the album, I establish a juxtaposition between literary texts that present albums and real nineteenth-century albums, the two elements of this practice that are still present nowadays. In this way, through the voices of social commentators, narrators, fictional characters, and real women whose albums were considered important enough to be kept in archives in France and Spain, I attempt a reconstruction of the trajectory of this fashion in nineteenth century. The type of text in which the album was portrayed varied, including different literary genres and even journalistic essays on social customs. My study of the album’s depiction in the essays on social customs offers a historical and almost sociological perspective on the development of this phenomenon in nineteenth-century France and Spain. The three essays on social customs that I analyze are Victor-Joseph Etienne de
Jouy’s “Des Album” [sic]\(^1\) (1811) and “Recherches sur l’Album et sur le chiffronier sentimental” (1811), part of his collection *L’hermite de la Chaussé d’Antin, ou Observations sur les mœurs et les usages parisiens au commencement du XIX\(^{\circ}\) siècle*, and Mariano José de Larra’s “El album” (1835), included in his *Artículos*. I wish to approach these essays as a type of contextual theory on the album, a first-person account that presents the particularities of the emergence and development of this practice in its context. However, I will contrast this historical element present in Jouy’s and Larra’s essays with the genre’s satirical nature and the humor typically used by writers who speak about social custom to portray the social practices they observed. In this way, I will establish a balance between what could be a factual representation of the album and what was possibly a view corrupted by the fictional elements that were usually included in the essays on social customs.

My analysis of Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on the album presents their literary depiction of this practice and also problematizes it, considering the similarities and differences in their particular approaches to it. The intertextuality between the two essays, which results from Larra’s appropriation and reproduction of the topic of Jouy’s essay, makes inevitable the comparison between them. I want to interpret Jouy’s and Larra’s particular interest in the album, and their presentation of this trend in their respective collections along with other multiple social practices, as a gesture that confirmed the

\(^1\) Although he uses the plural article in the title of his essay, Jouy keeps the noun “Album” singular. I will not point out the errata in further references to the title.
popularity of this phenomenon in their context. The effects of the album practice captivated Jouy and Larra to the point that in their essays they stop being neutral observers or commentators. Both writers adopt in their accounts of the album a more active role that reveals their controversial position regarding this fashion’s impact in their milieu. They present the album first by criticizing certain aspects of it, but then reveal their fascination with it by scrutinizing some of its basic uses. The different portrayal that each author makes of the album will be essential for my examination of their essays, since I aim to point out the instances in which their descriptions are conflicting with each other and to determine if those particularities respond to a cultural determination or simply to the fictional touch they give to their individual presentation of the phenomenon.

Also, my study of actual nineteenth-century albums will allow me to identify the instances in which Jouy’s and Larra’s depiction of this object contradicts its actual physical constitution. The key contribution of my analysis of Jouy’s and Larra’s writings on the album is the contrast I will establish between them through my comparative analysis of the three essays, something that critics have failed to do before in the few published academic studies regarding this trend.
I. Lives and Connections: Tracing the Origin of the Album Topic in the Essays on Social Customs

A. Jouy’s and Larra’s Public Persona and Literary Production

In his 1835 essay “El album,” Larra acknowledges that he is not the first author who paid attention to the album fashion and that an anonymous “French author” had already written an article about it in 1811. In order to analyze Jouy’s and Larra’s interest in the album, it will be essential to explore the aspects of their biographies that explain why this type of social phenomenon caught their attention, as well as the one-way dialogue between the literary production of the two social observers, emphasizing the indebtedness of the Spanish author towards his predecessor. Analyzing Jouy’s and Larra’s biographies will be essential for me to identify the circumstances that determined their interest in the album and their decision to portray this practice in their essays on social customs.

Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy (1764-1846) lived his life, as pointed out by Ch. M. des Granges, as though it were a “sorte de roman” (“type of novel”; 72). Probably des Granges did not refer exclusively to Jouy’s multiple travels to Guyana, India, and other places, but also to his life in Paris and the adventures that he lived there as a minute observer of social customs. Jouy’s life was certainly a performance, of which he became the main character, since even his name changed.² A fan of the “séduction pour la

² His real name was “Joseph Etienne,” and his father added “Jouy” to his family name. “Etienne,” thus, changed from surname to first name and Jouy himself eventually added the particle “de” at a moment when
séduction” (“seduction for séduction”) Jouy must have been aware of his physical and moral virtues since, as his contemporary Ernest Legouvé points out, he was: “un beau jeune homme d’aventures, un d’Artagnan du dix-huitième siècle […] tout lui riait et il riait à tout!” (“handsome young adventurer, an eighteenth-century d’Artagnan […] everything smiled at him and he smiled at everything”; Faul 18). Although married in 1793 to Isabella Walker, daughter of English writer Lady Mary Leslie Hamilton, Jouy never considered this commitment as an obstacle for him to continue playing the role of seducer in his travels, to the point of even forgetting that he was married. From this marriage resulted a daughter, Emma, who, interestingly, was herself an album owner. I was able to consult Emma Jouy’s album in France and will analyze it later in this study, considering the intersection between the fictional account of the practice written by her father and the symbolism of the real object owned by her.

Jouy’s literary production includes nine plays that he wrote and published by himself or in collaboration between 1797 and 1800. Eventually, he also published short stories (his collection La Galerie des Femmes includes stories about stereotypical libertine and coquettish women), poetry, vaudevilles, fables, and even operas. His essays on the album that I will be analyzing belong to his journalistic production, which he started in 1811 with his collaborations in La Gazette de France. He finished his Gazette it was convenient for him to have a more commercial name under which he could publish his theater plays and newspaper articles (Faul 13, 67).
period in 1814 to create with some colleagues littérateurs the satirical newspaper Le Nain jaune ou Journal des arts, des sciences, et de la littérature. This newspaper lasted only until July, 1815 (Faul 93-4).

Jouy was not precisely admired or praised by critics, especially those from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth-century. Georges Le Gentil identified him as a “chroniqueur mediocre,” while Ch.-M. de Feletz declared that his problem was not a lack of “esprit,” but an inability to show it in his published works (at least in the volumes de Feletz had read, some five out of twenty-five) (445). Notwithstanding the criticism and disapproval of his writing style and personal eccentricities, Jouy’s talent in observing the happenings of his social surroundings and narrating them was on multiple occasions acknowledged and praised, sometimes through his appearance in fictional works. Such is the case of Gustave Flaubert’s novel Bouvard et Pécuchet (1881). Feeling the imperious

3 Among the colleagues who participated with Jouy in this project were Louis François Auguste Cauchois-Lemaire, Antoine-Vincent Arnault, and Jean-Baptiste Bory de Saint-Vincent.

4 Comparing him later with the writer Antoine Jay, with whom Jouy had collaborated, de Feletz even affirms that Jouy is the more interesting of the two: “de sorte que, dans les ouvrages faits en commun par ces deux écrivains, ce sont les morceaux composés par M. Jouy que l’on recherche, si l’on recherche quelque chose” (446). (“in such a way that, in the books written collectively by these two writers, it is the passages written by M. Jouy the ones people look for, if they look for anything”) Antoine Jay (1770-1854) was a French writer who had published two literary texts in collaboration with Jouy: Les Hermites en prison, ou consolations de Sainte-Pélagie (1823) and Les Hermites en liberté pour faire suite aux “Hermites en prison” (1824). They wrote these texts after being arraigned for ‘crimes’ related to their literary production. Jouy was being accused of mocking, in an article written for the collection Biographie nouvelle des contemporains, the sentence against the brothers Faucher, who were condemned to death by a council of war. Jay was convicted for writing an article about Boyer-Fonfrède, included in the same anthology as Jouy’s. On April 20, 1823 they both got to the Sainte-Pélagie prison to serve their sentence. As Claude Pichois points out, being “hommes de lettres” they knew how to take advantage of their detention to make their popularity grow. They published two volumes of chronicles in which they narrated their life in prison. The sequel, Les Hermites en liberté, was published after they came out of jail (Pichois 248-49).
need to learn about society and “descendre plus avant dans la connaissance des mœurs,”
Bouvard “relut Paul de Kock [et] feuilleta de vieux Ermites de la Chaussée d’Antin” (“go
deeper into the knowledge about customs […] reread Paul de Kock [and] skimmed
through old hermits of the Chaussée d’Antin”; 166). Was Flaubert a fan of Jouy and of
his writings on social customs? Was he trying to validate the chronicler as a trustworthy
source of knowledge about nineteenth-century society?

Jouy’s life seemed always to be a challenge, as G. Lenôtre points out, and the
biggest adventure in that exploit was probably the writing of the collection of essays of
the Hermite: “l’ouvrage le plus insignifiant, le plus lourd, le plus fastidieux, le plus
illisble que compte la littérature française” (“the most insignificant, heavy, tedious, and
unreadable work ever published in French literature”; 229). Ironically, this literary work,
the one in which the essays on the album are included, gained him a position in the
Académie Française. For many, included his biographer Michel Faul, Jouy was simply
an arriviste who put all his energies into his mission of being elected as member of the
Académie française. Jouy’s dream finally became a reality on January 11 1815,
notwithstanding the critiques of those who did not think of him as worthy of this position
and even identified him as “l’une des plus complètes nullités académiques” (“one of the
most complete academic nullities”; Faul 96).^5

[^5]: In order to materialize his project of being elected for the highest language and literature organization in France, Jouy had even become part of the Déjeuner de la Fourchette, a group of around fifteen writers of which four had already been members of the Académie when the group was formed (Andrieux, Arnault, Daru, and Picard), and three became members after the creation of the group (Parseval-Grandmaison,
Larra’s life (1809-1837), on the other hand, cannot be narrated in the same satirical way that critics approach Jouy’s. The Spanish costumbrista’s decision to end his life at the early age of twenty-seven completely determined the tone of future accounts of it. Notwithstanding the humor in his narrations and his frequent presentation of himself as a character in them, Larra is often described as having a very serious and depressive personality, prone to perceiving life with a certain severity that eventually affected him emotionally. To these character traits it should be added the clear frustration that Larra suffered regarding the circumstances of his historical context. The writer also known as “Fígaro” (his most popular pseudonym) had an inevitable inclination to contrast all the things that were desirable in other societies with everything despicable in his own. His only objective, it has been said, was to modernize Spain in all aspects (Lorenzo Rivero 1). He was a progressive liberal who fought for a better Spain, one which could overcome the backwardness and vice that hindered its development (Marún 382). But Larra’s desire for progress had a justified basis in the afrancesamiento that, according to his contemporaries, he experienced. Larra probably learned his inclination and attraction to French society and culture from his father, who supported Joseph Bonaparte in his reign during the Peninsular War and moved to Bordeaux in 1812 with all his family to serve as military surgeon for the French army.

Lacretelle le jeune, Etienne, and Chateaubriand. The purpose of the group was to make sure that each one of the members would at some point be part of the Académie (Faul 87-88).
In 1818, as a result of an amnesty that Fernando VII offered to the exiled Spaniards, Larra’s father decided to return to Spain with his family. Forced to insert himself into the Spanish system of education at the age of nine, Larra had to get used to a new language and a way of teaching and learning that was different from the one he knew. In a letter to one of his editors Larra declared: “El francés fue mi primera lengua, y esta rouille sólo, como los goznes de una puerta, el uso me vuelve a poner corriente” (“French was my first language and it is becoming rusty like the hinges of an abandoned door, only by using it I can renew it”; Caravaca 3). The beginning of Larra’s studies in Spain coincided with the development in that society of a phobia against French fashion and all the things that came from France (Rubio, “Introducción” 14). The future writer had to face this rejection toward something that in some way he represented, having grown up in a country resented at that moment by Spaniards. Larra aspired to make an impact and plant the seed for change from two main platforms: his political engagement and, most importantly, his literary endeavors. His frustration regarding his social and political projects originated the discouragement that was partly the cause of his decision to commit suicide. The other influences for this outcome were personal reasons, specifically related to sentimental relationships.

Like Jouy, Larra had a weakness for the opposite sex, and his adventures with women determined many circumstances in his life. In 1829, at only twenty years old, he married to Pepita Wetoret y Velasco. But that marriage did not last long, since Pepita discovered that Larra was being unfaithful with Dolores Armijo, an extremely beautiful
Sevillian woman who was a poet and was also married. His biographers affirm that Larra became completely infatuated with Dolores. By 1836 Larra’s despair and hopelessness was evident in many of his writings and even in his approach to writing: “Escribir en Madrid es llorar, es buscar voz sin encontrarla como en una pesadilla abrumadora y violenta. Porque no escribe uno ni siquiera para los suyos. ¿Quiénes son los suyos? ¿Quién oye aquí?” (“To write in Madrid is to cry, it is to look for a voice without finding it like in an overwhelming and violent nightmare. Because one does not even write for friends and family. Who are one’s friends and family? Who listens here?”; Montero 3).

On February 13, 1837, after a meeting that Larra had hoped would be a reconciliation with Dolores, the young and promising writer ended his life with a pistol shot (Montero 4).

In terms of his literary production, Larra wrote poetry, novels, theater, and also did translations and adaptations. But the most important genre developed by the *costumbrista* is undoubtedly the journalistic one, specifically the *artículos* that became so representative of his style. Larra gave a real depth to the typical *costumbrista* articles focusing on ideas rather than on things and examining exhaustively the causes of the social, political and psychological misfortunes of his country (Servodidio 17).

Notwithstanding his short eight-year literary career (and the fact that the literary scene in his context did not pay much attention to the news of his suicide), Larra became the only figure from his generation whose popularity and prestige have augmented with time. His literary creation nowadays seems to be more present than ever (Servodidio 8). The
satirical tone that his biographers avoid is frequently present in the *artículos* that address his desire for the political and social modernization of Spain.

B. “Dí las gracias a Jouy:” On Larra’s Appropriation of Jouy’s Essays on French Social Customs

Jouy’s “Des Album” (the essay to which Larra makes a specific reference) was published in 1811, during the time of the Peninsular War and the Napoleonic invasion of Spain. It is understandable that this period led to the entrance into Spain of many artistic products that would make an impact in the cultural development of Spanish society. Although Larra was only two years old when Jouy’s essay was published, he evidently had access to it later in life, which means the production of the French writer remained as an important reference of social customs writing in the neighboring country. Larra’s knowledge of Jouy’s work is not limited to the French author’s essays on the album. The Spanish *costumbrista* knew the totality of Jouy’s oeuvre well, to the point that many of his articles on Spanish social customs were clearly based on previous writings on the same topics published by Jouy. It has been said that Larra was influenced by Horace, Nicolas Boileau, Joseph Addison, Jean de la Bruyère, François de La Rochefoucauld, Ramón Mesonero Romanos, among others (Caravaca 8-9, 13). However, it is evident that the strongest presence in the writings of Larra was Jouy. Critics have identified more than a dozen articles in which Larra imitates or copies Jouy, and others in which he reproduces passages from the French author (Caravaca 20). The parallels in certain titles of both authors allow us to recognize Larra’s use of the subjects presented by Jouy in his essays.
for example: “La Cour des Messageries” / “La diligencia,” “La Maison de Prêt” / “Empeños y desempeños,” “Une première représentation d’aujourd’hui” / “Una primera representación,” “La partie de chasse” / “La caza,” and “Quelques portraits” / “Varios caracteres.”

Evidently, Larra did not bother to change significantly the titles of many of the essays inspired by Jouy, since he did not need to hide the influence of the French author in his works.

Larra should not be blamed for copying Jouy, since he never claimed to be original in his literary creation. On the contrary, he warned in the preface of *El pobrecito hablador* that he would steal his materials wherever he could: “publicándolos íntegros o mutilados, traducidos, arreglados o refundidos, citando la fuente o apropiándonoslos descaradamente, porque como pobres habladores hablamos lo nuestro y lo ajeno” (“publishing them in their full-length or mutilated, translated, mended or rewritten, quoting the source or appropriating them blatantly, because, as poor speakers, we talk about the familiar and the foreign”; Hendrix, “Notes on Jouy’s Influence” 37-8).

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7 This idea of copying and recirculation is definitely similar to what happens in the album exchange. Album contributions were available in the book for future contributors and acquaintances who wanted to read the praises created for the album owner. Therefore, there was the possibility that those literary creations were copied and reused in other albums. There were cases in which the contributors themselves would recycle their poetry, using the same verses in multiple albums to compliment different women. Larra and Jouy
Although this generalization reveals that the sources of the topics he presented in his articles were multiple and diverse, it is clear that Jouy is the strongest influence in the writings of the Spanish *costumbrista*. In his article “La revista del año 1834,” Larra, referring to a dream he had, acknowledges that he was recklessly plagiarizing Jouy: “La segunda cosa que vi fue [sic] que al hacer este sueño no había hecho más que un plagio imprudente a un escritor de más mérito que yo. Dí las gracias a Jouy…” (“The second thing I saw was that by having this dream I had done nothing but imprudently plagiarize a writer of more merit than myself. I thanked Jouy”; Hendrix, “Notes on Jouy’s Influence” 38). Identifying the plagiarism attenuates the negative connotation that such an accusation would usually carry with it and illustrates the looser attitude toward copy and emulation in the literary domain in this period. The *costumbrista* is satirically revealing and accepting the idea not only that he had copied Jouy, but also that the French writer was superior to him. This declaration rhetorically invalidates any allegations that his detractors could make against him, since he is clearly not ashamed of his lack of creativity in this specific article. On the contrary, Larra seems to be proud to declare that he has copied Jouy, implying that his rendition of the French author’s topic is as good as the original one. Although in other articles he keeps Jouy as an anonymous reference (the make reference to this circumstance in the album exchange and we will also see it depicted in the literary texts that present the practice.

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essay on the album is a case in point), in this particular one Larra thanks Jouy directly, attempting to attenuate the charge of his plagiarism.

Hendrix defends Larra’s gesture of copying Jouy, declaring categorically that his articles “virtually without exception are an improvement on the Frenchman’s,” and that when he translates into a Spanish context the translation becomes almost original (“Notes on Jouy’s Influence” 45). Along these lines, Caravaca states that Larra contributes with his vigor, his aggressiveness, and particular vision to the development in the Spanish costumbrismo of a focus on problems that, if he had lived longer, he could have transformed into real issues treated by this genre (22). Whether Larra’s articles are superior to Jouy’s is open to debate, and I would be considerably less categorical than Caravaca. I do think, however, that Larra developed a very specific approach to these social situations that reveal a lot about the particularities of the Spanish context. Thus, the validity of his literary gesture comes, if not from an innovation in the subjects of his articles, at least from a certain cleverness and talent in the study of the reproduction of the social phenomena already analyzed by Jouy.

There were definitely many other writers who presented social customs that Larra could have chosen to imitate. But he found Jouy so relevant as to borrow many topics and approaches from him. Larra could have copied some of the customs portrayed, for example, by Louis-Sébastien Mercier, considered Jouy’s predecessor. Mercier had published his Tableau de Paris before Jouy’s essays, between 1781 and 1788, and in it he offered an analysis of aspects of French society at the end of the eighteenth century that
Larra could have also identified in his Spanish context. However, it was invariably Jouy who caught the attention of the Spanish writer. Considering Larra’s infatuation with Jouy’s essays on social customs, it is not surprising that the album became one of the main topics of this constant homage. The Spanish author offers his own account of the manifestation of the album craze in Spain, using as inspiration and reference Jouy’s descriptions and analysis of its presence in France at the beginning of the century.

II. A Theoretical Approach to the Album as an Object

In Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on the album this object is presented, not only as an emblematic social practice in their respective contexts, but also as a fashion that determined multiple aspects of the status and gender dynamics of its participants. Since the album came to be a symbol of its owner, I think it is important to consider the condition of “object” of the book itself from a theoretical standpoint. The interest in understanding the relationship that humans establish with the things and objects surrounding them in their daily life has led to the appearance (especially in recent decades) of a broad theoretical discussion on this topic. One of the most recent texts that proposes the reconsideration of the role of things in our daily life is Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*. Using Bruno Latour’s notion of “actant” (a source of action, either human or nonhuman), Bennett proposes to explore an affect not specific to human bodies and to “theorize a vitality intrinsic to materiality as such” (XIII). Bill Brown examines the function of objects in his article “Thing Theory.”
Affirming that “we look through objects […] but we only catch a glimpse of things” (4), Brown establishes a hierarchical differentiation between things and objects, privileging the latter and identifying the former as a notion that refers to generality and amorphousness. For Brown, objects function as windows that reveal information about history, society, nature, or culture, while things only obtain their value regarding their material utility (4). Arjun Appadurai’s approach in his essay “Commodities and the politics of value,” the “Introduction” to The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective, is focused on the classification of things as “commodities” because of their participation in a market economy. Appadurai equates commodities with human beings, arguing that, as a result of the relationship between the notions of value and exchange and the effects that derive from it, “commodities, like persons, have social lives” (3).8

Among the multiple theoretical approaches to the notion of things and objects and their role in the daily life of humans, I think the most appropriate for my study of the album is the one developed by Jean Baudrillard in his book Pour une critique de l’économie politique du signe. Baudrillard starts his examination of the notion of object by debating the empiricist hypotheses according to which the use of value of an object and its functionality should be prioritized. He affirms that the essential value of an object

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8 Other texts that present fascinating theoretical approaches to objects and things, their consumption, and their role in the daily life of humans are The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective, edited by Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, and Judy Attfield’s Wild things: the material culture of everyday life.
is actually the exchange value ("valeur d’échange"), while the need for and functions of objects are only an abstract level or manifest discourse of their existence, a discourse to which the social discourse itself seemed to be fundamental (8). Baudrillard’s proposal is pertinent to analyze the album since this object belonged to a dynamic of exchange on different levels. First, it was an object that participated in a commercial culture and therefore was attributed a specific monetary value that the potential owners had to pay if they wanted to obtain it. Second, the album gained an additional value once its pages were filled up with contributions, particularly depending on the contributors’ status and notoriety and on the quality of the entries themselves. However, the clearest instance of exchange in the album phenomenon is, evidently, the gesture of asking for contributions and responding to this request with an album entry. While album owners would obtain a contribution that would enrich their book and their own perceived social value, album contributors would have the possibility of showcasing their talent in a social environment that could eventually provide them the recognition for which they longed.

Baudrillard presents his idea of consumption focusing on the notion of “conspicuous waste” that he borrows from Thorstein Veblen in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. From this concept, Baudrillard develops his theory of a “consommation prestigieuse” ("prestigious consumption") that allowed for a social discrimination in the access to consumption in preindustrial societies. Quoting Veblen, Baudrillard affirms that one of the main signs of prestige, besides the “wasteful
expenditure,” is the “waste of time” (“l’oisivité”). The world of objects does not escape to this rule of superficiality:

Le monde des objets n’échappe pas à cette règle, à cette contrainte de superfluidité: c’est bien toujours en ce qu’ils ont d’inutile, de futile, de superflu, de décoratif, de non fonctionnel, que des catégories entières d’objets (bibelots, gadgets, accessoires) ou dans chaque objet, toutes les connotations et le métabolisme des formes, le jeu de la mode, etc., -bref, les objets ne s’épuisent jamais dans ce à quoi ils servent, et c’est dans cet excès de présence qu’ils prennent leur signification de prestige, qu’ils “désignent” non plus le monde, mais l’être et le rang social de leur détenteur. (11)

The world of objects does not escape this rule, this constraint of superfluousness. It is always present in their uselessness, their futility, their superfluity, their decorativeness, and their non-functionality, in entire categories of objects (trinkets, gadgets, accessories) or for every object, in all its connotations and metabolism of forms, e.g., in the game of fashion, etc. In short, objects never exhaust themselves in the function they serve, and in this excess of presence they take on their signification of prestige. They no longer “designate” the world, but rather the being and social rank of their possessor. (Levin 32)

Was the album a useful or practical object in its context? What was its immediate utility besides decorating the living room of its owner and materially symbolizing her social success? In my analysis of Jouy’s and Larra’s essays I will show how the two journalists describe the album with a certain disdain, pointing out precisely the futility of this object because of its insertion in an exclusively female fashion reality. However, this practice was in fact, as I will show through my examination of actual albums, also practiced by men. The “excès de présence” (“excess of presence”) mentioned by Baudrillard as a condition of many objects is also denounced, not only by the two

9 Terms in English are from Veblen as quoted by Baudrillard, terms in French are Baudrillard’s.
journalists, but also by the many writers who were pestered by album owners in the
search for contributions (Balzac’s “Au diable tous les albums” is a great example of this
generalized aversion to the album). My study of the album as an object that allows for the
identification of important social, economic and gender circumstances in nineteenth-
century France and Spain proves, nonetheless, the usefulness and historical value of the
book in the long term. It is indeed because of the excessive presence of this phenomenon
in its context that nowadays it can be used to explore multiple aspects of the public and
private constitution of the participants in the exchange that it promoted.

The link that Baudrillard establishes between objects and the social class of their
owners is particularly useful to analyze the album practice. Criticizing F. Stuart Chapin in
his essay “A Measurement of Social Status,” Baudrillard declares that the relationship
between objects and the different positions in the social hierarchy is basically a vicious
circle, since “on retrouve dans les objets la catégorie sociale telle qu’on l’a au fond déjà
définie à partir des objets” (“in the objects, one identifies a social category which has, in
the final analysis, already been described on the basis of these objects”; 35; Levin 16). As
I will show in my analysis of the depiction of the album in literary texts and of the
historical albums that I was able to consult in libraries in France and Spain, this practice
was mainly present among the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. Thus, the album was
identified as an object that belonged to a higher social sphere, but that group was,
simultaneously, associated with the ownership and use of sophisticated expensive cultural
artifacts such as the album. The album reproduced the cyclic dynamic that Baudrillard
mentions, and it offered high class women a symbol of the social and economic power to which they had access.

This idea of a cyclical connection between objects and their owners becomes even more appropriate for analyzing the album when Baudrillard starts questioning the purpose that individuals have regarding their objects. What exactly does one want to present through one’s objects? “Traduit-on à travers ses objets plutôt qu’à travers ses enfants, ses amis, ses vêtements, etc., une exigence de conformité, de sécurité, ou plutôt ses aspirations, ses ambitions sociales, et, dans ce cas, quelle sorte d’aspirations et à travers quelle catégorie d’objets?” (“Is it through these objects rather than through one’s children, friends, clothing, that one indicates a demand for conformity, for security, or rather, what sort of ambition, and through what category of objects?” 37; Levin 18), questions Baudrillard. The possibility of considering them to be even more emblematic of an individual’s idiosyncrasy than his or her family or clothes gives objects a significantly elevated status that defies the generalized and accepted notions of the importance of people and objects in human beings’ lives. This idea of using objects to communicate one’s desire for social belonging or personal goals will be essential in my approach to the album practice. It is clear that by owning albums bourgeois women were fulfilling a desire to be respected and accepted by a female group of society that was aware of this trend. But there is another important motivation for engaging in the album practice related to Baudrillard’s idea of the “ambitions sociales” (“social ambitions”) that an object could express. Album owners wanted to know that they were popular among their
acquaintances, and that men would want to contribute to their albums having always something positive to say about them. Single or married, young or old, women wanted to be praised and acknowledged in their social circle, and the album offered them that possibility. Baudrillard mentions later that objects allow individuals to search for their place in an order (or “social logic”) (20). In my study of the album I want to explore the function of this object as one that promoted the construction of a personal identity in the public space for French and Spanish nineteenth-century women. However, I will not limit my analysis to the characterization of the album as feminine and will also consider the cases of men who defied the stereotypical identification of this practice, becoming album owners.

III. Jouy’s and Larra’s Essays on the Album: Two Different Accounts, One Fashion; or the Contradictions in the Depiction of the Album Phenomenon in France and Spain

I have already established Larra’s interest in following Jouy’s observations of the social phenomena that were developing in the French writer’s context and applying them to his own milieu. Besides the presence of Jouy in the Spanish writer’s journalistic production, it is important to mention another influence that was essential in the literary production of both writers. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele are frequently pointed out as an essential reference in Jouy’s and Larra’s accounts. Not only did the French and Spanish writers reproduce the satirical and clever approach to social practices that characterized Addison and Steele, but also used the journalistic format to publish their
accounts. Addison and Steele are best known for their collaboration in *The Spectator*, a paper published in London from March 1, 1711 until December 6, 1712. Recognizing the absence of an authentic “popular novel” (McPharlin 3) and, as Addison declared once, the undeniable “Englishman’s craving for news” (Streatfeild 28), *The Spectator* was created to satisfy the curiosity of the early eighteenth-century London bourgeois who were eager to read about artistic events, new fashions, and social characters and situations of their context. Having published *The Tatler* from 1709 to 1711, Steele hit upon the idea of *The Spectator* and Addison joined him from the start of this new project. The success of *The Spectator* was solid: of the 10,000 copies sold of a specific issue at the peak of its popularity, each copy was read by dozens, frequently at the multiple coffee shops around London which were subscribed to it (McPharlin 4). One of the most interesting aspects of *The Spectator* is the figure of “Mr. Spectator,” the social observer who describes the habits and particularities of his context and fellow citizens. It is almost inevitable to establish a link between this “spectator” and the ones featured in the

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10 Although their contributions to the paper were basically equal in terms of quantity (Addison wrote 274 articles and Steele 236), it has been said that Addison’s work was superior to his colleague’s in terms of quality. Voltaire had praised precisely the English journalist’s talent saying: “Nothing can equal the sweetness of Addison’s prose” (Streatfeild 31). Actually, when after the publication of the 555th number Steele’s connection with *The Spectator* ended, Addison (after an interval) returned to the task and published seventy-nine additional numbers of the paper (Streatfeild 27).

11 In his compilation of extracts from *The Spectator*, Paul McPharlin explains that: “Defoe was yet to write *Robinson Crusoe*, Richardson was no more than a printer, Fielding was a boy, and Smollett was unborn” (3). This is why the popular novel did not exist yet, and there was basically nothing interesting in terms of popular culture to read at this moment in England.
writings by Jouy and Larra (in the form of the “Hermite” or of “Fígaro”), since those also performed the role of scrutinizing their milieu and narrating the particularities of life in it.

In Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on social customs there is plenty of evidence of the impact of Addison and Steele and their journalistic project. Jouy admitted directly that he was imitating the creators of *The Spectator* (Hendrix, “Notes on Collections…” 210) and even included in the “Avant-propos” to his collection of essays a direct reference to Addison made by the character of the hermit, who admits that he was attempting to do something similar to what the English journalist had done in his context.12 Meanwhile, Larra’s motivations in his literary production were similar to the ones manifest in the work of the two English journalists. In the tenth published number of *The Spectator*, the narrator reveals to his readers the principal aim of the paper: “to bring philosophy out of the closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea tables and in coffee houses” (McPharlin 4). Evidently, Addison and Steele’s project was an instructional and reformatory one, which aimed to offer a specific type of education to its readers, an instruction that would help them identify the flaws in their society and work towards improvement. Although it would be difficult to measure the impact that *The Spectator* had in changing eighteenth-century social customs, it is undeniable that the paper transcended its moment and became a model for the analysis of cultural practices

12 For the specific quote see page 25 of this chapter.
and journalistic writing. Considering the instructional purpose of Addison and Steele in their paper, it is not surprising that Larra, who dreamed of the transformation of Spanish society in his moment, would have wanted to use their journalistic feat as a model. The influence of the English journalists on the Spanish costumbrista has been previously documented. But there is an aspect of Addison and Steele’s observation of social customs that can be closely linked to Jouy’s and Larra’s and that justifies my interest in exploring their journalistic venture. Just like the French and Spanish writers, the creators of The Spectator were particularly interested in women. In a collection of some of the articles published in their paper, there are multiple essays that deal with topics representative of the position of women in their context, female fashion, and female prototypes and stereotypes. I can imagine that, if the album had existed in England at

13 Explaining the persistence of The Spectator in English letters, McPharlin affirms that Benjamin Franklin took this paper as his model when learning to write, and quotes Samuel Johnson’s praise of it: “Whoever wishes to attain an English style must give his days and nights to the volumes” (3).

14 In her article “Apuntaciones sobre la influencia de Addison y Steele en Larra,” Gioconda Marún mentions five different aspects in which Larra copied the English writers: the notion that the article on social customs should be vivid and concise, the mission of censorship and reformation of customs, the use of pseudonyms, the physical or moral characteristics of his fictional narrators, and the tendency to criticize vices and foolishness in individuals (383). Meanwhile, Caravaca makes a comparison among passages from articles by Larra and Addison to show how the Spanish costumbrista had basically copied the words of the English journalist, even in the title of the essays (“El café” is a clear reference to “Coffee-house Politicians”) (9-10).

15 Some of the essays by Addison and Steele that present female characters or practices are: “Accomplished Wives,” “Classic Dress,” “Dissecting a Coquette’s Heart,” “Favourites of Women,” “Hoopskirts,” “Marriage,” “Salamander Women,” “Seducers,” “Victims of Love,” and “Women’s Education.” I read these articles carefully, considering the possibility of finding depictions of the album practice in eighteenth-century London. I did not find any.
the beginning of the eighteenth century, Addison and Steele would have written about it in *The Spectator*.\(^6\)

I have already established the network of crossing influences present in Jouy’s and Larra’s production, unilateral in the case of the two of them, and equivalent in terms of their indebtedness to the English model imposed by Addison and Steele. Now I would like to analyze in detail the essays on the album written by Jouy and Larra taking into consideration, as I have explained before, the intertextuality that links them, because of Larra’s appropriation of the topic originally presented by the French author. I will locate these essays in the literary production of both writers on social customs and identify the transformation of their role from simple observers to active judges of the album practice. Even though Jouy’s and Larra’s accounts could constitute a type of sociological approach to the contexts in which the album fashion developed, I would like to problematize their essays, by keeping in mind their pseudo journalistic nature, which implied the potential inclusion of fictional elements in them. Aspects such as their description of the album’s physical appearance, their intention to determine its social uses, and their insistent categorization of this practice as feminine will be essential in my analysis of Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on the album.

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\(^6\) Another aspect in which Jouy’s essays on social customs resemble Addison and Steele’s articles is in the use of the epistolary format. In both collections there are many letters supposedly written by readers and sent to the author of the articles, which adds a new level to the narrative complexity of these works.
A. Structure of the Essays and Context of Their Publication

Jouy strengthened his celebrity status by publishing about one hundred articles in La Gazette de France, between 1811 and 1814, around the time of the decline of the Napoleonic Empire, in whose army he had served. These articles presented scenes of daily life in Paris and, according to Faul, received as much praise as criticism. Referring to Jouy’s success in depicting Parisian life, Charles Monselet affirms: “Il fut le premier feuilletoniste de genre de ce temps-là […] Ce fut ainsi qu’il pénétra dans l’étude du notaire et dans le boudoir de l’actrice, dans le cabinet du magistrat et dans l’atelier de la grisette, partout, en un mot où il y a une patte de lièvre à gratter ou un bouton à tourner longuement” (“He was the first feuilletoniste of that sort at that time. It was thus that he penetrated in the office of the notary and in the boudoir of the actress, in the office of the magistrate and in the workshop of the working class woman, everywhere, in a word where there is a hare’s foot to scratch or a button to turn for a long time”; Faul 78).

Stendhal is less generous with the journalist, declaring that “l’observation de M. de Jouy a légèrement effleuré les choses […] [mais] elle a manqué de profondeur dans le trait et de force dans le coloris […] Aussi défectueuses sont ces esquisses, elles ne sont pas sans valeur” (“the observation of M. de Jouy has slightly touched upon the things [but] it lacked depth in the treatment and strength in the color […] As faulty as these sketches are, they are not worthless”; Faul 79). Thus, in the same way that his personal life had
been criticized, his journalistic articles were scrutinized by his contemporaries.\footnote{Faul also quotes Auguste Vitu’s harsh critique of Jouy: “Je ne suis pas sûr que, dans les cinq volumes de l’hermite, il se rencontre un seul trait d’observation véritable, ni, par compensation, un seul mot spirituel. En fait d’observation, comme en fait d’esprit, M. de Jouy s’en tient aux choses convenues et […] il montre une prédilection noire pour la plaisanterie connue, acceptée, toute faite […] M. de Jouy n’a pas la moindre idée du détail, il ressemble en cela à ces peintres qui dessinent tant bien que mal l’ovale d’une tête et ne savent que mettre dedans” (“I am not sure that, in the five volumes of the hermit, there is a single line of actual observation, or, to compensate, a single spiritual word. In terms of observation, M. de Jouy sticks to what has been decided and […] he shows a manifest predilection for the known, accepted and well-made jibe […] M. de Jouy has no idea about how to deal with detail, in that he resembles those painters who draw as good or as bad the oval of a head and do not know what to put inside”; 79). However, Faul follows this quote with his own validation of Jouy’s work, affirming that these articles constitute a testimony of the epoch, and that they contribute to the knowledge about Parisian daily life under the Empire (79).} Notwithstanding the importance of Jouy’s journalistic work, it is essential to point out that Jouy was not the first one to develop in France the \textit{peinture des mœurs}. As I have mentioned before, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, journalist and writer from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, has been identified as Jouy’s predecessor and, interestingly, he was also influenced by Addison and Steele’s \textit{Spectator}. Mercier’s collection \textit{Tableau de Paris} compiled a series of scenes that depict daily life under the \textit{Ancien Régime} (including diverse social characters and circumstances). Although Mercier’s sarcastic tone and interest in the social customs in his context were definitely an influence in Jouy’s journalistic essays on the phenomena in his context, he denied the influence of his French precursor in his work. This is particularly interesting, considering that he pointed out the impact of Addison and Steele in his \textit{études de mœurs}, which reveals a possible desire of ignoring the previous work on customs done in France in order to present his project as innovative and unique in his country.
Jouy’s two essays on the album appeared in the *Gazette de France* about a week apart, on October 30th, 1811 (“Des Album”), and November 8th, 1811 (“Recherches sur l’Album et sur le chiffonnier sentimental”). It is evident that the French writer had much to say about this object and he could not postpone his second account of it to a later issue of the *Gazette*. These articles later became part of the collection of *L’Hermite de la Chaussé d’Antin, ou Observations sur les mœurs et les usages parisiens au commencement du XIXe siècle*. I think it is important to analyze the use of the term “mœurs” in the title of Jouy’s collection. These “observations” on “mœurs” found in Jouy’s essays might be seen as predecessors of the *Études de mœurs* that will be proposed later in the century by Honoré de Balzac. In a letter sent to Madame Hanska (his correspondent at the moment who would later become his wife) in October 26, 1834, Balzac describes in detail what he would include in his *Études de mœurs*, one of the sections of his *Comédie Humaine*. He explains: “Les Études de mœurs représenteront tous les effets sociaux sans que ni une situation de la vie, ni une physionomie, ni un caractère d’homme ou de femme, ni une manière de vivre, ni une profession, ni une zone sociale, ni un pays français, ni quoi que ce soit de l’enfance, de la vieillesse, de l’âge mûr, de la politique, de la justice, de la guerre, ait été oublié” (“The studies on customs will represent all the social effects including any life situation, physiognomy, male or female personality, way of living, profession, social area, or French region, anything comprising childhood, old age or middle age, politics, justice, or war”; 269). Balzac’s *Études de mœurs* aimed therefore to cover not only all the possible social characters at different
moments of their lives, but also their ways of living and the political and social circumstances that could have an effect on them. The use of the notion of “effets sociaux” makes clear that he will be focusing on the consequences that the particularities of the context would have on the constitution and behavior of individuals. Although he never declared to have a project as broad as Balzac’s, Jouy also aspired to portray the responses of Parisians in particular to a diversity of social phenomena. Thus, his “observations” on customs in his context, although written in a different style and focused on different manifestations of social practices, precede the ones made by Balzac almost twenty years later.

In order to understand Jouy’s interest in the album and his purpose when writing these essays, it is essential to analyze the structure of the collection of the hermit, and the journalistic and fictional construction surrounding it. At the moment of the publication of the articles that had already appeared in the Gazette, Jouy decided to create a fictional frame that would support the gathering of those texts. He used the “Avant-propos” to narrate a story about how these articles came to constitute a published collection. After the “Avant-propos” he added a section called “Portrait de l’Auteur” in which supposedly the author of the articles presented himself to the editors of the Gazette and exposed to them all the reasons why he should be selected as the writer of the articles on social customs that they planned to start publishing. It is particularly interesting how in these two introductory sections Jouy creates the fictional character of the hermit and hides behind this role, making his authorship of the collection of articles a more complex
question. More than a simple pseudonym, the hermit was a figure who would carry all the blame for everything said in these social accounts.\(^\text{18}\) However, Jouy could not escape the association with his fictional dopplegänger, as Des Granges reveals: “[c]elui qui s’est appelé l’Hermite” (“that one who is called the Hermit”; 73). Jouy and the hermit both lived in the Chaussée d’Antin, and the fiction of their separation was flimsy indeed. Nonetheless, the creation of a fictional double allowed Jouy to shift responsibility if the reader found his observations questionable.

In the “Avant-propos” of the collection, Jouy presents a conversation between the hermit and “le libraire” (“the publisher”). When the publisher approaches the hermit and explains to him that he wants to talk about the “Hermite de la Chaussée d’Antin,” the hermit is surprised and confused and asks the publisher how he knows his true identity. The publisher reminds him that anonymity is a fallacy for someone who publishes his writings: “Je ne suppose pas que vous ayez cru pouvoir rester long-tems caché sous votre nom pseudonyme. L’incognito d’un journaliste est impossible à garder” (“I do not believe you thought you could remain for a long time hidden behind your pseudonym. It is impossible to remain as incognito being a journalist”; VI). Then the publisher goes on to explain to the hermit how famous he has become thanks to his articles and how they are the main discussion topic at cafés and cabinets de lecture. Finally, the publisher

\(^\text{18}\) It is important to point out that Jouy did adopt some actual pseudonyms, but he did it during the epoch following the Gazette. His debut in the Nain Jaune in 1814 coincided with one of his nom de plume: Guillaume le Franc-Parleur. In 1815, when he started working for Le Mercure de France, he changed his pseudonym again. Now he signed as Paul, chevalier de Pageville, also known as Hermite de la Guiane (Faul 89, 99).
reveals to the hermit an important proposal he has for him: he wants to be authorized to
gather his serial articles (“feuilleton”) in a volume and to publish them. The hermit is
astonished by this offer because he does not consider his articles deserving of such
attention, having been created only for the fleeting pleasure of the readers. When the
publisher reminds him that collections in the same genre have been published, the hermit
replies by saying that he is not the abbé Prevost, Addison, Steele, or Johnson, implying
that his humble writing could not be compared to the feat of those important social
observers. The hermit even makes a specific reference to one of Jouy’s main influences:
“Addison a peint les mœurs et les usages de Londres au commencement du dix-huitième
siècle, j’essaie de donner une idée de celles de Paris au commencement du dix-neuvième”
(“Addison painted the customs and habits of London at the beginning of the eighteenth
century, I am trying to give an idea of those of Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth
century”; IX-X). Eventually convinced of the complete success that the publisher
promises him that his collection of essays on the nineteenth-century French customs will
have, the hermit agrees and authorizes him to publish them and the ones he will write in
the future.

The “Portrait de l’auteur” that Jouy adds right after the “Avant-propos” can be
interpreted as a complement to the first section, as readers learn more about the author of
the articles that appeared in the Gazette de France, namely Jouy disguised as the hermit.
Jouy explains that the editors of the Gazette decided to create the Bulletin moral de la
situation de Paris, in which they would publish a weekly article including “une foule de
détails domestiques, de circonstances fugitives [et] d’événements journaliers auxquels il est impossible d’ajouter un nouveau degré d’intérêt en les rattachant à des souvenirs politiques ou littéraires” (“a multitude of domestic details, of fleeting circumstances and daily events to which it is impossible to add a new degree of interest in linking them to political or literary memories”; 2). These articles would expose the “diversité des mœurs parmi les habitans de cette immense capitale” (“diversity of customs among the inhabitants of this immense capital”; 2-3). Precisely during a meeting to decide who they would choose as author of these articles, the editors of the Gazette receive a letter from a potential candidate, presenting himself and justifying why they should choose him to fulfill this role. It is fascinating to think about the meta-fictional structure at work here: Jouy writes the “portrait” in which he describes the candidate for the Gazette, who is the hermit and who is, in the end, Jouy himself. But Jouy gives some details to distract the readers and make them think that it is really a different person who is being described here. For example, the protagonist of the portrait makes the following statement: “je suis né le 25 juillet 1741” (“I was born on July 25, 1741”; 4), but Jouy was really born in 1764. Was this supposed to be the birthdate of the hermit? In the rest of the self-description, this anonymous character points out all the traits that make him an ideal candidate for the position. Besides being extremely curious and independent, he declares that he does nothing in life: “absolument rien; je vais, je viens, je regarde, j’écoute, et je tiens note le soir, en rentrant, de tout ce que j’ai vu et entendu dans ma journée” (“absolutely nothing; I come, I go, I see, I listen, and at night when I come back home, I
take notes of everything I have seen and heard during my day”; 6-7). Next, he narrates his activities on a typical day: from his walks by the docks and his lunches at the cafés by the *Palais-Royal* (listening to the conversations about politics, finances or commerce from the other guests), to his visits to friends in the Faubourg Saint-Germain and the spectacles he would go see at the *Opéra* or the *Comédie Française*. The similarities between the hermit and Jouy become evident at this point, since the journalist has been accused of not living like a hermit, and having instead a very active Parisian life, particularly evident in his constant appearances in salons (Faul 107). In the case of the portrait of the hermit created for the editors of the *Gazette*, it is clear that this character did not have to work to sustain himself, which means that he had enough money to live a leisurely life without worrying about the expenses it entailed. Great connoisseur of life in the French capital, this applicant for author of the articles on the *mœurs* in the city was definitely prepared to assume such a role. Right before finishing his written self-portrait he reassures the editors of the *Gazette*, affirming that he is also an expert in fashion, an area of knowledge that would prove to be essential in treating the phenomenon of the album.

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19 In his article “El café,” Larra presents a character whose daily life is very similar to the hermit’s. Like the hermit, the protagonist and first-person narrator of “El café” is very curious about the world and interested in learning about everything. Also, like his French predecessor, he does not do much during the day. The favorite activity of this type of Spanish *flâneur* is to go to coffee shops where he can indiscreetly listen to conversations about nationality and politics. He does not specify if, like the hermit, he takes notes of his observations at the end of the day, but he does declare that he analyzes and judges the events and characters that he witnesses every day and that sometimes he laughs about them before going to bed.
This fictional apparatus created around the publishing of the collection in which Jouy’s writings on the album are included is crucial if one wants to comprehend the position from which Jouy approached this practice. It is particularly interesting that the two essays on the album included in *L’Hermite de la Chaussée d’Antin* are not framed as texts written by the hermit-Jouy, but as letters supposedly sent to him by readers. The first essay, “Des *Album*,” specifies in its subtitle that it was written by “Un homme de lettres du Marais à l’hérmité de la Chaussée d’Antin,” and it is signed “Galand de Fontenay-aux-Roses.” The second essay, “Recherches sur l’*Album*,” does not have such a precise detail about the sender and the receiver, but it addresses the hermit at the very beginning, which makes clear that it is a text sent to him. This essay is signed “P.E.L” before a section of “Observations détachées” added at the end. However, two entries after this last one on the album (which is an entry of “Correspondance,” fairly common in Jouy’s text), there is a note that aims to clarify the origin of the two essays on the album: “Cette lettre, ainsi que celles sur l’*Album*, sur le *Chiffonnier Sentimentale* et sur le Public, ne sont pas de l’Hermite de la Chaussée d’Antin. (Note de l’Editeur)” (“This letter, along with those about the *Album*, about the *Chiffonnier Sentimentale* and about the Public, do not belong to the Hermite de la Chaussé d’Antin. (Editor’s note)”; 206). What exactly

20 There is an intense exchange of “Correspondance” included in Jouy’s text. But this exchange is not always necessarily with the hermit. There are many letters that are written by or addressed to what can be considered emblematic figures in the context in which Jouy is writing. Besides the “homme de lettres du Marais,” who writes the letter about the album, there are also letters from a “bourgeois du Marais” to the hermit, or from “une famille de la Chaussée d’Antin” to the “bourgeois du Marais.” I think Jouy’s intention
does this mean? Were these letters not written by the hermit or not addressed to him?

Who is the editor of the book (who has not been mentioned before)? Is it the people at the Imprimerie de Pillet, who first published the book?

Considering the different narrative and fictional levels that Jouy created, the fact that the essays on the album are letters supposedly sent by someone else to the hermit is clearly a ruse in the French writer’s literary game. Jouy transformed his own essays on the album into hypothetical letters to present different perspectives of this practice. The multiplicity of narrative voices which were not the hermit’s or Jouy’s allowed the French writer to present diverse approaches to the album fashion. These different interpretations of the album phenomenon were presented through characters who, although vaguely identified (the first letter is written by “Un homme de lettres du Marais” and the second one by an unidentified correspondent), could represent different social groups and therefore transmit varied and opposite opinions about this craze. There is also the distinct possibility that Jouy did not want to be blamed for what was said in the essays. These narrative ploys allow for a more complex presentation of the album because they voice different public reactions to it.

The publication of Larra’s *Artículos* takes place in a very different context and circumstances. These articles were written at a moment in which progressive liberals with the composition of these fictional letters was to reproduce real disputes that happened between members of his social context, and to depict diverse perspectives on the issues he presents in his essays.
questioned and reevaluated the totality of the social structure prevalent in Spain during the *Antiguo Régimen*. After the Ominous Decade (from 1823 to 1833), the death of Ferdinand VII in 1833 and the First Carlist War (from 1833 to 1840) determined a period of change that offered the possibility of rethinking the established social and political structures. Representing this liberal wave, Larra offers through his articles an exciting portrayal of the transformation of Spain into a “modern” society (Servodidio 7).

However, Larra is not strictly attached to the established meaning of the term, since he transformed the type of analysis performed in the typical artículo. Larra transgresses the superficial boundaries of the depiction of types or characters and aims to penetrate the idiosyncrasies of the figures and situations he presents. His contribution to the study of social customs thus critiques stereotypical models and proposes alternatives for materializing the change he wanted to see in his country.

As Joseph V. Servodidio explains in the introduction to his analysis of Larra’s articles, the artículo came to be the main literary manifestation of costumbrismo (“literature of social customs and manners”), a direct inheritor of the cuadro de costumbres (“portrait of social customs”) from the seventeenth century. The main difference between the cuadro and the artículo is that the first one, notwithstanding its relative autonomy, was always incorporated into the longer format of the novel, while the second one was more independent. Also, the length of both types of compositions was essentially different: whereas the cuadro tended to have very prolonged moral and didactic digressions, the newspaper format required that the artículo be short enough to
occupy the minimum space available. Considering that the newspaper aimed at a more diverse public, with heterogeneous tastes and interests, the journalist had to illustrate and popularize the tone of his material, putting aside his most serious intentions, if he wanted to keep the interest of his readers. The religious or theological approach to human behavior that had dominated the cuadro was no longer central in the artículo. The economic, social, and political aspects of life were now the ones that required a more detailed analysis. Contrary to the cuadro, the artículo was particularly interested in political satire and in the picturesque aspects of society (Servodidio 14-5). The artículo de costumbres became an established literary genre through the exposure that Serafín Estébanez Calderón, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, and, of course, Larra gave to it. These three writers became innovators who promoted the new genre and dedicated their careers almost exclusively to it. It is particularly interesting that Estébanez, Mesonero, and Larra, along with their respective supporters, all fought over the title of “first,” trying to prove that each one of them was the real precursor of costumbrismo in Spain (Servodidio 15).

The collection Artículos consists of a selection of the articles that Larra wrote in the space of eight years, from 1828 to 1836, and that were published in the different periodicals he worked for during that time. There have been more than thirty different editions of these articles. In all these different editions, the main and more popular articles are repeated, while other secondary articles are added to each selection. Some of the periodicals for which Larra wrote are El duende satírico del día, El pobrecito
The initial inclusion of articles from these different newspapers in his compilation depended on the status that Larra awarded to every one of them. For example, the very first newspaper he published in, *El duende satírico del día*, was completely excluded from the first edition of his *artículos*, since he did not consider it particularly important (Rubio, “Introducción” 39). Just like Jouy’s use of the figure of the hermit and of the names that he adopted during his literary career, Larra also created more than one pseudonym to hide his real identity. Some of Larra’s *noms de plume* were a direct reference to the periodical with which he was linked at the moment. Among these names there are: “Duende,” “Bachiller,” “El pobrecito hablador,” and “Fígaro.” This last pseudonym, a tribute to the character created by Beaumarchais in his 1775 play *Le Barbier de Séville ou la précaution inutile*, was the one that became most emblematic of the Spanish *costumbrista*.

In the edition I am using for this study (the one published by the Editorial Cátedra), each *artículo* is linked after its title to a footnote with the information about the periodical in which it was originally published and the date of its publication. The essay on the album, for example, was first printed in the *Revista mensajero*, on May 3, 1835. In this edition there are also some other essays in which Larra was directly influenced or inspired by Jouy, for example: “Una primera representación,” “La fonda nueva,” and “La sociedad.” However, there are also many other articles that were Larra’s original creation.
and that show evidence of his ability to observe and analyze the events and characters in
the Spanish context, as well as to examine critically literary and dramatic works. Some of
the most popular are: “El café,” “El castellano viejo,” and “En este país.” As critics have
acknowledged, Larra’s progressive ideals allowed him to become a political and satirical
force in his contemporary literary scene. His costumbre was not limited to reflecting
upon a certain custom from a merely descriptive perspective, leading to simple
picturesqueness. Rather, Larra studies his types from a very different point of view,
employing social, philosophical, and political considerations that allow him to formulate
very unique conclusions about the behavior and the character of his society (Rubio,
“Introducción” 66-67).

B. On Writing for “Nuestras Elegantes Lectoras” and the Women of the Chaussée
d’Antin: Public and Motivation of Jouy’s and Larra’s Essays

The public to which their essays were addressed is another aspect essential for
understanding Jouy’s and Larra’s intentions when writing about the album phenomenon.
At this point, it is useful to go back to Addison and Steele and consider who composed
the public of their journalistic writings in eighteenth-century England. As Alain Bony
explains in his study of The Spectator, this literary enterprise allowed for the
transformation of “tous les publics” into “un public” (“all publics” “one public”; 192).
This new public was no longer the restricted and narrow public of the aristocratic Court,
but one defined by shared aspirations, a public diversified and openly associated with a
more autonomous aristocracy (192). Bony affirms that the public of The Spectator was
unified in the imaginary representation that it created of itself through this cultural project that offered them the possibility of developing a sense of belonging (193). The public of *The Spectator* certainly had to be a public that had the necessary economic resources to buy the newspaper. However, Bony points out that in their articles Addison and Steele ignored the daily life concerns of their most humble readers: “le Spectateur ne s’intéresse pas aux serviteurs, mais aux maîtres” (“the Spectator is not interested in the servants, but in the masters”; 195).

Who were then Jouy’s and Larra’s public? Was their public similar to Addison and Steele’s? Was it linked to a specific social class or gender? In order to understand the potential composition of Jouy’s and Larra’s readership it is essential to establish the levels of literacy in the contexts in which their essays on the album were published. I would like to refer exclusively to Paris and Madrid, the capitals where the newspapers that featured those essays were published. In the case of the French capital, the level of literacy during the 1789 French Revolution was exceptionally high: 90 percent of men and 80 percent of women could sign their own wills (Lyons 5). It is possible to imagine that these numbers were probably even higher twelve years later, in 1811, when Jouy’s essays on the album were published. Female literacy kept growing throughout the century, and at the end of it the gap between female and male literacy was almost nonexistent (Lyons 5). Madrid, on the other hand, had significantly lower levels of literacy in the nineteenth century, before and after the publication of Larra’s essay on the album. In 1820, 86.19 percent of men and 43.19 percent of women were literate
(Soubeyroux 252). Interestingly, these numbers drop for both genders in 1840 (around 20 percent for men and 8 percent for women), and then go up again in 1860 as a result of the development of education and the opening of more secondary schools (Soubeyroux 252-54). Published in 1835, Larra’s article about the album is from the period when the descent in literacy levels started, so we can assume that around a 70 percent of men and a 30 percent of Madrilean women would have been able to read it.

Within the public who had the ability to read Jouy’s and Larra’s texts I can identify two groups. First, there is the public who had access to the newspapers in which they published, a public that had money and an interest in indulging in the pleasure of reading this type of journalistic text. Among the group of readers who could have bought these newspapers there could have certainly been male album contributors who paid particular attention to these essays which portrayed a practice in which they had been involved. Then, I would identify in the second group the women who read exclusively Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on the album, or other essays on social customs which presented any recent female fashion. These women, who must have belonged to a higher social sphere that offered them the education to be able to read and the means to obtain the newspapers in which the essays were published, could have been album owners themselves, or could have been in the constant quest for identifying the latest trends in female social practices. In any case, both Jouy and Larra were aware of the desire of their public to read about the album phenomenon that was developing in their context, and, thus, were confident that their analysis of it would be appreciated by many.
In the case of Jouy, it is important to consider, in the first place, that his public was mainly composed of the readers of the *Gazette de France*, the weekly newspaper for which he was writing the essays on social customs based on the practices and events that he observed in his context. Published since May 30, 1631, the *Gazette* (which actually did not become *Gazette de France* until 1762) was the first published newspaper in France. As Pierre de Bacourt explains in his article on the origins and evolution of the press in France, the *Gazette* was created by Théophraste Renaudot in 1613 and it started as a “bureau d’adresses” that evolved into a “bureau de renseignements,” and eventually became a compilation of “nouvelles” (166-167). Although at the beginning he would write the news by hand, Renaudot had to start printing his newspaper when the demand for it increased. Described as not being a “happy” or independent newspaper, the *Gazette* was, under Richelieu and his successors, an unofficial organ, and then, under Louis XV, an official one which was annexed to the *Ministère des affaires étrangères* (Bacourt 167).

It is interesting that in Jouy’s collection, specifically in the essays about the album, he focuses on the development of this practice in specific neighborhoods of the French capital, such as the Marais and the Chaussée d’Antin. We can imagine that the public in these neighborhoods was more eager to read these accounts which depicted real elements of their daily lives. Precisely because of the importance and popularity of Jouy’s essays as a weekly publication, they eventually came to constitute the collection of *L’Hermite*, thus creating a secondary readership. The readers who got to know Jouy’s essays through the published collection were probably a more intellectual public, which
preferred the book format to the journalistic articles. Interestingly, it is in the second essay-letter on the album in which the motivation to write about this practice is explained. Jouy (through the voice of the person who is supposedly writing a letter to the hermit) explains that one of the hermit’s “Correspondans” published in their newspaper a very ingenious critique of this fashion. I suppose that this reference is to the first essay on the album, published before this one. In his response to the correspondent, the ‘letter addresser’/Jouy mocks him, affirming that the type of text in which he published his critique of the album, a newspaper, is precisely a type of album in itself, being the main particularity that in this album the publisher is the owner and his friends who write for the newspaper are the contributors who submit a tribute of their intelligence and imagination. However, he acknowledges that this previous text on the album was the origin of his interest in this social custom. “Cette réflexion,” affirms Jouy, “m’a porté à faire quelques recherches sur l’origine des Album, et sur l’étendue qu’on peut donner à leur signification” (“This reflection led me to make some research about the origin of the Album, and about the extent that we can give to its signification”; “Recherches” 167). Taking advantage of the different fictional levels that he creates in the narrative frame of his collection of essays, Jouy identifies the origin of his interest in writing about the album in the previous essay on the album that he himself had written. Thus, he continues to make his literary game work, hiding behind the multiple masks that the hermit, the newspaper correspondents, and his invented readers/addressers provide him.
Jouy explains that the first aspect of that “signification” of the album that he mentioned is the desire to leave traces: humans’ need to leave memories of their passage wherever they go. In order to complete this desire, people engraved their inscriptions in public places, accessible to the sight and judgment of everyone. Jouy affirms that this practice could be called “l’Album à plein vent” and quotes a line that an anonymous “poète comique” (“comic poet”) had engraved in the “Album du cercle polaire,” an example of this genre of album. Jouy also mentions the “Album des murailles,” which consisted of a collection of illnesses and remedies carved on the walls of the temple of Asclepius. The “Album vulgaire” is closer to the structure of the nineteenth-century album that interests me: “celui qui se forme aux dépens d’un registre blanc, et qui exige le concours de deux volontés” (“the type of album which consists of an empty register, and which requires the collaboration of two wills”; “Recherches” 170). Jouy’s example of this version of the album is the type of register that religious orders would keep, in which they collected the signatures of their visitors.

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21 Even though it is inconsistent, I followed Jouy’s use of italics in the names of these types of album.

22 He is talking about Jean-François Regnard (1655-1709), a French poet who used to travel frequently. The quote is: “Sistimus hic tandem nobis ubi defuit orbis” (“At last we are landing here where the world has fallen short for us”; Jouy, “Recherches…” 168). Regnard had been traveling with two other French men and, after going to Flanders, Holland, Switzerland, Lapland, and Corberon, they got to a mountain in Metawar, India, and carved a poem in a rock there. The line that Jouy quotes is the last verse of the poem (“Sistimus hic tandem”).

23 The specific example that Jouy discusses in this section is the album of the Charterhouse of Grenoble. Larra quotes this passage of Jouy’s essay in his article on the album and I will present it later in this chapter.
The last use of the album mentioned by Jouy is, according to him, a perfected version of it: “l’ultimatum de l’amitié passionnée” (“the ultimatum of passionate friendship”; “Recherches” 172). Women who traveled frequently due to their sensitive and nervous nature owned albums in order to keep a souvenir of the people they had met for a week, a day, or an hour. Back in France, these “belles conquérantes” kept their books full of memories in a space that would honor its sacredness. Jouy introduces the “Chiffonnier Sentimental” as the piece of furniture that became the altar of albums par excellence. Apparently a type of chest destined to contain objects related to the sentimental life of its owner, the “Chiffonnier Sentimental” was not exclusive to French women, since “les plus tendres et les cœurs les plus palpitants de l’Angleterre et de la Pologne” had also enjoyed it (“the most tender and emotional hearts of England and Poland”; “Recherches” 174). Notwithstanding its popularity among French women, Jouy fears that the “Chiffonnier Sentimental” will soon lose its attractiveness and will be relegated to a simple storage piece of furniture.

As for Larra, he begins his essay on the album by reflecting on the role of the “escritor de costumbres” (“writer of social customs”), a notion that is essential to understand his purpose when writing this collection of artículos on social customs. The first aspect of the labor of this type of writer that Larra analyzes is the public to which he addresses his writings. This issue is particularly important in the case of the essay on the album, since understanding the potential public of a text that introduces this object also reveals who would be interested in owning it. Larra makes clear, however, that this writer
does not write for any particular social class, but “imparcialmente para todos” (“impartially for everyone”; 326). The totality that an artículo de costumbres should convey could not be composed of only a specific group or strata, so it would need the participation of the different levels of society.

Larra is particularly interested in acknowledging the diversity of society in his artículos, certainly because he knew that it was the mixing of the different classes and social types that led to the fascinating scenes and events that interested him. Regarding the public Larra analyzes in his artículos, critics have affirmed that he usually condemns the most low and popular strata of society, acting in a completely aristocratic way through his condemnation of the coarse language and behavior of those groups (Rubio, “Introducción” 69). It is particularly interesting that in his essay on the album, Larra uses the word “amalgam” to describe society, a term that, as we will see later, Jouy could have applied to the album: “la sociedad es una amalgama de mil sociedades colocadas en escalón, que sólo se rozan en sus fronteras respectivas unas con otras, y las cuales no reúne en un todo compacto en cada país sino el vínculo de una lengua común, y de lo que se llama entre los hombres patriotismo o nacionalismo” (“society is an amalgam of a thousand societies organized in levels which rub against each other only at their boundaries, and which are reunited as a compact whole in a country only through the link of a common language, and by that which men call patriotism or nationalism”; 327). The phenomenon of the album developed precisely in that context of a multiplicity of “societies.” However, it stayed mainly within the boundaries of the upper social classes,
whose members were able to acquire the luxurious book. Therefore, considering Larra’s observations, it is possible to think that those were the social classes that evinced the patriotism or nationalism he mentioned, the social classes that have in common the economic status permitting them to own diverse cultural objects that would eventually define what it meant to be Spanish. Evidently, we cannot take Larra at his word when he says that he writes equally for everyone in this specific essay about the album and in his journalistic production in general, since his idea of “society” is clearly limited to the groups represented in the social customs he depicted in his articles.

While for Jouy the idea of writing about the album came from the (fictional) exchange of letters between a supposed reader of his articles and the hermit, for Larra it was precisely the reading of Jouy’s essay on this practice which motivated his interest in this topic. In his essay, Larra acknowledges that he is not the first one who writes about the album phenomenon. “He aquí cómo motiva el origen de la moda del album un autor francés,” declares Larra, “que escribía como nosotros un artículo de costumbres acerca de él el año 11, época en que comenzó a hacer furor esta moda en París” (“You can see how the origin of the album trend inspired a French author who, like us, wrote an article on the custom in the year 1811, when this fashion started causing a frenzy in Paris”; 331). It is particularly interesting that Larra specifies the nationality of the author who previously wrote about the album topic and even the year in which that essay was published, but does not quote him directly nor mention his name. Larra even uses the expression “como nosotros” when referring to the gesture of the anonymous album chronicler, clearly
establishing that he used the previous account as model for his own. Although Larra affirms that 1811, the year in which Jouy’s essay was published, is the date when this fashion started to spread in Paris, this practice was evidently popularized before that since Jouy talks about the album as an institutionalized craze already in that year.

After this presentation, Larra goes on to quote Jouy at length, a specific passage from his essay “Recherches sur l’Album” in which the French author identifies the album from the Charterhouse of Grenoble as the “father and model of all our albums.” Since there is no existing translation of Jouy’s essays into Spanish, I assume that the one Larra shares in his article was done by himself. The anonymous quote was the following:

L’origine en est noble, sainte, majestueuse. Saint Bruno avait fondé, au Cœur des Alpes, le berceau de son ordre; tout voyageur y était reçu pendant trois jours, avec une hospitalité grave et décente. Au moment du départ on lui présentait un registre, en l’invitant à y écrire son nom, qu’il accompagnait ordinairement de quelques phrases inspirées. L’aspect des montagnes, le bruit des torrens, le silence du monastère, la religion grande et formidable, les religieux humbles et macérés, le temps méprisé et l’éternité partout présente, devaient faire naître, sous la plume des hôtes qui se succédaient dans ces augustes demeures, de hautes pensées et de touchantes expressions. Aussi quelques-uns de nos poètes vivants ont déposé dans ce répertoire de vers justement célèbres. […] Album de la Grande-Chartreuse est incontestablement le père et le modèle de tous nos Album (‘Recherches” 170-171).

24 Here Larra cuts the following questions from Jouy’s original text: “Qu’est-ce devenu ce registre si singulier et si précieux? Les solitaires l’ont-ils emporté dans leur émigration? serait-il enterré dans quelques obscures archives de la ville de Grenoble? Qu’on ne soit point étonné de mon inquiétude sur son sort […]” (“What happened with that register so singular and valued? Have the solitary people taken it in their emigration? Would it be buried in some obscure archives of the city of Grenoble? Let no one be surprised with my worry about its fate.”). Larra also takes some liberties in his translation in general, changing essential terms to better fit his purpose (for example: “nos poètes vivans” become “Hombres de gran mérito” in the translation).
It is of a noble, saint, majestic origin. Saint Bruno had founded, in the heart of the Alpes, the cradle of his order, and every traveler was hosted there during three days, with a solemn and decent hospitality. Before their departure travelers would receive a register, and would be urged to write their name, to which they would frequently add some inspired phrases. The aspect of the mountains, the sound of the streams, the silence of the monastery, the great and formidable religion, the humble and cloistered monks, the loss of time along with the ever present eternity, all of these must have led the profound thoughts and touching expressions that came from the pen of the guests who had followed one another in these august dwellings. Also, some of our living poets have contributed with well-known verses to this repertoire. The Album of the Big Charterhouse is undoubtedly the father and model of all our albums.

Although in this section Jouy refers to the origin of the nineteenth-century album, placing it in the one kept by the Order of Saint Bruno, I think Larra’s quote selection was odd since this passage does not really transmit the importance of the phenomenon in the nineteenth-century French context or the main topic of the essay he is copying. The Spanish writer probably wanted to ignore all the other details that Jouy had in his article about the album’s role in nineteenth-century French society that were similar to his own observations of the phenomenon in Spain, since mentioning them would imply revealing a certain lack of creativity in his approach to this fashion.

Just as Jouy had to explain the significance of the album in order to justify his decision to write about it, Larra also dedicates a short passage in his artículo to analyze the origin of the interest in the album. Larra affirms that human pride forces us to leave traces of our presence everywhere we go. The famous pyramids of Egypt are then, according to Larra, the signature of the Pharaohs in the big album of Egypt. Every monument is the facsimile of the nation that erected it, and it is stamped in the “grande
“album del triunfo” (“the great album of triumph”; 330). While Jouy had identified the gesture of making inscriptions in public places as a manifestation that preceded the album practice, mentioning specifically the “Album à plein vent” and the “Album des murailles,” Larra aims to interpret the monuments as album contributions that enrich a nation. A nation would be then the album itself, which anxiously waits to be honored by its citizens through their material manifestations of their knowledge and abilities. But Larra takes his interpretation of this type of public album even further: “¿Qué es la historia sino el album donde cada pueblo viene a depositar sus obras?” (“What is history but the album where every nation deposits its works?”; 330). Like the album, history is a book with white pages at the beginning of time that would be completed through the entries that men create for it, the monuments and events that would signify it just like the album signified its owner. This metaphor of the album would transform it completely: from a private, individual object, to a public one which would hold not one but multiple and diverse stories.

C. Initial Definition of the Album: Etymology, Geography, and Physical Description

After understanding their motivations to write about the album and the public they were writing for, we must explore how Jouy and Larra defined this phenomenon and how they classified it in their respective contexts. In the case of Jouy, the term “album” appears in the title of his first essay on the topic, and he immediately feels the obligation to define it in a footnote: “Les Album sont des livres blancs destinés à recevoir des notes, des dessins, etc., etc. Il est peu de personnes qui ne les connaissent pas, et il en est
beaucoup qui les connaissent trop (Note de l’auteur25)” (“Albums are books with white pages destined to receive notes, drawings, etc., etc. Very few people do not know them, and too many know them too well (Author’s note)”; “Des Album” 14326). This basic definition evokes the main characteristics of the album: its color (or the color of its pages), and its purpose: collecting writings, drawings, and other inscriptions. By saying that there were only a few people who were unaware of the existence of albums Jouy is not only affirming the popularity of this object, but also excluding those who did not know about it as backward people who were not up-to-date with the latest fashion. On the other hand, those who were aware of the existence of the album knew too much about it, letting themselves be consumed by this fashion and the importance of following it in order to belong to specific social groups who shared this type of activity. This statement sets the ironic tone of Jouy’s essay, and announces the criticism that he will deliver against the album fashion.

In the case of Larra, after an explanation of the willingness of the writer commenting on social customs to move among different spaces and celebrations (from folkloric “routs” to elegant “saraos”) in order to collect all the information he needs for his accounts, he finally focuses on the subject of his essay, starting with the meaning of

25 Jouy has to specify here that this is a “Note de l’auteur” because, as I previously explained, this is supposed to be a letter sent from a “homme de lettres du Marais” to the hermit. The “auteur” is then facilitating the reading of the essay, explaining a term introduced by the writer of the letter.

26 From now on, all the quotes from Jouy will be from the essay “Des Album.”
his title. He acknowledges that this term does not have a Castilian origin, but declares that this does not pose a problem for him, since he is not, and does not want to be, a purist. Then, Larra questions the way in which syllables are put together to convey a meaning. He affirms that he does not understand the pact that men have established with the divinity or with nature to use a certain combination of syllables to express themselves: “desde el momento en que por mutuo acuerdo una palabra se entiende, ya es buena; desde el momento en que una lengua es buena para hacerse entender en ella, cumple con su objeto” (“from the moment when by mutual agreement, a word is understood, it is already good; from the moment in which a language serves to make oneself understood, it fulfills its objective”; 328). Thus, for Larra the formation and use of words is an almost mystical process, outcome of which is the possibility of men to understand each other. The word “álbum” belongs to this mysterious agreement and that is why Larra does not consider important the fact that its origin is not Castilian, since he is convinced that all his readers will understand this term.

Although the title of his article may be incomprehensible (“Greek”) to the majority of the people in his context, Larra acknowledges that there is a group that will not find it unpleasant: “nuestras elegantes lectoras” (“our elegant female readers”; 327). But, how many female readers could Larra really have had considering the literacy

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27 According to the Trésor de la Langue Française the correct spelling of “rout” was “raout,” and it referred to a “grande reception mondaine” (“Raout”). The Diccionario de la lengua española from the Real Academia Española, defines the “saraos” as night meetings of distinguished people in which they had fun dancing or listening to music (“Sarao”).
circumstances in his context? The women who would not be surprised by Larra’s subject must have been sophisticated members of a higher social class who probably already had an album or were thinking about acquiring one. Larra makes it clear that the following explanation and description of the album is certainly not for them. Of course, he would not have wanted to hurt the pride of his female readers, especially since they were probably the only ones who were going to appreciate his effort to depict the album as a nineteenth-century phenomenon worthy of study by a costumbrista. The fact that only stylish women were able to understand the notion of “album” makes it clear that the amalgamated society of which Larra spoke before was not at all mixed, and the division between the high class (album connoisseurs and owners) and the low class was very clear.

Larra is aware of the diffusion of the album all over Europe before it got to Spain. Declaring that this fashion spread at a surprising speed as soon as it started, he points out that the English clung to it and that the French did not despise it, adopting it as a social custom. Larra argues that Spanish women were unfortunately late regarding the album fashion, just as Spanish society had been historically behind in terms of social developments with respect to the rest of Europe. “Nuestras señoras han sido las últimas en esta moda,” affirms the Spanish writer, “como en otras, pero no las que han sabido apreciar menos el valor de un album” (“Our ladies have been the last ones to adopt this fashion, as with others, but they are not the ones who have most underappreciated the value of an album”; 332). While acknowledging the delay of the arrival of the album
practice in Spain, Larra stresses the fact that it was the “señoras” who were the ones responsible for its popularity, underlying the essentially feminine nature of this fashion.

Prior to Larra, Jouy had also made geographical remarks about the origin and development of the album phenomenon. In the case of Jouy, from the beginning of “Des Album” he makes it clear that he will be talking about a fashion that he has identified in the Chaussée d’Antin, the neighborhood where both the fictional figure of the hermit and Jouy himself live. This neighborhood is located in the ninth arrondissement of the quadrangle and takes its name from the main street in it. A section of the popular French department store Galeries Lafayette is located in this area, and the Chaussée d’Antin was already popular in the early nineteenth century for its developed fashion taste. Jouy points out that the multiple fashions imposed by the Chaussée d’Antin would spread faster to Vienna, Berlin, or Saint Petersburg than to the Marais, another neighborhood of the French capital. This differentiation between the two neighborhoods is evidently based on a class and economic distinction, since the Marais was not as prestigious as the hermit’s neighborhood.28 Acknowledging the multiple trends people from the Chaussée d’Antin have established, Jouy ironically asks if the album could be added to the list in which are already featured the “habits verts” and the “attelages dépareillés:” “ne vous devons-nous pas aussi les Album, que vous semblez avoir inventés pour le bonheur d’un sexe et le désespoir de l’autre” (“do we not also owe you the Albums, that you seem to have

28 We need to remember that it is the “homme de lettres du Marais” who is writing this essay-letter, so he is basically exposing the situation of his neighborhood.
invented for the happiness of one sex and the despair of the other”; 145). It is particularly
important that in this passage, the first mention of the album in the essay, Jouy makes
reference to the gender determination of this practice. Although up until this point Jouy
has not yet explained in detail the roles of men and women in the album practice, it is
clear that the sex which receives pleasure from it is the feminine, while the one pestered
by it is the masculine.

But the people from the Chaussée d’Antin did not invent the album, as Jouy
previously suggested, and he continues his description of this artifact by pointing out the
difficulty of determining its origin. He acknowledges that for some the album may be
attributed to the Germans, while others may think it was a Russian creation. His interest
in establishing the geographical origin of the album fashion leads him to consider the
etymology of the term: “En effet, le mot *Album* est-il français?” (“Is the word *Album*
French?”; 145). Larra’s gesture of questioning a possible Castilian origin of the word
album had then already been performed by his predecessor, who worried about finding
the etymological roots of the term at the beginning of the century. Jouy’s and Larra’s
anxiety for determining the origin of the term “album” could respond to a need to
establish the trajectory of this object, in order to fully understand its imposition as a
generalized fashion in their contexts. It was almost a responsibility they had towards their
readers, since they had already introduced themselves as having the authority to
knowledgeably present this phenomenon.
Due to his lack of familiarity with modern languages, Jouy has to admit that he is incapable of resolving the issue of the etymology of the word “album.” However, he feels confident enough about his understanding of this phenomenon to give a definition of it disregarding the detail of its linguistic source: “ce mot Album […] ne peut signifier autre chose que mélange, pot-pourri, confusion, galimatias, macédoine” (“this word Album cannot mean anything else but a mix, a potpourri, a confusion, a mumbo-jumbo”; 145-46, his italics). It is essential to notice that all the terms that Jouy uses to define the album imply disorganization, disorder, and a multiplicity of elements combined in a way that is difficult to apprehend. The Trésor de la Langue Française defines “mélange” as, among other things, an ensemble of elements reunited to create a totality, and as the insertion of a foreign element that alters something. The term “pot-pourri” refers either to a literary composition made of a collection of diverse texts (frequently in no particular order), or to a heterogeneous and bizarre mixing. A “galimatias” is a confusing discourse that pretends to say something, but that actually means nothing. Finally, the notion of “macédoine” (beyond the instant reference of the vegetable salad so popular in France, or even the country in the Balkan Peninsula) refers to an assorted gathering of things or people.29

According to these definitions, the album contains within itself a diversity that is not complementary, but uncertain and indefinite. This multiplicity results in a totality that

29 The definitions in the Trésor de la Langue Française are evidently a lot longer and detailed, but I am just using here the passages that more directly serve my purpose of pointing out Jouy’s characterization of the album.
lacks uniformity, a certain disarray that could become excessive for album owners, contributors, or simple viewers. Why did Jouy use those terms to define the album? Why did he want to characterize this object as an excess hard to comprehend? Why did he want to point out the elements that referred to the album’s diversity? A collection of multiple entries created by individual contributors, it was inevitable that the album was seen as a chaotic object where heterogeneity would be interpreted as threatening. Among the albums I consulted in France and Spain I identified different types of contribution in terms of the artistic creation and even a diversity of styles within those categories of contribution. For example, there were many literary (mainly poetic) contributions, but some of them were imprinted with visual images that would add a variation to the category. The album which belonged to Madame de Heredia (the wife of Cuban-French writer José-Maria de Heredia) offers several instances of this tendency to diversify the contributions. Madame de Heredia had in her album poems like the one added by her own husband, which combines the lyric text with a drawing, and the one added by d’Aurevilly, which is written with red and gold ink and embellished with long strokes in specific letters. (See Figures 24 and 28) As proven by Madame de Heredia’s, albums contained a multiplicity in terms of the type of contribution and of the variations even within each category. This heterogeneity combined to narrate a story, the story of the album owner and of how she (or he, in the cases of male owners) was viewed by the contributors. That narration was not a linear one written by a single author, but a diverse one that resulted from the creations of multiple contributors with different styles and
perspectives (an exquisite cadaver dedicated to an exclusive person). How to classify an object like this?

The tone used by Jouy in this description of the album is evidently a negative one. The album could only mean (“ne peut signifier autre chose que”) confusion, a nonsense mix, an incomprehensible collection. It is obvious, however, that Jouy was interested in the album precisely because of the diversity it represented. The fact that the album was a practice that provided a space for gender exchanges, social class definition, and art manifestations made it a fascinating topic for a social customs account. Thus, Jouy’s characterization of the album corresponds to the sarcastic nature of his essay and to an acknowledgement of the countless possibilities of communication and memorialization that this object offered.

The physical appearance of the album is undoubtedly an essential aspect to consider when analyzing this phenomenon. Critics have tried to establish a generalized look for the book in which they focus on aspects such as the binding and the pages. As Michael Pakenham affirms: “L’album classique est d’habitude oblong, fort bien relié avec tranches dorées, assez souvent daté. Le nombre de pages, parfois de couleurs différentes, varie” (“The regular album is normally oblong, well bound with golden edges, quite frequently dated. The number of pages, sometimes of different colors, varies”; 111). Meanwhile, Leonardo Romero Tobar uses the definition of “album” that appeared in the 1869 *Diccionario de la lengua española* from the Real Academia Española: “Libro en blanco (albo), comúnmente apaisado, encuadernado con más o
menos lujo, cuyas hojas se llenan con breves composiciones literarias, sentencias, máximas, piezas de música, firmas y retratos de personas notables” (“A blank book, usually oblong, bound in a more or less luxurious way, whose pages must be filled with brief literary compositions, adages, maxims, musical compositions, signatures, and portraits of notable people”; “Los álbums…”; 73). In the case of the writers who interest me in this chapter, it is Jouy who is in general more focused on the content of the album, whereas Larra dedicates a bigger part of his account to a description of the material aspect of the object. While in terms of physical appearance Jouy had only said that the albums were “des livres blancs,” Larra shares multiple details about them. His physical portrayal of the album starts with a reference to its size: “es un enorme libro” (“it is an enormous book”; Larra 328). Then, Larra declares that it is essential that the pages of the album be made of “papel de música” (“music paper”), which suggests that they used in it the same paper that was used to write musical scores.

The information I obtained through my research of albums in libraries in France and Spain is useful for me to confirm or contradict the depiction of the album in physical terms made by Jouy and Larra and by contemporary critics. Jouy’s description of the album as a “white book” must have referred to an original state of the book, before being filled up with contributions. Of the albums I saw, only the one which belonged to the Princesa de Anglona had the majority of its pages still white, while among the others only some of the pages were still blank. Pakenham affirmed that the album was frequently dated. I would say that in the majority of the cases it was not the book itself but the
entries included in it that would include dates. The earliest entry I could identify is from 1813 (in Emma de Jouy’s album) and the latest one is from 1884 (in Mariana Paniagua’s). It is true that the number of pages would vary, and even the material, which means that not all the albums were made of music paper. There were albums whose pages were mutilated (Dolores Saravia), colored (Vizcondesa de Solís), and of an extremely rough texture (Maria de Marches). Pakenham was right about some albums having golden edges (as Josefa González’s proves). However, none of the albums I studied had an oblong shape, which can be uncomfortable when considering that the objective was to write, draw, or add musical scores in the book.

In Larra’s description of how an album should be made in order to be considered a respectable one, he pays particular attention to the binding of this book. The material had to be the best one available and the album would be even more prized if it had the initials or the shield that represented the owner. Among the albums that I consulted, the leather binding was the most popular. There were leather bindings that were red (in the album which belonged to the señorita de Goyena), green (Vizcondesa de Solís), black (Dolores Saravia), and brown (Madame de Heredia and the princesa de Anglona). (See Figure 1) Velvet was another material used in the binding of albums, as shows the ones that belonged to Josefa González and to the Señora de Ibáñez. Larra’s next observation is regarding the level of sophistication of the album: it must be expensive and English. It is

30 Larra refers here to the shield representative of the family. Sometimes these shields would have the last name of the family and its country of origin.
interesting that the Spanish *costumbrista* uses the term “inglés” here both as an adjective and to specify the country of origin of the album. Of course, if an album was from England it would be “English,” which means it would be chic and sophisticated. The issue of nationalism (either the promotion of it or the criticism against it), so important in the *costumbrista* articles, is present in Larra’s irony about the ideal origin of an album. He makes it very clear that a good album could only be foreign, and that it would be very hard to find one in Spain able to compete in terms of quality. The two main places where Spanish potential album owners could get the book were London and Paris, although Larra strongly recommends the first, since Paris is “más vulgar, más trivial” (“more vulgar, more trivial”; 328). Thus, Larra encourages Spaniards to copy others and to adopt the album fashion, to the point of acquiring the object in other European countries.\(^{31}\) This gesture is not unlike what he himself was doing with his consistent imitation of Jouy in many of his articles.

\(^{31}\) Larra is somewhat inconsistent in this passage of the text when referring to the gender of the album owner. He uses the term “dueño” (“male owner”; 328) when he is talking about the need to have the shield of the owner on the cover of the album. Later on, when describing the types of verses collected in an album, he affirms that they were usually variations about the beauty and kindness of its “dueño” (“male owner”; 329). However, in the rest of the essay Larra makes very clear that the album was exclusively owned by women, pointing out the role of men as contributors in the book. When he declares: “todas las dueñas de *album* son hermosas” (“all female *album* owners are beautiful”; 330), “Nuestras señoras han sido las últimas en esta moda” (“Our women have been the last ones in adopting this fashion”; 331), and “cada una de ellas [las hermosas] no tiene más que un álbum que dar a llenar, y […] cada poeta suele tener a la vez varios a que contribuir” (“each one of them [the beautiful women] has only one *album* to collect contributions, and each poet has multiples to which to contribute at the same time”; 332), Larra makes clear that this was a feminine phenomenon. Why does he use then the notion of “dueño” to refer to album owners? Was he trying to acknowledge the exceptions in which men also owned albums? Or was he just simply offering them the possibility of doing it?
D. The Gender Categorization of the Album. Or Understanding That Each Woman Had Only One Album to Fill Up and Men Had Multiple to Which to Contribute

There is an essential aspect to consider when analyzing Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on the album. These essays, which portray a predominantly female fashion, were written by two male authors and, therefore, offer a perspective of the album practice that is not
the one of the female owner, but the one of a male contributor or simple observer. Jouy and Larra were both very interested in women in terms of their intimate life, as proven by the episodes about their multiple love affairs (during or after their respective marriages) always included in their biographies. Thus, it makes sense that they would have wanted to understand female practices and dynamics in their milieu. In the same way that Addison and Steele had examined and portrayed in their journalistic essays different aspects of female fashion and female social presence, Larra and Jouy dedicated some of their essays on social customs to the album. These texts reproduce the dynamic of the album itself, becoming a meeting place of the sexes in which the two male observers scrutinize the behavior and intentions of women who owned albums.

Being one of the most conflictive issues surrounding the album phenomenon, the characterization of the album as a stereotypically feminine practice deserves close attention. Both Jouy and Larra insist on presenting this fashion as a feminine one and give multiple examples that support this view of it. In my archival research in France and Spain I was able to confirm that some men were also album owners, a circumstance that is not referred to in the essays on social customs or in the majority of the other literary texts that portray this practice. My detailed examination of those male-owned albums later in this study will question the gendered portrayal of this fashion, looking further into

According to the footnote, it is important to note that there are no essays on social customs about the album written by women. The only literary text written by a woman in which the album is portrayed is the novel *Elia, o la España treinta años ha* (1857) by Fernán Caballero, pen name of the Spanish writer Cecilia Böhl de Faber. This novel will of course be examined later in this study.
the implications of this depiction. It is true that the album, as a fashion that implied the acquisition of an artifact representative of the taste of the owner and the enjoyment of compliments, was permeated by a very particular female essence. However, what is problematic about Larra’s and Jouy’s presentation of this phenomenon is that they use the gender distinction to underline a certain inferiority of the female subject. Thus, women are ridiculed for their superficiality in the adoption of this practice, their desperation to obtain entries, their moral corruption (which was signified through the quantity of contributions they collected), and even their stupidity, which would not allow them to realize that the entries included in their book were frequently not created for them and that men were simply repeating in all the albums the same contributions. In my approach to the album, I am aware of the agency that this phenomenon offered women, allowing them to initiate a public exchange with men and to fulfill a gesture of collection. Nevertheless, in my analysis I also acknowledge this depiction of the inferior role of women in this practice, which frequently led to men obtaining the majority of benefits in the aftermath of the album request.

Before establishing a direct identification between the album practice and its female owner, both Jouy and Larra present certain aspects of the book as a representation of the male figure that participates in the exchange. Referring to the parallels between men and the album in its original state, before its pages were filled up with contributions, Jouy affirms: “Ces pauvres livres, sortis tout blancs de la main du relieur, et d’autant plus barbouillés, qu’ils circulent dans le monde, ressemblent fort aux enfans des hommes, qui
perdent leur candeur à mesure que l’esprit leur vient” (“These poor books, which come out completely white from the hands of the bookbinder, and become increasingly sullied as they circulate around the world, resemble children, who lose their innocence as they gain knowledge”; 146). Jouy personifies the album lamenting the corruption that this object suffers once it goes out into the wilderness of the album exchange universe. Just as children lose their innocence when they immerse themselves into the real world and obtain a certain conscience about it, albums are altered when their pages are covered with entries from different contributors. It is interesting how, according to this analogy, the content of the album can be seen as the source of a certain type of knowledge, an approach completely opposite to the previous one, in which the album was only “galimatias” and “macédoine.” Thus, the ‘baby album’ that was pristine at the end of its construction, right before leaving the factory, is forced to mature and become a ‘used (adult) album,’ an album whose pages are not white anymore.

In Jouy’s quote the loss of candor is not necessarily negative, since it would imply for the man obtaining a knowledge (“esprit”) that would be essential for his entrance in the world. The signification of the naiveté of albums (or men) with the color white is not only an observation about the newness of their pages in their original state, when the album has just been assembled, but also a direct reference to the gender issue central to the album practice. This comparison is actually the opposite of the generalized conception of the role of men and women in the album exchange. The whiteness of the album is not typically linked to the male contributors, but is interpreted as a
representation of the physical and moral purity of the album’s female owner, and, thus, its staining signifies the loss of their virginal state.

Larra’s comparison between the album and the male figure is not related to the content of the book, but to its material construction. Explaining in detail the elegance that the album should have, Larra affirms: “Debe estar, como la mayor parte de los hombres, por fuera encuadernado con un lujo asiático, y por dentro en blanco; su carpeta, que será más elegante si puede cerrarse a guisa de cartera, debe ser de la materia más rica que se encuentre, adornada con relieves del mayor gusto, y la cifra o las armas del dueño” (“It should be, as the majority of men, bound with an Asian luxury, and completely white inside; its cover, which is more elegant if it can be closed like a purse, should be of the richest material possible, decorated with engravings of the highest taste, and the initials or family crest of the owner”; 328). In a gesture similar to Jouy’s, Larra establishes a parallel between the album and men. Jouy’s comparison is basically positive for the male subject, since it implies that he is an innocent child who is corrupted once he obtains knowledge about the world, just like the album’s white pages are stained once they are covered with contributions. Larra’s comparison, on the contrary, is actually negative.

Larra affirms that one of the basic requirements for a respectable album is that its binding be extremely luxurious and that inside, due to its newness, it should be completely white. In a blatant critique to members of the male sex, he adds that, in this sense, albums should be like the majority of men, implying that they are very elegant outside, but are empty inside. This portrayal of men as soulless and cruel individuals who only cared for
their physical appearance and completely disregarded emotions or values is very appropriate for referring to the role of men in the album exchange, as presented in the literary texts that depict the practice.

One of the most interesting scenes in all the texts that portray the album in terms of this stereotypical construction of gender responsibilities in the practice is included in Jouy’s “Des Album.” Just after describing the “pauvres livres” which would lose their candor in the process of receiving contributions in their pages, Jouy proceeds to narrate a specific instance of the gesture of collection. What makes this episode particularly interesting is that Jouy narrates in the first person an event where such a gathering of contributions was carried out. The French writer starts with a description of the album owner: it was an anonymous woman, a “héritière de la rue de Braque, nouvellement mariée à un riche banquier de la rue Caumartin” (“heiress of the Braque Street, recently married to a rich banker of Caumartin Street”; 146). It is important at this point to remember what Jouy had previously said about the distinctions between the neighborhoods of the French capital. The fashion tendencies that the Chaussée d’Antin imposed would get to other countries first, before reaching the Marais neighborhood. This detail is essential to analyze the case of this album owner. She was originally from the Braque Street, located in the Marais, but she had just married a rich banker from Caumartin Street, located in the ninth arrondissement, the neighborhood where the Chaussée d’Antin is located. Because of her marriage, the woman from the Marais
moved to the more exclusive neighborhood and had access to the latest trends. The album was therefore a new discovery for her.

According to Jouy, it was this woman who made the album known in the Marais. “Elle est arrivée chez sa mère un jour de boston, un livre relié en maroquin sous le bras” ("She arrived at her mother’s house on Boston day, with a book covered on Morocco leather under her arm”; 146). “Boston,” also known as “Boston de Fontainebleau” or “French Boston,” was a nineteenth-century card game that was played throughout the Western world apart from Britain (where it later materialized in the descendant form of “Solo Whist”). It has been said that the Boston was created in France in the 1770s by combining the 52-card pack and the logical ranking system of partnership (Parlett 39).33

Surprised by the arrival of the unknown object and the difficulty of integrating it in their game night, the woman’s cousin asks her: “Ferons-nous de la musique?” as Jouy remarks, “trompée par la forme et la dimension du volume” (“Are we going to make music? […] mislead by the shape and size of the volume”; 146). Since the cousin mistook the album for a music score, it was the album owner’s responsibility to show her what it was and to explain her intention in bringing it to that gathering. The woman took out the book from its case and what Jouy saw amazed him:

33 The rules of the Boston are the following: “four players each receive 13 cards from a 52-card pack ranking A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 in each suit. Eldest bids first and the highest bidder becomes the soloist, playing alone against the other three unless one of them bids to be an ally. Eldest leads first. Follow suit if possible, otherwise play any card. A trick is taken by the highest card of the suit led, or by the highest trump if any are played.” Among the schedule of bids it is possible to find names as “Petite Misère,” “Grande Misère,” “Four-ace misère,” “Petite misère ouverte,” and “Grande misère ouverte” (Parlett 41).
La confusion de langues n’était pas plus complète à la tour de Babel, M. l’Hermite! Figurez-vous du français, du latin, du chinois, des dessins, des vers, de la musique, de la prose, voir même de l’algèbre, enfouis pêle-mêle dans le même recueil, rassemblés au hasard dans un livre fort semblable à celui de la Sibylle, à cela près qu’il contient moins d’oracles. C’est là que j’ai reconnu combien les arts nous fournissent de moyens divers de rendre la même idée, ce que les dames avaient avant moi. Le peintre avec son crayon, le poète avec ses vers, le prosateur avec ses lignes, le musicien avec ses notes, exprimaient tous le même sentiment; sentiment non moins vif que discret, dont un algébriste démontrait galamment la puissance à l’aide d’une équation. (146-147)

The confusion of languages was not more complete in the Tower of Babel, Mr. Hermit! Imagine French, Latin, Chinese, drawings, verses, music, prose, even algebra, buried haphazardly in the same collection, organized randomly in a book very similar to the one of the Sibyl, just with less oracles. It is at that moment that I recognized how the arts provide us with different ways of expressing the same idea, something that women already knew before me. The painter with his pencil, the poet with his verses, the writer of prose with his lines, the musician with his notes, all of them expressed the same feeling; a feeling not less alive than discreet, a feeling so powerful that an algebra specialist would courteously show it with the help of an equation.

Evidently, Jouy was discovering something completely new for him, a type of text that he had never seen before. The combination of different languages and disciplines shocked him and reminded him of the book of the Sybille, but with fewer oracles. This reference is extremely interesting since the notion of “sibyl” refers to a prophetess in Latin antiquity. The Sibylline books contained solutions to social or natural disasters. It is very emblematic that Jouy uses this reference to describe the album, since thinking about the nineteenth-century book as a newer version of the book of the Sibyl would make of the woman owner a type of contemporary visionary, an illuminated being who had access to some sort of wisdom forbidden to the rest of society. Thus, the album did contain a different type of knowledge absent in other types of social transactions, and this made the
female owner the possessor of information inaccessible for other members of society.

Jouy himself recognizes the superior artistic awareness of women, when he declares that this first encounter with the album helped him understand “ce que les dames savaient avant moi” (147).

Analyzing the different types of art manifestations that he discovers in the album belonging to the woman character from the Marais is one of the most revealing aspects of Jouy’s discovery of this artifact. He explains that the painter with his pencil, the poet with his verses, the musician with his notes, and even the mathematician with his equation, were all able to express their feelings in a very discreet manner. But all these contributions were not anonymous: they were accompanied by the signature of their authors, “signature que la dame proclamait avec une complaisance pareille à celle qu’un vainqueur mettrait à faire le dénombrement de ses captifs” (“signature that the lady announced with the same satisfaction as a victor would have when counting his prisoners”; 147). Thus, these signatures served the female owner to boast about her abilities as a collector and about the quantity of men who were willing to leave their creative mark for her. According to Jouy, this need of women to validate themselves publicly derives from their insatiability: “les femmes sont peut-être plus insatiables que les héros” (“women are probably more insatiable than heroes”; 147). The Marais woman was no exception to this rule, and since she had the propitious opportunity to have a group of people (apparently mainly men) already gathered, she took advantage of it to add to her collection of album entries. The moment of truth came when everyone was
asked for an album contribution, that is, asked to show their “esprit.” No one is impolite enough to refuse. Even Jouy himself, hidden behind the literary mask of the hermit, is inevitably forced to improvise an entry for the album of the Parisian woman.

Jouy’s description of his reaction when receiving the album to add his contribution exemplifies the generalized attitude towards the nineteenth-century album and the anxieties that this book triggered in the potential contributors:

Mon tour vint. Comment refuser mon contingent? Moi, qui ai étudié à Picpus, il y a quelque temps à la vérité! Moi, qui ai travaillé dix ans chez le procureur, en face de la maison de Beaumarchais! Moi, enfin qui déjeune tant que je le veux avec le Chansonnier sentimental, ce grand amateur d’huîtres, et pourvoyeur d’Album, s’il en fut! Moitié d’invention, moitié de réminiscence, je fournis un impromptu. Ma réputation s’est accrue, mais mon repos en souffrit. Et n’est pas toujours aux dépens de la tranquillité que l’on obtient la gloire? (148)

My turn came. How could I refuse my share? I, who studied at Picpus, a while ago actually! I, who worked for ten years with the prosecutor, across from Beaumarchais’ house! I, finally, who have lunch as many times as I want with the Chansonnier sentimental, that great oyster lover and supplier of albums, if there was any! Half invention, half reminiscence, I contributed with an impromptu. My reputation increased, but my peace of mind suffered with that. And is it not always at expense of tranquility that one obtains glory?

Jouy, intellectual and connoisseur of literature, is evidently supposed to prove his talent and knowledge through his album contribution. Although the reasons that he sarcastically gives (working an office opposite from of Beaumarchais’ house or having lunch with the “Chansonnier sentimentale”) are not necessarily proof of a developed literary taste or ability, Jouy affirms that he was forced to do his best if he wanted to be considered a respectable and reputable member of that society. Like Jouy, other men who were requested to create a contribution for an album may have felt the pressure of having
to prove their intellectual and artistic potential and their ability to improvise, all this while praising the album owner. It is then understandable that many men rebelled against this practice, expressing their annoyance with it and symbolically sabotaging it by not creating new entries for each album, but repeating the same praises for all album owners. We will see this later in the analysis of the literary texts that depict this practice.

This was not the case for Jouy’s narrator. Completely new to the album practice, he was willing that night to make the effort and spontaneously create a contribution for the album of the Marais woman. He describes his impression of the process of collection of entries and signatures, and then he focuses on the aftermath of this album soirée and on the effects that the ritual had on the album owner and on the rest of the women who were witnesses of the scene. After having collected forty-seven entries in her album, in verse and prose, in just one night (before 3AM), the Marais woman went back to her hôtel, album in hand, satisfied and content with her success as a collector. But the impact of her gesture was already established: “elle avait inoculé sa maladie aux dames de la famille, qui la communiquèrent à celles du voisinage, lesquelles la donnèrent à toutes les dames du quartier” (“she had spread her sickness to the women of her family, who transmitted it to women in the neighborhood, and these passed it on to women in the whole district”; 148). This rapid dissemination of the album fashion resulted in the intense presence of the object in the whole neighborhood: “Depuis ce jour chaque dame du Marais veut avoir un Album. Dans les rues, dans les boutiques, dans les boudoirs, on ne voit plus que des Album. Les Album se sont glissés jusque dans les corbeilles de
baptême, jusque dans les corbeilles de mariage” (“Since that day every woman in the Marais wants to have an Album. In the streets, in the boutiques, in the boudoirs, all we see are Albums. The Albums have found their way to the baptism gifts and marriage gifts”; 149). Jouy’s hyperbole is evident. According to him, the album was bought, owned, gifted, and ubiquitous in the Marais. The album could be found equally in the “corbeilles de baptême” or in marriage gift baskets, a circumstance that emblematizes the potential presence of the object at different moments of a woman’s life.34 Albums were not exclusively for single women who wanted to establish interactions with men in their social circles (who could potentially become their suitors), but were also owned by newly married women, and even by those who had just given birth. Thus, the album spread in the Marais, becoming a central artifact in the material culture of this neighborhood, an object emblematic not only of social tendencies, but also of the social constitution of the female subject in this context.

The fact that after this scene narrated by Jouy many women in the Marais wanted an album implies that a demand for this object was created, a demand based on a social pressure to have such a book and determined by the economic possibility of acquiring it. At the same time, this demand for albums would have an impact on the economic

34 According to the Trésor de la Langue Française, the “corbeille” was a type of basket destined to gather different types of things, among those, gifts. Specifically, the “Corbeille de mariage, de mariée, de noce, de noces” was “À l’origine, corbeille, puis coffret contenant les cadeaux (surtout des bijoux) du fiancé à sa future” (“Corbeille”).
constitution of that society, regulating the possibilities of its commerce through availability and price increase.

In his discussion of the uses of the album in the Spanish context, Larra also focuses on the characterization of this practice as a feminine one. First, he tries to imagine the questions of his readers about the uses of the album: “¿Y para qué sirve […] esa especie de misal, tan rico y tan enorme, tan extranjero y tan raro? ¿De qué trata?” (“And what purpose does […] that type of missal serve, so rich and enormous, so foreign and strange? What is it about?” 329). The same readers who had thought that the title of the album was not understandable, “Greek” as Larra had said, are probably now the ones who are wondering about the uses and content of the album. The reference to the “missal” can be linked to a comparison that Jouy makes between the album and the medieval book of hours, to which I will return shortly. The missal was a book that contained all the scripture readings for the mass and details about the structure of the celebration. Just like the books of hours, the missal was a small book that the owner could carry to church. Probably conscious of the discordance between the sizes of these two books, Larra points out that the album was a type of missal, but “enormous,” a condition that limits its physical circulation. A clearly secular object, the album is identified with this type of religious book with the only intention of insisting in its classification as a feminine practice. For Larra, in the same way that women were the only ones who carried “misales” to church, they were also the exclusive owners of
albums. If he is as right about the missal fact as he is about his album statistics, we can imagine many men bringing their missals to mass in nineteenth-century Spain.

In order to explain the function of the album in his milieu, Larra feels the need to establish a parallel between this object and other artifacts also important in this context. At this point, the identification of the album as a female practice is inevitable: “Ese librote es, como el abanico, como la sombrilla, como la tarjetera, un mueble enteramente de uso de señora, y una elegante sin álbum sería ya en el día un cuerpo sin alma, un río sin agua, en una palabra, una especie de manzanares” (“Like the fan, the parasol, and the cardholder, that large book is an accessory entirely for ladies’ use, and an elegant woman without an album would become, in a single day, a body with no soul, a river without water, in a word, a type of apple orchard/manzanares”; Larra 329). The album was at the same time an object for the service and pleasure of women and a symbol of them. The comparison with the fan is justified, since this object was inevitably a female one that was frequently used by women in the process of flirting in Larra’s context. Quoting Octave Uzanne’s *L’éventail*, Noël Valis explains that Spanish women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had developed a very particular “art of the fan” (“manejo del abanico”). But the silent language of fans was not exclusive to Spanish women, affirms Valis. Late eighteenth-century English fanmakers marketed novelty items like the “Fanology or Ladies Conversation Fan,” and “The Telegraph of Cupid.” The French adapted the English style but filtered it through a Spanish system developed by Fenella (Valis 108).
An 1878 Spanish manual intended for female readership titled *El lenguaje de las flores*, included a section on the language of the fan. According to this text, the position and movement of the fan in contact with the female body constituted a coded language of desire. Thus, a closed fan carried in the right hand signified one’s availability: “Deseo novio” (Valis translates this as: “I desire a friend,” but I would say it is clearly “I desire to have a boyfriend”). A closed fan carried in the left hand meant the contrary: “Estoy comprometida” (“I am engaged”). A rapid fan movement meant passion: “Mucho te amo” (again, Valis translates this as “I adore you,” but I would translate it as “I love you very much”). Finally, indifference towards the suitor was expressed by a languid swish: “Me eres indiferente” (“I am indifferent to you”). Valis also refers to the “secret grammar” of the language of fans, to its euphemistic character, and to the rules to which both participants in the exchange had to agree in order to transmit and understand the message (Valis 107-108).

Contrary to the fan, the parallel between the album and the umbrella and the cardholder (the other two objects that Larra mentions) is more arbitrary, considering that these were artifacts also owned by men. The cardholder in particular, which main use could have been the carrying of the *cartes de visite* became a primarily masculine object as a result of the predominance of men participating in the exchange of this souvenir. (See Figure 2) Just like the album, the phenomenon of the *cartes de visite* was originally popular in France, and eventually adopted in Spain. These cards, invented by André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri in 1854, were made of a picture in the front, and in the back
some space for a dedication or a thank you note. Eventually, the back of the card started to contain more technical information like the name of the photographer or of the company which made it. I had the opportunity to obtain a catalogue of an exhibition held at the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid of the collection of 511 *cartes de visite* that belonged to the Spanish writer Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. Like in the case of the album, the historical information that an analysis of the *cartes de visite* can offer (for example: the public relations their exchange revealed, the social classes involved in the practice, etc.) is extremely valuable. Although Larra’s mention of the cardholder made me immediately think of this phenomenon, there is an essential discrepancy that makes it impossible to link the album to this object. If the *cartes de visite* were created in 1854, then the cardholder that Larra is referring to in 1835 was not used to carry this type of card. However, there is a possibility that Larra’s cardholder was used for a different sort of card. In the decade of 1850, was popularized in the United States a card that is nowadays identified as the predecessor of the *cartes de visite*, known as the calling card. Smaller than today’s business cards and consisting only on the name of its owner engraved and printed on glossy stock, the calling card was used for introducing oneself at social visits (“A Brief History of the *Carte de Visite*”). Although I have not been able to obtain information of a specific predecessor of the *cartes de visite* in Spain, it is possible to imagine that a similar photo-less card also existed there before the peak of the *cartes de visite*. 
In the second part of his remark, Larra establishes the implications for a woman of not having an album. First, he uses the term “elegant” as a noun and not as an adjective to refer to album owners and insists once more upon the social status of the followers of this fashion. But the album does not simply define women in terms of their public image. According to Larra, it also determines the owner’s spiritual and moral constitution.

Women who did not have an album would be simply a body with no soul, an empty being, an individual without an essence. The very last phrase of the sentence has two possible interpretations. First, if we translate “manzanares” as “apple orchard” we can
read this description as a reference to the monotony and repetition in color and shape that one can find in a fruit farm where there would be hundreds of copies of the same tree. In this sense, Larra could be referring to the absence of distinction without the album. A woman who did not own an album would be as boring as the repetition of trees in an orchard, since she would not enjoy the social presence and activity that an album would offer her.

I think there is, however, an even more appropriate interpretation of this phrase. When Larra affirms that a woman without an album would be “un cuerpo sin alma, un río sin agua, en una palabra, una especie de manzanares,” it is inevitable to establish a link between the river without water and the name “manzanares.” The Manzanares is a river of 69 kilometers of extension that starts in the Guadarrama mountain range on the northwest of Spain and empties in the Jarama river on the southeast of the country, crossing the city of Madrid. This river has a concrete historical significance in Madrid. Since mid-seventeenth century this river became the workspace of laundresses who, as a result of the regulation and privatization of the body of water by the city government, would pay a lessor for the rent of a “banca” (the small wood benches that they used to kneel on the banks of the river). Images from 1860 show the Manzanares’ banks

35 This river has obtained a lot of attention in recent years because of the construction of the “Madrid río” public park, a 10-kilometer long park that runs along the banks of the Manzanares river in the heart of the city and offers a wide selection of sports and recreational facilities for the whole family (“Madrid río”).

36 The lessor would, at the same time, pay to the government for the rent of specific sections of the bank of the Manzanares. In 1749 the city government officially privatized the river, creating a new municipal
covered with hundreds of laundresses, each one occupying a very small space, enough to complete their labor. This emblematic scene aroused the interest of travelers and writers who, throughout the nineteenth century, described it in their texts (Sarasúa 66).

Notwithstanding the extensive use of the Manzanares for washing clothes, it was not (and it is not) an important river in geographical terms, since it is small and does not have a big current of water. The Manzanares is not impressive, it is a river that lacks something. Thus, the Manzanares river conveys how Larra viewed women who did not have an album. Being such an important and symbolic reference of daily life in the city, it is understandable why Larra would have wanted to use it in his description of the album. An almost dry river became then the representation of women whose identity was missing something, women who were not complete or whose presence was not meaningful in their social circles. The only detail that would not support this interpretation of Larra’s quote is the fact that he did not use the capital letter in the name or the river, and it is not clear if the was using the proper name. I think that for Larra his reference to the river, considering that he had just mentioned the “river without water,” was very clear, and the use of the lower case letter was just a stylistic choice.

Regardless of the interpretation of this last phrase of the quote, it is clear that for Larra the album signified women in physical or material terms. This object was almost an income called “de lavaderos, bancas de lavar ropa y baños” (“of washing sites, benches to wash clothes, and baths”; Sarasúa 63).
extension of their bodies socially, because it allowed them to establish themselves as public individuals, and even spiritually, considering that without it women had no soul. A woman without an album would be empty and meaningless, lacking the one thing that would establish her public persona. Nineteenth-century Spanish women who obtained an album would be validating themselves in the social sphere, proving that they also had a story worthy of being told through their book.

Considering the centrality that Larra gives to the album in terms of completing a feminine being, it would have been normal to expect that his description of this object and its content would be a commentary on the impact that it had in nineteenth-century Spain. However, when trying to answer the question: “¿De qué trata?” (“What is it about?”), one of the questions he imagined his readers would have for him, Larra oversimplifies and degrades the content of the album: “No trata de nada; es un libro en blanco” (“It is about nothing, it is a book with white pages”; 329). Probably Larra’s intention in this description was to stress the fact that the album was a different type of book, a book that, unlike the others that his readers knew, started with blank pages. However, although it is true that the album is completely white in its original state, right after being released from the bookbinder’s hands, Larra’s description insinuates that the album is “about nothing” in general. According to this interpretation, the contributions to the album, which will be about its owner and her (or his) qualities and attributes, will be equivalent to nothing, so insignificant that they do not deserve to be acknowledged. But Larra knows he has to explain the content of the album to his avid readers, and he does it
in terms of the gesture of collection that the book implies: “es un libro el *album* que la bella envía al hombre distinguido para que éste estampe en una de sus inmensas hojas, si es poeta, unos versos, si es un pintor, un dibujo, si es músico, una composición, etc. En su verdadero objeto es un repertorio de la vanidad […]” (“It is a book that a fair lady must send to a distinguished man so he might impress upon one of its immense pages some verses if he is a poet, a drawing if he is a painter, a composition if he is a musician, etc. At root, it is a catalog of vanity [...]”; 329). Here Larra portrays the album once again as an object owned exclusively by women, emphasizing the roles played by each gender in the exchange. Jouy had already established who would obtain pleasure and who would be bothered by the album practice, and Larra insists that “la bella” is always the album owner, and the “distinguido” the male contributor. Being a man was not the only requirement to contribute to an album: it was also necessary to be a well-known member of society, one who album-owning women would want to include in their collections. This illustrious figure needed also to have a special talent, an ability to create some artistic manifestation to honor the album owner. Thus, the creation of some type of “art” was one of the main aspects of the album exchange, essential to understand the social and economic dynamics that this phenomenon instigated. I will further explore the notion of art as proposed here and promoted by the participants in the album practice and by the object itself.

The true purpose of the album is not, according to Larra, to promote a certain type of communication between men and women, or to provide the space for the creation of
diverse works of art. The album exists to be a “repertoire of the vanity” of a woman, that is, to nourish the personal pride of each owner who takes the time and effort to compile entries. The idea of “repertoire” reinforces the gesture of collection essential in the album practice and subtly evokes the problem of the repetition of contributions. Emphasizing the idea of the album as a material proof of not only a woman’s virtues and attributes, but also the public acknowledgement of the names and quantity of her admirers, Larra compares this book to a temple, in which the female owner would hang all her trophies (“es un templo colgado de todos sus trofeos”; 332). A sacred object according to this metaphor, the album also had political and economic connotations for the woman who owned it: “es su lista civil, su presupuesto, o por lo menos el de su amor propio” (“it is her civil list, her budget, or at least the budget of her self-love”; Larra 332, his italics).

The notion of “lista civil,” according to the Diccionario de la Lengua Española, refers to the economic aid assigned to a monarch and his family in the state’s budget (“Lista civil”). The use of this term and of the notion of “presupuesto” establishes the function of the album in women’s lives as an object that would add to their personal value, an accessory that was given to them so they would be able to develop a public persona and social relations. The fact that the album is the budget of its female owner, or at least that of her self-love, strengthens the idea of the superiority of album owners, since the coveted book would enrich their ego giving them the confidence needed in the gender exchanges that would originate album contributions. These notions of “lista civil” and “presupuesto” refer also to the accumulation materialized in the album practice through
the collection of entries. It is particularly interesting that Larra links the album to these economic concepts, since the question of the value of this object before and after its pages were filled up with contributions will also be a central issue in the development of this practice in France and Spain.  

But Larra’s characterization of the album as a female object is not limited to its uses and meaning for women. Following the identification of the coveted book as a temple and “lista civil,” he establishes a much more direct comparison between the female owner and the coveted book. “¿Qué es una bella,” asks Larra, “sino un *album* a cuyos pies todo el que pasa deposita su tributo de admiración? ¿Qué es su corazón muchas veces sino un *album*?” (“What is a fair lady but an *album*, at whose feet everyone leaves their tribute of admiration? What is her heart, if not often an *album*?” 332). Now it is the female subject who becomes objectified, being represented as an album. To imply that a woman might herself be an album goes beyond what Larra had previously declared about the emptiness of women who did not own albums. Women cannot escape the gender identification with the album, since the book now literally symbolizes them. The fact that praises are supposed to be placed at the women’s feet conveys visually the dynamic of the album exchange, in which the female owner was supposed to be idealized and dignified by the male contributor through the improvised entries. I think that the

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37 Larra acknowledges the potential economic value of the album when discussing the impact that drawings or verses by famous painters or poets would have in it. I will introduce this economic aspect of the album practice more in detail later in my analysis.
body metaphor that Larra introduces here is essential to understand his interpretation of
the album phenomenon in the Spanish context. If the woman is an album, then her body
would be an empty vessel waiting to be fulfilled by men in the form of album entries.
Although the image of the tributes and praises being put at the feet of the woman evokes
an almost virginal reference, it is clear that Larra is referring to the gender exchange, and
frequent courtship, that took place in the album practice. When he questions next what
the owner’s heart could be if not an album he supports this interpretation, since feelings
were frequently involved in the gesture of collection of contributions from suitors or
potential lovers.

Larra also links the metonymical interpretation of the album as a symbol of the
woman to the issue of honor so essential in nineteenth-century gender relations. The
album exchange required a constant communication between men and women, initiated
generally by the album owner who would ask for entries from the male contributor. The
book’s content represented the multiple interactions that the woman had with men in her
social circle, many of them potential love relationships. Thus, Larra associates the
material condition of the album with the moral situation of the owner, pointing out the
use of the book as a depiction of her level of social activity. When Larra exclaims:
“¡dichoso el que encuentra en esta especie de album todas las hojas en blanco!,” he is
clearly implying that the whiteness of the book embodies the purity of its owner (“lucky
the one who finds in this type of album all the pages still white!”; 332). According to this
interpretation, each entry of an album could signify a lover, a contributor who had stained
the pages of the album at a literary level, and the honor of the owner at a physical level. We must not forget that Larra had previously established the link between the album and the corporeal nature of the female owner. An album with the majority of its pages unwritten announced an almost virginal woman, one whom any man could consider as a potential wife. In case it is too hard to be the first one to ‘contribute to an album,’ Larra declares that men should try at least to be the last one. Closing or finishing an album would give a man the security that no one else would tarnish his partner’s purity after him, neither symbolically through the words stamped in the album, nor physically by leaving their traces on the owner’s body.

Larra’s last remarks in his essay on the album reinforce his presentation of it as a gendered practice. He insists on the different roles of each gender in this exchange, pointing out that women obtained all the pleasure from it, while men were punished with the trouble of having to create a new entry for each album. Larra affirms that it is essential to request women’s indulgence towards male contributors who are desperate because of their obligation to fulfill the expectations of female album owners. But men’s responsibilities toward women implied much more than only the written album contribution. In the very last sentence of his article, Larra declares that he does not want to finish it without reminding the “hermosas (“beautiful women”) that “cada una de ellas no tiene más que un album que dar a llenar, y que cada poeta suele tener a la vez varios a

38 The issue of the originality expected from album contributors is essential in Jouy’s and Larra’s presentation of this practice and I will address it later in this study.
que contribuir (“each one of them has only one album to fill up, and each poet usually has various to which to contribute at the same time”; 332). The beautiful women have only one album, just like they have only one body. Men, on the other hand, have multiple albums that they have to contribute to, albums which represent the multiplicity of bodies they will try to seduce. Thus, men would not only be evaluated by their creativity and improvisation techniques in terms of artistic creation, but also by their ability of offering an acceptable courting and physical performance for each woman. Even the nineteenth-century quill could become here the phallic symbol that would signify the masculine gesture of writing contributions and, therefore, staining the album/female body. While the reputation of a woman whose album was full of contributions could be questioned when establishing the link between those entries and possible love relationships, the status of a man would benefit from his ability of contributing to multiple albums. The fact that Larra decided to finish his essay stressing this issue reveals the insistent identification of the album as a gendered practice and the strict attribution of male and female roles in it. However, minimizing the album to a feminine fashion or a courting practice would mean to ignore the fact that this phenomenon offers essential information about social structures, class divisions, notions of art, and multiple aspects of the constitution of nineteenth-century society in France and Spain.
IV. Encore: The Album and the *Ridicule*

In order to convey the centrality of the album in nineteenth-century women’s lives, Jouy establishes a comparison between this artifact and another important object in this context: the *ridicule*. Jouy evokes the eagerness with which women adopted the *ridicule* and affirms that their obsession with the album is exactly the same. According to Jouy, the album and the *ridicule* became the two essential accessories of women in nineteenth-century France, and they complemented each other to the point of being inseparable: “ces deux objets,” affirms Jouy, “loin de s’exclure, se sont liés jusqu’à se confondre. Un *Album* et un *ridicule* ne font plus qu’un” (“these two objects, far from excluding one another, are linked to the point of getting mixed up. An *Album* and a *ridicule* are one”; 149). This comparison between the album and the *ridicule* is fascinating, since establishing this link allows us to imagine the centrality of the ownership of objects in general in this context. Just like the album, the *ridicule* was an artifact that belonged to the female fashion universe, and that would have worked in a similar way in terms of social display, insertion in the economic market, and gender determination. The exploration of the *ridicule* resonates with the purpose of this study in terms of the information it offers about social practices and material culture in nineteenth-century France. For this reason, it was important for me to do further research on the *ridicule* and its presence in the milieu of the album.
What exactly is the *ridicule*? Apparently, the term *ridicule* was a variation or synonym of the term *réticule*. According to the *Trésor*, the *réticule* was a small handbag or purse, made of thin mesh, which was in vogue during the *Directoire*, between 1795 and 1799. (See Figure 3) Jouy mentions that women started using *ridicules* at the same time they started wearing see-through dresses, since that type of dress could not have pockets. Therefore, they started carrying handbags for personal objects, such as handkerchiefs, fans, visiting cards, letters, newspapers, and dance cards. These small purses were called *indispensables* in England, and *réticule* or *ridicule* in France. The term *ridicule* was used in French and English until 1912 (“Histoire d’un petit”).

![Image of a *lady’s reticule*](image)

Figure 3: The *ridicule* or *réticule* (“Histoire d’un petit sac à main”).

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39 The dance card (*carnet de bal*) or dance program was a card used by women to remember all the different dances that were programmed for a specific night at a ball, and the partners with whom they planned on dancing. (See Figure 4) On one side of the card there was usually an image of a group of people dancing (the image I include here shows Victorian nostalgia for the eighteenth century as an era of bygone elegance), while the reverse side gave the sequences of dances of the evening with space for specifying the potential partners’ names with the attached pencil (Barlow 100).
Since the album also became an essential object in nineteenth-century women’s lives, there was also space in the ridicule for it. “Renfermé dans le ridicule,” declares Jouy, “l’Album marche avec nos petites-maîtresses, semblable à ces livres d’Heures que nos grand-mères faisaient porter dans des sacs de velours quand elles allaient à la paroisse” (“Kept inside the ridicule, the album is to our little mistresses what Books of Hours were to our grandmothers: an object that they would have carried to church in velvet purses”; 149). The album, then, was carried around the city in that small handbag, just like the books of hours. The only problem with Jouy’s observation is that the album cannot actually be compared to a book of hours in terms of size. A book of hours was usually very small, not bigger than 4 by 4 inches in size, so it is understandable that women would put them in their ridicules. However, albums could not have fit into these nineteenth-century handbags, or at least not the albums that I was able to consult in libraries in France and Spain. Those albums were big, heavy books, and some of them were carried in boxes or cases made exclusively for them. One of the albums I consulted, the one belonging to Madame de Heredia, measures 13.3 inches (horizontally) by 16.9 inches (vertically), not a portable size, and especially not an ideal one to carry in a purse. Perhaps Jouy was referring to earlier albums, a variation that may have existed in the first decade of the century, since he wrote his essay in 1811.

40 The Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin holds the Belleville Hours manuscript, which measures 4 ¾ by 3¼ inches (Hale).
As T.H. Parke mentions in his article “Baudelaire et La Mésangère,” the ridicule or réticule became such an important female object in the nineteenth century that even Charles Baudelaire made reference to it in an explanation to a line of his poem “Les Petites vieilles.” In the third stanza of the poem, the poetic voice describes how the little old women pressed to their side, as if it were a relic, “un petit sac brodé de fleurs ou de rebus” (“a little purse embroidered with flowers or rebus”; Baudelaire 153). In a note to the poem added in the version published in 1862, Baudelaire explains this verse: “Le ridicule, ou réticule, a été souvent orné de rebus d’une nature galante, comme le prouvent les vieilles gravures de modes” (“The ridicule or reticule has frequently been decorated with a gallant rebus, as proven by old fashion engravings”; Parke 249). The “gravures de modes” where Baudelaire learned about the ridicule were the ones included in the Journal des dames et des Modes, directed by Pierre de La Mésangère. Published from 1797 to 1838, the Journal des dames focused on presenting the tendencies in the female fashion in France, particularly in terms of clothing. It was in one of the late 1798 numbers of the magazine that, in the section of “Modes Parisiennes,” the ridicule appeared:

Le sac a définitivement remplacé les poches. On peut quitter un mari, un amant, jamais le sac; c’est le compagnon [sic] indivisible de nos belles, le dépositaire fidèle de leurs plus secrètes pensées. On l’appeloit le ridicule; quelques changemens survenus à leur forme, leur ont donné le nom gibecière. Il y a des sacs de toutes couleurs; les plus élégans sont brodés en or ou en soie; une bourse plus ou moins garnie, une lunette, un mouchoir, et un roman, c’est tout ce qu’il faut pour qu’il soit complet. (Parke 251)

The purse has definitely replaced pockets. One can leave a husband, a lover, but never the purse; it is the inseparable partner of our beautiful women, the faithful guardian of their most secret thoughts. It was called “the ridicule,” but some
changes made to its shape changed its name to “hunting pouch.” There are purses in all colors, the most elegant ones are embroidered with gold or silk, a purse more or less filled up would contain a spectacle, a handkerchief, and a novel. That is all that is necessary for it to be complete.

In a later issue of this review in that same year, the ridicule owner is more clearly depicted: “Toute femme bien mise porte son ridicule (sac) avec elle. Peu de personnes n’en ont qu’un; on aime à en changer, et les mieux fournies en ridicules en prêtent à leurs amies” (“Any well dressed woman carries her ridicule (bag) with her. Very few people have only one; people love to change it, and the better equipped people even lend them to their friends”; Parke 251). The ridicule is almost personified in this description as an extension of its owner. Even more important than her husband or lover, the ridicule was an elegant confidant which carried everything its female owner needed in her public life. It was almost a matter of self-respect to have a ridicule, since this object was an essential part of a sophisticated attire. This portrayal of the ridicule justifies why Jouy linked it to the album in such a convincing way, since it is possible to imagine that ridicule owners were women who were eager to follow all the trends in female fashion. Therefore, they would also want to own an album, even if they did not put it inside their ridicule.
Figure 4: The dance card or dance programme (Barlow 100-01).

V. Conclusion

The essays on social customs that I analyze in this chapter reveal important characteristics about the development of the album fashion in nineteenth-century France and Spain. As I have shown, the nature of this type of text allowed for the construction of a narrative that explored and exposed the basic features of this practice in terms of its
social manifestation from a very particular perspective. Jouy and Larra conveyed their specific approaches to the album phenomenon in their context through the combination of journalistic and satirical elements in their essays. Jouy creates in “Des Album” a fictional frame with multiple narrative voices through which he could express different views and opinions about the album phenomenon. Meanwhile, Larra declares at the beginning of his essay that the “escritor de costumbres” (“writer of social customs”) like himself, had the responsibility of writing impartially for everyone. Notwithstanding the fact that both writers attempt to convince their readers that their depictions of the album are trustworthy and accurate, it is evident that they both had an individual agenda when describing this phenomenon in their journalistic production, an agenda that implied the portrayal of the practice as a gender-determined one. The intertextuality between the essays provokes the similarities in their description of the album phenomenon, mainly in the presentation of it as a practice that revealed female superficiality. However, there are aspects in which Jouy’s and Larra’s understanding of this fashion is contradictory with each other and with the actual constitution of the phenomenon. After narrating that fascinating scene of the woman of the Marais collecting contributions in a gathering, Jouy affirms that “every woman” in that neighborhood wanted an album because of the popularity that this object had gained in that context. Jouy makes of the album a generalized fashion even among women of the Marais, which was not a neighborhood recognized by the taste or wealth of its inhabitants. In this way, Jouy insists on the unlimited extension of this practice. Larra, on the other side, indirectly insists throughout his essay on the social status required to
become an album owner, referring to his “elegant female readers” and stating the quality of an ideal album, which required an economic investment that only women of a certain social class could undertake. Jouy and Larra’s contradictions are not only regarding each other’s depiction of the phenomenon, but also concerning the actual physical appearance of albums, as I have explained before. Evidently, both writers manipulated the information they had about the album in order to make it work for their particular purposes when presenting this craze.

According to Jouy’s and Larra’s portrayal of the album phenomenon, the identification of this fashion as a female one is unavoidable. The album became an object which signified women in the social space, but also represented more intimate aspects of their constitution. I argue that women obtained agency through this practice, which required their constant communication with men in the demand for contributions. While gaining public presence in the album dynamic, the establishment of this fashion also stressed multiple stereotypes about women, for example, their weakness for fashion. Notwithstanding the superficiality of the album practice, denounced by Jouy and Larra and supported by Baudrillard’s theoretical approach to the inutility of objects in general, albums played an essential role in the life of both owners and contributors. Baudrillard’s argument about the use of objects to translate personal desires and social ambitions summarizes to a great extent the function of the album in nineteenth-century France and Spain. Women in these contexts made of the album a symbol of their desire to have an active public life and of establishing interactions that would otherwise be inaccessible for
them. Thus, album owners allowed this object to become a metonymy of themselves, and let it be filled up with the male entries that would confirm their popularity and multiple moral and physical attributes. In this way, both female owner and male contributor collaborated in the process of blurring the frontier between the body and the object and between the personal story and the one narrated through the album entries.
Chapter 2: “Of Objects, Collections, and Networks: Analyzing Nineteenth-Century Albums”

Il ne faut jamais rien écrire sur les albums.
(One should never write in albums.)
G. Hanotaux, *Album de Madame de Heredia*

Plus on écrit, moins on pense. J’ai écrit.
(The more one writes, the less one thinks. I wrote)
Paul Valéry, *Album de Madame de Heredia*

¡Albums! moda acosadora!
(Albums! Harrassing fashion!)
Pepita Massanés, *Album de Modesto Lloréns y Torres*

Ne ferez-vous rien pour mon *Album*, vous qui avez mis de si jolies choses sur l’*Album* de toutes ces dames?
(Would you not do something for my Album, you who have put such beautiful things in the Album of all those ladies?)
Victor-Joseph Étienne de Jouy, “Des *Album*” (1811)

After conducting extensive research on the place of the album in nineteenth-century essays on social customs, novels, plays, short stories, and even published poems that originally appeared in albums, I was finally able to see the historical objects. The sight of albums in physical form far surpassed all of the imagery I had envisioned while reading the texts that described them. The different covers that revealed the personality and taste of the owners, the handwriting in the contributions, and the discovery of the names of important nineteenth-century writers (such as Alfred de Vigny, Charles Nodier, Campoamor, and José Zorrilla) were striking. So too were the texture of the pages and heaviness of many of the books. Everything evoked another level of the album’s reality different from what I had experienced through literature up to that moment. At the same time, the literary texts were an inevitable point of reference in relation to the objects that I
was discovering. Nineteenth-century literary portrayals of the album convey the practice in a way that helped me understand it in context, and therefore appreciate many of the subtleties that the study of the actual albums offered.

In this chapter, I analyze archival albums from a historical perspective that promotes an understanding of the ways in which this practice flourished in the milieu of nineteenth century. My focus is on the significance of the albums as objects in the context in which they were created and circulated. This approach furthers my analysis of the representation of the album in fictional texts and highlights the centrality of this phenomenon to French and Spanish society. Having already analyzed the depiction of this craze in essays on social customs, I now study the physical albums identifying the role of the object itself for nineteenth-century owners and contributors, and discussing the importance of their conservation in archives. The exploration of the historical context of the album allows me to reconstruct multiple social and cultural transactions in nineteenth-century France and Spain. In my study of the albums, I identify aspects of the objects that reveal important information about the economic, gender, and artistic angles of the exchange. In particular, I pay attention to details such as the material construction of the books, the information the albums offer about the process of collection, and the identification of important literary and historical figures who participated in the practice. The analysis of the networks established among nineteenth-century writers who became album contributors and whose family members (frequently wives) were album owners, is an essential component of my approach to the impact and scope of the fashion. I also
focus on the types of contributions included in the albums, as well as on exceptions to the typical gender dynamic of the exchange, in the cases of male owners or female contributors. In addition, I maintain a dialogue between archival albums and Jouy’s and Larra’s essays on social customs, in order to determine whether the interactions between album collectors and contributors correspond to literary portrayals of this practice.

I. An Attempt to Control: Jouy’s Proposals for the Transformation of the Album Practice

In my first encounter with the album, I thought of Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy’s and Mariano José de Larra’s essays on social customs and the way in which those texts became a type of manual that established the rules and functions of this practice. I specifically remembered a passage in Jouy’s “Des Album” in which he analyzes the impact of the album phenomenon in his nineteenth-century Parisian context. Jouy denounces album owners’ constant disruption of all men who knew at least how to read and write, to ask them for an album contribution. Considering the strain on men caused by continuous requests for contributions, Jouy starts to wonder if there could be a solution to this situation, a way to reconcile all interests in which the ladies would obtain the desired entries for their books “sans trop exiger des beaux-esprits” (“without demanding too much from smart men”; 151). Evidently, Jouy himself has the answer to his inquiry. He proposes a complex project that would regulate the development of the

1 All the quotes in this section are from the essay “Des Album.”
album exchange in his milieu. For the materialization of this project, declares Jouy, it will be necessary to convene an assembly of “poètes, prosateurs, matématiciens, musiciens, orientalistes, hellénistes, grammairiens, peintres, dessinateurs, etc.” (“poets, writers of prose, mathematicians, musicians, orientalists, Hellenists, grammarians, painters, drawers, etc.”; 151-52), who will discuss and decide on his different suggestions of amendments to the album practice. The diversity in the participants of this imaginary assembly represents Jouy’s conception of the album as a space where multiple disciplines and artistic manifestations converged. Jouy had already manifested this view of the album in his description of his experience as a contributor (which he narrates disguised as one of the correspondents of the hermit). Due to the lack of logic in the mixing of all these “specialists” Jouy’s list is clearly humorous, which makes it correspond to his proposals for the transformation of the album practice.

The first topic that Jouy addresses when mentioning the different issues that would be discussed at the assembly of experts and artists is the format and quantity of pages that an album should have. “Les dames son suppliées de ne plus adopter, pour leur Album, le format in-folio,” declares Jouy, referring to the type of page that should be used for albums (“We beseech women to not adopt the in-folio format for their albums”; 152). In the in-folio format, a sheet of paper would be folded, so it would become four pages (“In-folio”). Jouy insists that the format for albums should be “in-quarto,” which referred to a printing sheet which is folded twice and forms four leaves, or a notebook of eight pages (“In-quarto”). He also proposes that in the future all albums should have fewer than
700 pages. Jouy imagines that by controlling the type and quantity of pages albums could have, he could also limit album requests, and thus minimize the pressure put on album contributors.

Jouy then goes on to address the level of complexity of entries women could request from contributors. He argues that women should be reasonable in their expectations of men, and should not ask them to create entries which would exceed contributors’ time or ability. “Sont également suppliées lesdites dames,” declares Jouy, “de ne plus exiger, pour lesdits Album, d’un peintre un tableau d’histoire; d’un compositeur, une symphonie complète; d’un homme de lettres, un chant tout entier en vers, ou tout un chapitre en prose, suivant le genre de talent d’icelui” (“We also beseech such ladies to not demand for their Album, from a painter a historic painting; from a composer, a complete symphony; from a man of letters, a complete song or an entire chapter of prose, according to each one’s talent” ; 152). According to Jouy, women should only expect a romance from a musician, a couplet, a quatrain or even simply a phrase (in French) from a writer (“littérateur”), and a portrait of herself from a painter. In this way, album owners would not be demanding an outrageous creative effort from their contributors, and the exchange would be more fair for everyone.

Jouy’s third proposal for the transformation of the album practice is certainly the most interesting and radical one. He suggests that in order to ease the creative burden imposed upon men, “entrepôts” or “warehouses” should be established in the main neighborhoods of Paris, where “l’on trouvera, à juste prix, des assortiments de vers et de
prose en toutes les langues vivantes ou mortes, de dessin et de musique, et de tous les 
genres d’équations de tous les degrés, sur des feuilles propres à être intercalées dans les 
Album: l’acquéreur n’aura plus qu’à signer” (“one will find, for a fair price, a variety of 
verses and prose in all living and dead languages, of drawings, of music, and of all types 
of equations of all degrees, on sheets ready to be inserted in an album: the purchaser will 
have to do nothing but to sign”; 153). Closely related to this suggestion, in his fourth 
amendment to the album exchange Jouy recommends that album contributors deal 
directly with the directors of these warehouses and that they pay cash for the entries that 
they want to buy to add to albums. This transaction, declares Jouy, “ne peut qu’être 
favorable aux [vendeurs]” (“will be nothing but beneficial to the sellers”; 153). This 
proposal for the creation of a type of album entry industry implies a fundamental 
transformation of this practice, because it would alter its basic premise: the need for the 
contributor to be creative and improvise something for each album owner. The institution 
of such warehouses would require another economic transaction in the album fashion. 
Besides buying the new blank album and considering the monetary value that it would 
obtain after it was filled with contributions, now the materialization of the album 
exchange would be determined by the purchasing of the art to be included in the book. 
With the elimination of the originality that was mandatory in the creation of entries, the 
effort to make each contribution unique and to exalt the personal attributes of the album 
owner would disappear as well. This new approach to the album practice would also 
introduce a serious issue of authorship, because the signature that would accompany each
entry would not represent its creator, but rather the man who had the economic means to obtain it.

Fortunately, Jouy’s ironic proposals for the regulation of the album practice remained simply that: humorous suggestions that never materialized, imaginary rules that were the product of his personal interest and frustration with the practice, but which never transcended the space of his literary gesture. Notwithstanding Jouy’s criticism of women owners or of the particularities of the phenomenon, albums continued to be what they had always been. Thus, albums with different numbers of pages, a diversity of types of contributions (in terms of both discipline and complexity), and entries that were created by contributors themselves, continued to be a central social custom in nineteenth-century France and Spain. I was able to consult some of those rich and fascinating albums in libraries and archives.

**II. Exploring the Archive: Transitioning from Literature to the Historical Object**

A brief explanation of the type of access I had to albums is necessary. Albums are not regular books kept at library collections. Interestingly, albums are not either art in the generalized sense, and thus they are not displayed in museums along with other art objects. Albums are not governing documents or public records, but they are usually also kept separately from other personal documents of its owners. Placed in the blurry frontier between the private and the public, an album constitutes an individual collection authored by others and that represents its owner. All these particularities make definitely
challenging the discovery and study of albums. The albums that I was able to consult in libraries and archives in France and Spain could have been saved by friends or family of its owners, who thought they were important objects that deserved to be protected. Having access to albums in the twentieth-first century and being able to constitute a corpus of study of them is certainly a gesture that defies the limitations of its nature as historical documents.

The sites that house the albums that I consulted in France are the Association pour l’Autobiographie and the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, which is part of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. In Spain, I visited the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the Biblioteca del Museo del Romanticismo, and the Biblioteca de la Fundación Lázaro Galdiano. At the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal I saw four albums, those belonging to the Duchesse de Camastra, Madame de Heredia, Maria de Marches, and an anonymous album identified as Album amicorum romantique. I was able to see the manuscripts of all these albums and even take pictures of them. This was also the case of Georgette’s album, which I saw at the Association pour l’Autobiographie. At the Biblioteca Nacional de España I consulted four albums: Aurelia Picatoste’s, Julia de Asensi’s, the Señora de Ibáñez-Marquesa de Mulhacén’s, and the Vizcondesa de Solís’, however, I was not authorized to take pictures of them.² At the Biblioteca del Museo Romántico, I was able to see albums that belonged

² At the Biblioteca Nacional, I was told that I would have to pay an exorbitant fee to have them take, print, and mail the photos for me. While I decided not to purchase this service, especially given my uncertainty about the quality of the reproductions, I have notes about the albums’ appearance and contributions, which I use in my analysis.
to Dolores Saravia, the General Enrique Solano, the Princesa de Anglona, Ramón Pérez Costales, the señorita de Goyena, and Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros. I had complete access to these albums and was able to take pictures of them. This library also holds don Alfonso de Quesada’s album, which I did not see in my visit, but was able to consult through the online scanned version made available by the library. At the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, I saw the albums of María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco, Emilia Pardo Bazán, G. Ll., Modesto Lloréns y Torres, and Paulina Contreras de Alarcón. My access to these albums was very limited, because a librarian supervised me while I consulted them. However, I was able to acquire an exhibition catalogue about the albums from their collection, which includes transcriptions of all of the contributions (including the drawings and music scores), as well as images of the albums’ covers.³

A. Who Were the Album Owners?

The task of identifying the owners of albums kept at libraries and archives in France and Spain is essential, in order to understand the extension of the phenomenon and the social groups in which it circulated. Of course, each album is identified with the name of its owner but, who exactly were these people? Considering how the phenomenon

³ There were some albums that I was unable to consult during my research, due to time and economic and geographical limitations. In France, there is an album at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Rennes (which belonged to René Martineau), an album at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Douai (Theodori Bisdom’s “Album amicorum,” which is actually from the eighteenth century), and another one at the Médiathèque de Metz (Nina de Villard’s). In Spain, there is an album at the Biblioteca del Palacio de Perelada in Barcelona (which belonged to the Marquesa de Valmar) and another one in Extremadura at the Biblioteca de don Antonio Rodríguez-Moñino y doña María Brey (Pilar de Zanarruza’s). I plan to consult these albums and to analyze them in future projects.
is described in literary texts, it is possible to imagine that there were hundreds, probably thousands, of albums circulating in nineteenth-century France and Spain, mainly in Paris and Madrid. Why have these particular albums survived the passage of time and been preserved in libraries for more than a century? It seems that, in many cases, the conservation of certain albums was intentional, since there was an awareness about the historical value of a specific book, based upon the social status of its owner. In other instances, when the album did not belong to a person who was “important” in his or her context, the book’s archiving seems to be the result of a fascination with material culture, which led to the valuation of the object beyond the identity of its owner. I think that, in the end, chance also played an important role in the historical coincidence that led the preservation of these books which reveal so much about the constitution of social exchanges in the nineteenth-century French and Spanish milieu.

I identify four main groups of album owners among the albums that I consulted. First, there are the women who were popular because of their link with the literary scene. There were women writers who owned albums, like Emilia Pardo Bazán and Julia de Asensi. Some wives or daughters of nineteenth-century French or Spanish writers were also album owners, for example: Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros, Paulina Contreras de Alarcón, Madame de Heredia, Emma Jouy (or Emma Bain-Boudonville, which was her married name), Mariana Paniagua, María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco, Aurelia Picatoste, and the Vizcondesa de Solís. The Señora de Ibáñez-Marquesa de Mulhacén and the Princesa de Anglona-Marquesa de Javalquinto also both had privileged positions, as
revealed in the titles that accompany their names (they were both marquises). In the second group, I identify women who may have been important according to the contributions included in their albums or to their titles, but about whom there is little information to be found.\textsuperscript{4} I classify the Duchesse de Camastra, Maria de Marches, and the Señorita de Goyena in this group. The third group includes women whose albums do not reveal significant social connections and whose identification would require a more in-depth historical search. In this group, I include Dolores Saravia, Josefa González,\textsuperscript{5} and Georgette.\textsuperscript{6} The fourth division I make of album owners is determined by a gender difference. This category includes men who owned albums and defied the original idea of

\textsuperscript{4} I used several resources for identifying these album owners, the most important being the \textit{World Biographical Information System}, which is the main online resource for European biographies. I also used the \textit{Biography and Genealogy Master Index}, \textit{Gale Biography in Context}, and some biographical dictionaries available on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France’s website. There were some album owners that I did not even find on these biography sources, but I was able to determine to which family they belonged, based on references in their albums, particularly to their husbands. I avoid including dates of birth and death of album owners, precisely because in some cases I have only identified them through their relation to important historical figures, and so do not necessarily have this information.

\textsuperscript{5} The only important contribution that both Dolores Saravia and Josefa González had in their albums was one by the Spanish nineteenth-century poet Ramón de Campoamor. But the truth is that Campoamor had also contributed to the majority of the albums I consulted. He wrote in the albums of Aurelia Picatoste, the General Solano, Mariana Paniagua, the Señora de Ibáñez, and Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros. Thus, Campoamor seems to have been one of the most accessible album contributors in the nineteenth-century Spanish context, which explains why these women (who were probably not that important in their milieu, according to the lack of biographical information about them to be found) would have been able to include a contribution by him in their books.

\textsuperscript{6} When adding Georgette’s album to the collection of the Association pour l’Autobiographie, Philippe Lejeune created a document in which, besides listing all the contributions in the book, he identified her as a student at the Sévigné high school in Charleville-Mézières at the beginning of the twentieth century. As an album that did not belong to an adult and which was created at the beginning of the twentieth century, this album does not correspond to the use of the practice that I am interested in exploring. The album which belonged to the Duchesse de Camastra represents also an exception, which I will present in detail later in this chapter.
this practice as exclusively female. Ramón Pérez Costales, the General Enrique Solano, Don Adolfo de Quesada, and Modesto Llorén y Torres are the four owners whose albums I was able to consult. Besides all these albums identified by the name of the owner and that I classify in these different groups, I also saw an anonymous album, included in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as an *Album amicorum romantique*, and another one identified only with the initials of its owner: “G. Ll.,” and kept at the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano.7

Diverse reasons could have led to the interest in each one of these albums, and their eventual conservation in libraries and archives. In the case of the first two albums I mentioned, the ones belonging to Emilia Pardo Bazán and Julia de Asensi, it is understandable that there would have been a genuine desire to keep an object that belonged to these two writers, and which revealed information about their social connections and even about their attributes from the perspective of the contributors. Interestingly, in the case of Pardo Bazán, her album did not conform to the traditional concept of the object, in which the owner’s acquaintances would include entries praising him or her. In 1871, the prolific writer used her album to include the poetry she had written during the previous six years, from the time she was fourteen years old to until she turned twenty. For just a brief phase at the end of 1871, Pardo Bazán’s album

7 I will not be studying these two albums in detail in my analysis of the material constitution of the books or the contributions included in them. In the case of the anonymous album, there are no contributions to study in it, and in the album that belonged to “G. Ll.” there are only drawings that do not necessarily stand out for their artistic technique or for the popularity of their authors.
fulfilled its traditional role, when her friends Juan Montes and Leandro Prieto, included one and three poems in it respectively (Yevés Andrés 68). In the case of Julia de Asensi, a writer of literature for adults and children, her album was used for the typical purpose of collecting poetry and drawings from admirers and friends. Born in 1859, Asensi participated in the album fashion in the late nineteenth century, as the dates of 1874, 1875, 1876, and 1881 in some of the contributions prove. This is decades after Larra’s essay on the development of the album fashion in Spain, in which he presents the album as being at its peak in 1835.

It is understandable that, given their relation to men who were important in the literary scene of their time, Emma Bain-Boudonville, Madame de Heredia, Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros, Mariana Paniagua, Paulina Contreras de Alarcón, and María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco would have been interested in having an album, since they could collect contributions from the personal connections of their fathers and husbands. The first three albums in this group, the ones belonging to Emma Bain-Boudonville, Madame de Heredia, and Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros, are probably the richest and most complete of all those I consulted, in terms of material constitution and variety of entries. In some way, these albums represent the ideal of the object, as described in the literary texts that depict the practice.

The essays that Jouy wrote about the album might even have prompted his daughter’s interest in obtaining one. According to the dates in some of the entries in Emma’s book, she probably started her collection around 1813, just two years after the
publication of her father’s reflections on the phenomenon. In the case of the album of Madame de Heredia, the wife of Cuban-French writer member of the Académie Française, José-Maria Heredia, her album is clearly one of the most prized at the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, where they zealously care for the manuscript, only letting researchers generally see the microfilm. They even created a list of all the entries in this album, specifying the author and type of contribution, something they did not create for other albums in their collection. Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros’ album is similarly prized at the Biblioteca del Museo del Romanticismo in Madrid. In November 2013 the library made it “pieza del mes” (“piece of the month”) at the museum and published an essay on it, which they made available online, along with a digitized version of the album. Manuel Bretón de los Herreros’ portrayal of the album in his plays El poeta y la beneficiada: fábula cómica en dos actos (1857) and El cuarto de hora: comedia en cinco actos (1848) may have been inspired on his wife’s ownership of the object, because both plays were written within the time period during which she completed her collection, which spanned 1842 to 1874.

In the case of Mariana Paniagua, her marriage to Spanish writer and journalist Eusebio Blasco Soler in 1872 was definitely decisive in the outcome of her album

8 In my initial request for the album they did not let me see the manuscript. They told me to consult the microfilm and said that if there was something that was not clear, I could eventually see the manuscript. The microfilm was in black and white, and I explained to them that an important component of my research was the visual part of the albums and that it was essential for me to see the colors of the drawings included in Madame de Heredia’s. Eventually, they let me consult the manuscript and even take pictures of it, which was fortunate because in this album even some of the literary contributions are written with colored ink.
collection. According to the date in the title page of her album, Mariana started participating in this fashion in 1877 and among the contributors to her book were José Zorrilla, Campoamor, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, and other important writers of her context whom probably she would not have met if it were not for her marriage to Blasco Soler. Paulina Contreras de Alarcón was in a similarly privileged position, being the wife of writer and album contributor Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. Actually, if it had not been for Paulina’s connections with artists and writers of her milieu through her husband, she would have probably not participated in the album fashion at all, since it was Zorrilla who purchased the album for her in France. María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco’s husband, Joaquín Francisco Pacheco, was very active in nineteenth-century journalism in Spain, and was also influential in his wife’s ability to complete her album collection. In María de los Dolores’ album, there are entries by Manuel Bretón de los Herreros, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, and even Victor Hugo. Lucrecia Picatoste’s experience was certainly similar to the one of these women, as the daughter of Felipe Picatoste, a journalist and politician in nineteenth-century Spain. For María Joaquina Fernández del

9 Pedro Antonio de Alarcón actually included a passage about an album in his book De Madrid a Nápoles (1878). But the album that de Alarcón describes in this text is not the same type of album that I focus on in this study and that his wife had. He describes his encounter with a type of travelers’ album that he discovered while going from Madrid to Paris through the Pyrenees. The Album de la Flechère, which de Alarcón got to see at his guides’ house after visiting the Mont-Blanc, was an album in which each traveler included “lo que se le antoja” ("whatever he wants"; 99). When reading the contributions to this album, de Alarcón noticed that there were in the album disputes among travelers from different countries, who would confront each other regarding political and nationalistic issues. The main disputes that de Alarcón quotes are among English and French men, but there are Russian, German, Polish, Italian, and Portuguese contributors who also intervene in the album. De Alarcón’s sarcastic tone when describing the exchanges between all these (male) contributors ridicules their patriotic arguments and transforms his narration into a critique of the idea of superiority in Europe.
Pino y Tavira, the Vizcondesa de Solís, the combination of the literary career of her husband, Emilio de Alcaraz y Francés, and the title of her family must have been very beneficial for the progress of her collection in her album. For the Princesa de Anglona-Marquesa de Javalquinto and the Señora de Ibáñez-Marquesa de Mulhacén, it was mainly their noble titles and the connections they implied, that were core elements that facilitated the gathering of contributions for their albums. It was very difficult to find historical information about the album owners that I identify in the second and third groups. The identification of these women would require a very thorough archival search, probably one based on birth or baptism certificates, an effort that goes beyond my purposes for this study.

In the case of the male album owners, three of them can be identified through biographical searches. Holder of the title of Conde de San Rafael de Luyanó, Adolfo de Quesada y Hore was a pianist and composer, representative of the Romantic movement in Madrilean classical music (“Adolfo Quesada y Hore”). Modesto Lloréns y Torres himself had an interest in literature, evident in the poetry and the few literary articles he wrote earlier in life. Although his writing did not develop into a career, it could have been the origin of his interest in or contact with the album practice.¹⁰ I was also able to obtain some biographical information about Ramón Pérez Costales, a Galician doctor who was

¹⁰ In the case of Lloréns y Torres, the biographical information I have comes from the catalogue of the exposition on albums presented at the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, in which Juan Antonio Yeves Andrés includes an introduction to each one of the owners of the albums they hold in their collection. All my references to Yeves Andrés in this chapter are from that catalogue.
very active in politics in his context. Interestingly, Pérez Costales was a writer as well, and one of his two poetry books included a preface written by Emilia Pardo Bazán. Thus, Pérez Costales was also part of the social circle in which the album was popular, which possibly made him curious about the practice to the point of becoming an owner himself, which defied the typical gender roles established in the practice (“Ramón Pérez Costales”).

B. On the Material Aspect of the Practice: The Album as Object

My analysis of the material construction of the albums aims to achieve a better understanding of particular aspects of the development of this phenomenon. One of the potential approaches to the albums in the exploration of their physical constitution is their identification as art objects. But acknowledging the artistic nature of the albums does not mean I will only examine them from a purely aesthetic perspective. I identify the sophistication and beauty of albums’ appearance in order to develop a reading of the objects in particular, and of the practice in general, in ways that go beyond the physical, and extend to their idiosyncrasy and social determinants. Through my study of the physical appearance of the albums that I consulted, I seek to understand the link between the identity of the album owners and the look of the object. I discuss the materials used in album’s production, including decoration, size, and other specific details. The aim of my examination is to identify how issues such as personal taste, social status, and gender differences are present in the albums’ construction.
As I have pointed out previously, the two materials used in the binding of the albums I consulted were leather and velvet.\textsuperscript{11} Only two of the albums were covered in velvet, those belonging to Josefa González (purple) and to the Señora de Ibáñez (dark red). This means that leather, the same material that Jouy mentions as being used in the album he contributed to, may have been the favorite of album owners. This would make sense, given that leather tends to be more durable than cloth like velvet, while still being aesthetically pleasing. On the contrary, it is even possible that more leather albums survived the passage of time, precisely for this reason. It is important to point out that the use of leather was not exclusive for albums, since high quality collectibles in nineteenth century were frequently also leather-bound.

The colors of albums vary, as do the designs on the covers of the books. For example, the albums that belonged to the two nineteenth-century women writers are very different from each other. Pardo Bazán’s album is covered in black leather with a golden design painted in the four corners of the cover and the word “Album” engraved in the center.\textsuperscript{12} (See Figure 5) Somewhat more attractive, de Asensi’s album, also in leather, in this case brown, has her initials in metal on the cover, and even a lock, now broken. The

\textsuperscript{11} In my analysis of Larra’s description of the ideal construction of an album, included in the first chapter of this study, I introduce briefly the topic of the materials used in these books.

\textsuperscript{12} Emilia Pardo Bazán is the only female album owner to which I will be referring by the last names. Due to the fact that I will be mentioning the husbands of the other female album owners, I decided to always use their first name to avoid confusion. In the case of the male album owners, I will refer to them by their last names.
presence of the lock is fascinating in that, as with a diary, it gives the album owner and key-holder control over who sees the content of the personal book, and when they see it.

Figure 5: Cover of the album of Spanish writer Emilia Pardo Bazán (Yeves Andrés, El álbum 154).

Interestingly, four of the women relatives of nineteenth-century writers also had their initials stamped on their albums’ covers. Emma Bain-Boudonville has the letters “E. B.” imprinted on the dark red leather cover of her album. (See Figure 6) Madame de Heredia’s has a black letter “H” on its light brown cover, traversed by a blue figure that serves as a stand for the initial. (See Figure 1) Of a more subdued brown, less flashy than
de Heredia’s, Tomasa Bretón de los Herrero’s album has also initials on its cover. Besides some engraved lines that cross each other, this album has the letters “T. A.” on its cover, which refer to Tomasa’s maiden name, Andrés. This means that even though she was generally identified by her husband’s name, perhaps she wanted to keep her album as an object that represented her on a more intimate and personal level and that offered her the social presence that she normally acquired through him. (See Figure 7) Mariana Paniagua’s album also has initials, in this case on the box that holds the album. One can clearly recognize the “M” stamped in golden ink. There is another letter on top of the “M” that seems to be a “B,” which most likely refers to “Blasco,” her husband’s surname. (See Figure 8) In this sense, Mariana’s gesture of identification of her album with initials is completely different from Tomasa’s, and similar to Madame de Heredia’s and Emma’s. Even though in her daily life she did not substitute her last name for her husband’s, she seems to have done so in her album, probably as a way of reiterating her link with a writer, an identification which could facilitate the gathering of contributions.
Figure 6: Cover of the album of Emma Bain-Boudonville, the daughter of French writer on social customs Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy (Album d'Emma Bain-Boudonville).
Figure 7: Cover of the album of Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros, the wife of Spanish writer Manuel Bretón de los Herreros (Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros).
Figure 8: Cover of the album of Mariana Paniagua, the wife of Spanish writer Eusebio Blasco (Album de Mariana Paniagua).
Putting the owner’s initials on the cover of the album personalized the object and may have also acted as a reminder for the contributors, who may have had several albums at home to which they had to contribute. In his description of the appearance of an ideal album, Larra insisted that its cover should be adorned with engravings and with the “cifra o las armas del dueño” (“initials or the shield of its owner”; 328). In the case of Tomasa and Mariana, the two Spanish women who had their initials on the cover of their albums, it is possible that they had read Larra’s essay before starting their collection, since the dates in their albums are posterior to the publication of the article (1842 to 1846 in Tomasa’s and 1877 to 1884 in Mariana’s). The frequent inclusion of initials on the albums of women related to the literary sphere surely responds, first, to an economic status determination. It would certainly have been more expensive to order an album personalized with the initials of the owner, or to pay after buying it to get the initials imprinted on the cover. Also, considering the social circles in which these women moved, it is understandable that they would have wanted their albums to stand out from the others that circulated in the wild world of album collection. The initials function as another element that, along with the color and other designs on the cover, allowed owners to identify with the book and make it a signifier of their public presence, while also showcasing their affluence, taste, and social status.

13 In this context, “cifra” refers to the initials used in seals (“Cifra”).

14 Josefa González’s album also had her initials in the back of the album. I have not found biographical information about her, but it is possible to assume that Josefa also had the economic means to pay for an album with a personal inscription. (See Figures 33 and 34)
But not all the women who had links to writers had their initials imprinted on the covers of their album, highlighting their connection to literary circles. Paulina Contreras de Alarcón’s album has actually a very rich design embossed in the dark brown leather of the cover. This combination of different types of leaves, flowers, and buds bears the inscription: “The Floral Album” in the center. (See Figure 9) It is very interesting that what seems to be the name or classification of this album is in English since, as I mentioned previously, Zorrilla supposedly acquired it for Paulina in France. Why would then the album be identified with this inscription in English? Perhaps the album had been imported from England, or commissioned in France to be inscribed with English text, as a unique alternative to other, more common personalizing gestures such as initials. The same image that is embossed on the cover appears on the first page of the album, in this case, in color. (See Figure 10) In his essay on the album, Larra affirms that album owners should make sure to obtain the most expensive and “English” model they had access to. He declares that in Spain it would be very hard to make an album that could compete with foreign models: “[s]ólo el conocido y el hábil Alegría podría hacer una cosa que se aproximase a un álbum decente” (“Only the well-known and skilled Alegría could create something approaching a decent album”; 328). Alegría was a bookbinder and draftsman well-known in Larra’s context (Rubio, “Introducción” 328). Album owners are thus encouraged by Larra to obtain theirs in other European cities such

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15 Zorrilla himself declares that he got the album for Paulina in France in the first contribution to the album, which I will analyze later in this chapter.
as London and Paris, preferably London.\textsuperscript{16} Larra insists that even if their album was Spanish and was a creation of Alegría, owners should make sure to convince everyone that its origin was foreign, specifying details about the trip in which they had bought it. It is understandable why Zorrilla wanted to obtain for Paulina a book that combined precisely the two ideal album markets, one which was ambiguously French and English at the same time. Maybe Parisian album-makers were even creating albums with English text on them, knowing they were the most highly sought-after. This would imply the creation of a foreign-language album market in France, a fascinating possibility that we could not dismiss.

\textsuperscript{16} Larra explains that Paris is more vulgar and trivial than London, and that is why the English capital was preferred as a destiny for album buyers.
Figure 9: Cover of the album of Paulina Contreras de Alarcón, the wife of Spanish writer Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (Yeves Andrés, *El álbum* 140).
The use of different colors, figures, and decorations was another way for owners to make their albums stand out. For example, María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco’s has an interesting frame of golden lines and colorful figures stamped on the black leather of the cover that make the album visually attractive. (See Figure 11) In this same vein, Dolores Saravia’s book has a very delicate design in nacre-colored lines that form a
frame on the black leather cover. There are small pearls in each corner of the cover and in the center there is a drawing of flowers. (See Figure 12) Maria de Marches’ album stands out not only because of its distinct wide frame in golden ink around the cover and the diamond-shaped colored figure in the center, but also because it has the complete name of the owner and the date of 1833 in its cover. (See Figure 13) I assume that this date refers to the moment when Maria obtained the album and started her collection. Of all the albums that I was able to consult, I think that the one belonging to the Duchesse de Camastra was the most impressive in terms of the cover’s appearance. This album has a design made with orange beads sewed onto the fabric of the cover, a unique decoration that certainly corresponds to the use that the owner made of this book. (See Figure 14) The Duchesse de Camastra did not use her album as a typical one in which she collected contributions from her acquaintances. In her case, the book served to document events that she held in her house, like dinners or parties, through the signatures of the guests and even through pictures of the occasion that the duchess would add. Another particularity that makes this album unique from the general practice is that the collection included in it was gathered at the beginning of the twentieth-century, from 1913 to 1924, significantly later than the dates of the use of the album that interests me in this study.
Figure 11: Cover of the album of Dolores Perinat, the wife of Spanish journalist Joaquín Francisco Pacheco (Yeves Andrés, El álbum 92).
Figure 12: Detail of the cover of the album of Dolores Saravia (*Album de Dolores Saravia*).
Figure 13: Cover of the album of Maria de Marches (Album de María de Marches).
Figure 14: Cover of the album of the Duchesse de Camastra (Album de la Duchesse de Camastra).
Differing from these female-owned albums that display a multiplicity of colors and designs in their covers, the four albums owned by men that I consulted were significantly more somber. Considering the number of female albums with covers of brown and black leather, it is impossible to identify dark colors as a determinant that would differentiate albums which belonged to men from those belonging to women. It is also very likely that the colors faded or deepened over time, as older leather tends to do; so the current color may be quite different from the original color. Regardless of color, it is possible to point out certain patterns in the style and appearance of albums owned by men that can reveal gender preferences. While it is impossible to make sweeping generalizations based upon a limited number of albums, it nevertheless seems very significant that none of the four male-owned albums have colored designs on their covers. The simplest of the male-owned albums is the one which belonged to Modesto Lloréns y Torres, which is black with golden lines forming a frame on the cover. This album has a design engraved in the center of the leather cover, framing the word “Recuerdos” (“Memories”), but this decoration is definitely less intricate than the ones in some of the female albums (like Paulina Contreras de Alarcón’s, for example). This album also includes the initials of the owner, not on the front, but on the back cover. (See Figure 15) Also a very modest model, Adolfo de Quesada’s album does not have any elaborate design on the cover: its material is brown leather and it has some small shield-like designs and the word “Album” in the center. Ramón Pérez Costales’ and the General Solano’s are definitely the most rich and detailed of the male-owned albums. Two frames
are imprinted in golden ink on the green leather cover of Pérez Costales’, and a third frame encircles the owner’s name, also stamped in golden ink. This album has also a broken lock on one side. (See Figure 16) The album which belonged to the General Solano is definitely the most “masculine” one of this group. A very particular element of this album is the material used in its cover, which seems to be alligator leather. (See Figure 17) It is understandable that Solano, having the status of a general in nineteenth-century Spain, would have had the money to pay for such a luxury and might have wanted to invest it to make his album stand out from the others circulating in his milieu. Besides the material of its cover, Solano’s album has wide silver metal corners with a design engraved in them that give his album an air of royalty. Two of these corners came off, leaving in their place a shadow in the cover of the album. In contrast to the golden metal corners in Josefa González’s album, which look delicate and feminine, the ones in Solano’s are big and seem heavy, giving this album a more “masculine” appearance.
Figure 15: Cover of the album of Modesto Lloréns y Torres (Yeves Andrés, *El álbum* 116).
Figure 16: Cover of the album of Ramón Pérez Costales (*Album de Ramón Pérez Costales*).
Figure 17: Cover of the album of the General Solano (*Album del General Solano*).
The size of the albums is another important aspect in my study of the albums’ physical construction. In the section about the *ridicules* in the first chapter of this study, I referred to Jouy’s affirmation that women would put their albums inside the little purses that were also very popular in nineteenth-century France. I critiqued Jouy’s claim, on the basis on the size of some of the albums I have studied. Referring specifically to Madame de Heredia’s, which, as I have stated, could be considered a perfect representation of the constitution of the object and the practice, I argued that the albums could not fit into the *ridicules*. Many of the albums I consulted are large books, some of them even heavy (due to the type of paper used for the pages and to contributions that were sometimes glued to the pages), and it definitely would have been improbable to put them inside *ridicules* and carry them around the city without breaking the delicate fabric of the bag. Madame de Heredia’s album is 13.3 by 16.9 inches, and 1.5 inches tall, certainly not a size easy to transport, and which would not fit inside a small purse.¹⁷ The album that belonged to Emma Bain-Boudonville is also one of the largest ones I saw, measuring 11 by 14.4 inches and almost two inches tall. Some of these larger albums have a horizontal orientation which makes them look less like a book and more like a photo album. Tomasa Bretón de los Herrero’s and the Vizcondesa de Solís’ are some of the albums that have this type of orientation, measuring 11.6 by 8.6 inches and 11 by 8 inches, respectively. There was probably not a standard size for an album, as suggested by the diversity among

¹⁷ All the measurements that I will mention will be ordered horizontally by vertically.
the ones I consulted in my research. It is also impossible to establish a correspondence between the size of albums and the social status of its owner. The album that belonged to Spanish writer Julia de Asensi was only 10.6 by 7 inches, significantly smaller than the others of women who were not writers or were not directly linked to the literary scene in their milieu. Perhaps the albums of less elite women were more standardized, since these women would be less likely to be able to afford to commission unique and lavishly personalized albums. It would be also difficult to draw any conclusions based on differences in the size of albums and the gender of the owner. The box of the album of Mariana Paniagua measures 7.5 by 10 inches (the album is slightly smaller) and Modesto Lloréns y Torres’ album measures 7 by 10.6 inches, which means that, in these two cases, the different gender approach to the practice did not impact the size of the book acquired to participate in it.

When exploring the inside of the albums, there is some important information to analyze before delving into their content and the contributions within. In some of the albums that I examined, I identified a seal that refers to the maker of the album, or to the stationery shop where the owner acquired it. According to Larra’s advice about the importance of having a foreign album in Spain and of being able to prove its origin, it is understandable that many album owners would have wanted to keep some material evidence to show where the book had been bought. Only two of all the albums that I studied still have the stamp that reveals where it was acquired, and they are both Spanish. Mariana Paniagua’s album has a seal on the inside of the cover, on the purple fabric
adorning the hard cover. Imprinted in golden ink, the seal has a crown that reads “Papeterie Marquet 10 R. de la Paix” (Album de Mariana Paniagua). (See Figure 18) Not only the name, but also the specific address suggests that Mariana was aware of the importance of having a foreign album, and thus obtained one from Paris. It is particularly interesting to know that Mariana’s album came from a papeterie, a detail which allows us to picture the presence of this practice at nineteenth-century books and objects markets. We must remember at this point that Mariana’s album is one of several that have initials in its cover (in this case “M. B.,” probably in reference to Mariana’s husband Eusebio Blanco). Considering that the detail of the initials implies an additional process of personalization of the book (probably taking it to a workshop where they would work on the leather), I wonder if the seal of the Papeterie Marquet was not originally part of this album, and if Mariana asked for it to be included in it at the same time when they added her initials. This seal announces the French origin of the album and thus confers it social status in the album world.
The album that belonged to Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros also has a stamp identifying its seller. In this case, the reference appears on the first page, a cover page that has a baroque drawing which includes angels, demons, lovers, and jesters playing music, as well as what seem to be two Greek antiquity gods pulling ropes to keep the ensemble together. (See Figure 19) Right next to these muscular male figures two birds hold a sign in their beaks reading: “Susse Frères Place de la Bourse 31 et Pass.° des Panoramas 7 & 8” (Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). (See Figure 20) Located in the Paris’ sophisticated second arrondissement (actually, not far from the Chaussée
d’Antin, where Jouy had written about the album), Susse Frères was founded in 1758 as a papeterie. Nowadays, Susse, which has moved from Paris to Malakoff, is the oldest art foundry in France and probably in Europe (Susse Fondeur). But there is actually more information in Tomasa’s album that allows us to reconstruct her process of acquiring this object. In the leather cover of Tomasa’s album, there is an inscription engraved in golden ink that says: “Ginesta.” (See Figure 21) The “Casa Ginesta” was one of the most popular bookbinding workshops in Madrid in the nineteenth century. Founded by Miguel Ginesta at the beginning of the century, this company thrived during the peak of the bookbinding business in Madrid because of the courtly character attributed to this practice (Quiney Urbieta 11). This means that Tomasa had an album with a seal of a French papeterie which leather cover had an inscription of a Spanish bookbinder. Her album also has the initials “T. A.” on the cover, which refer to her maiden name. How is it possible that there is a combination of French and Spanish materials in this album? I can think of multiple explanations for this. Possibly, Tomasa bought (herself or through some friend who was visiting the French capital) the album at the Susse Frères papeterie, took it to Spain, and then brought it to Ginesta’s workshop to change the binding there to have her initials engraved on the cover. The other possibility is that what she got at Susse Frères was not a bound album. I imagine that Tomasa could have gotten just the interior of the album, the pages with a simple thread binding that included that elaborated title page. Then, when she got to Madrid, she could have paid for the binding that has Ginesta’s inscription. A third possibility is that the Spanish bookbinder imported paper from Paris,
either regularly or at the request of patrons who commissioned books. In any case, the identification in the same album of seals from book related industries in the two countries I include in my study reveals important information about the transnational extension of this fashion and the multiple transactions that it promoted.

Figure 19: First page of the album of Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros (Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros).
Figure 20: Stamp of the Papeterie Susse Frères in the album of Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros (Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros).
In relation to the binding of the albums, their pages are another aspect that deserves attention as an essential part of the material constitution of the books. First of all, it is important to point out that many of the albums I consulted have numbered pages. For example, all of the albums at the library of the Museo del Romanticismo have numbered pages, as well as some albums at the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, like those of Madame de Heredia and Emma Jouy. Interestingly, the numbers included in the pages of those albums usually look very uniform, having the same handwriting and even color of
pencil.\textsuperscript{18} It is possible that the numbers were added by the owners when they got the album, in order to quantify the amount of contributions that they could gather. However, seeing multiple books at once allowed me to compare the inclusion of the page numbers in them and to realize that this must have been an effort of the bookstore when they obtained the albums to count their pages and classify their contributions. These numbers are placed in the upper right-hand corner of the pages, without any clear intention of making them correspond to the artistry present in the construction of the books and in the entries included in them. In some albums, the numbers are placed on the recto side of the sheet of paper and they skip the number which would refer to the verso side, and continue on the next sheet with the corresponding number. In other cases, both sides are numbered.

The albums I studied had anywhere from forty-seven (in the case of Emilia Pardo Bazán’s\textsuperscript{19}) to one hundred and ten pages (like Madame de Heredia’s and Paulina’s). The type of paper used for the pages could vary among albums and even within the same album. This is the case of the Señora de Ibáñez’s, the pages of which have different textures and thickness. The color of the pages was also diverse, and different colors could be combined in an album. For example, the pages in the Vizcondesa de Solís’ album are

\textsuperscript{18} The differences in the way the numbers are written in the different albums are minimal. For example, in the album which belonged to Ramón Pérez Costales the numbers are underlined (“18”) and in the Princesa de Anglona’s they are preceded and followed by a hyphen (“-18-”).

\textsuperscript{19} Although it does not have the page numbers written on the pages, Yeves Andrés specifies the quantity of pages in Pardo Bazán’s album in his catalogue of the collection of albums at the library of the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano.
white, light blue, dark blue, and brown. Similarly, the Princesa de Anglona’s album has blue, beige, and brown pages. This variety in the colors of pages made me consider the possibility that owners might even have added pages to their albums as their collection kept growing and as they established more social connections, which would require the need for more pages to include contributions. This would also explain the heterogeneity regarding the type of pages in some albums. However, doing this would have implied redoing the binding of the album each time, a process that was not convenient for owners in terms of the economic expense and the time that it would take away from their work of collecting.

A detail which stands out in some of the albums is the golden color on the outside edge of the pages, which makes the books very elegant when they are closed. Madame de Heredia’s, Maria de Marches’, and the Princesa de Anglona’s albums have this type of pages, with golden borders. In terms of the way that pages were used in the albums, it is important to point out that contributions were not always put directly on the page. In some of the albums I consulted, the poetry or drawing was made on a card or different piece of paper and then glued to the page. Although in general there was only one contribution per page, there are cases in which contributors put more than one contribution on a page and separated them by drawing lines that determined the space that corresponded to each entry (I saw this in Madame de Heredia’s album). It is also common to find blank pages in the albums, including between entries, which means that contributors skipped sheets when adding their creations for album owners. Considering
that all of these books are from the nineteenth century (or early twentieth century) and that contributors, acquaintances and owners must have leafed through them constantly, I have observed that their pages are generally in surprisingly good condition. In some albums, however, there are pages that are cut or broken, as if the owner (or whoever altered the book) might have wanted to hide something. Dolores Saravia’s, Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros’, the Duchesse de Camastra’s, and Ramón Pérez Costales’ albums have some damaged pages. There are also cases in which I could see that a whole page had been pulled out from an album, leaving a trace that reveals that there had originally been a page there. Imagining the reasons that album owners or contributors might have had to destroy or eliminate a page from an album means going beyond the realm of the historical facts and evoking the fiction that is so present in the constitution and representation of this practice. The analysis of the material construction of albums allows us to reconstruct the fashion that combines both the historical and the fictional. An analysis of the album as material culture, offers us information about tastes, economic means, and the presence of this object in the market that intersects the literary depiction of the practice. The examination of album contributions will add another level to the study of the history of the album, as well as of the stories this object narrates, through the identification of the multiple social networks and the artistic creation that this craze promoted.
III. The Universe of Album Contributions. Or Reconstructing History through Personal Stories

A. Different Ways of Saying: “Welcome to My Album”

The first page of albums was not usually dedicated to contributions, but rather to a continuation of the art depicted on the cover of the books. As I have explained before, albums like the one that belonged to Paulina Contreras de Alarcón reproduce the cover drawing or design they had on the first page. (See Figure 10) Others, like Tomasa Bretón de los Hereros’, have a new image that prepares the viewer for the art of the contributions. Many of the albums I consulted also have what can be interpreted as a type of title page. In addition to the word “Album,” the title page usually includes the name of the owner and the place and date of the beginning of the collection. Combined with the information that the contributions offer, these details are essential in order to establish the trajectory of the albums. One of the most attractive titles pages I saw is the one that opens Dolores Saravia’s album. This page has an orange frame topped by a second white one embossed on the page and in which the word “Album” is written in golden letters. There is a delicate drawing of leaves with sprouting flowers and blue bubbles, one of which has

20 I had to be very strict in the selection of contributions for my analysis in this chapter. Many of the albums are so rich and diverse in terms of the types of contributions and the topics presented in them, that they would each require a whole chapter for a detailed analysis of their content. I decided to be specific and choose the contributions that better served me to support and nourish my approach to the album as a phenomenon related to literature (not only because of its representation in different literary genres, but also because of the involvement of many writers in the practice). Regarding this, in my study of albums’ entries I also focus on written contributions (poetry or prose), which are the ones that interest me the most and that, due to my formation in literature, I am qualified to analyze. There are, however, contributions that consist of music scores and drawings in the majority of the albums that I consulted. I mention and examine briefly some of these entries, but my emphasis is on the written contributions.
the inscription “A Dolores Saravia.” (See Figure 22) The use of the preposition “a” suggests that this was not an album that Dolores got herself, but rather had received as a gift from someone else, a frequent occurrence in the album dynamic. The albums that belonged to Josefa González, Modesto Lloréns y Torres, Mariana Paniagua, and Aurelia Picatoste have also title pages that include the dates when begun their collections, which are 1844, 1856, 1877, and 1886, respectively. In the case of Lloréns y Torres, his album even includes the city name Barcelona right next to the year, which is where he acquired his album and began collecting works of art in it.²¹

²¹ Yeves Andrés points out that the dates in Lloréns y Torres’ album coincide with the time when he was studying in Barcelona (El álbum 34).
Considering that, as with Dolores Saravia’s, many albums were not an active purchase of the owner, but rather a gift offered to them by their relatives, it is
understandable that many of them include dedications that reveal who was responsible for their involvement in this craze. For example, María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco’s includes an initial comment about the virtues of the álbum recipient: “A D.a María de los Dolores Perinat y Ochoa, de Pacheco, la mejor de las hijas y la mas amante Esposa”22 (“To D.a María de los Dolores de Perinat y Ochoa, de Pacheco, the best of daughters and the most loving wife”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 93).23 These flattering words are signed by her relatives: “Su padre / Juan Luis / Su mama / Teresa Ochoa / Juan José Perinat”24 (“Her father Juan Luis / Her mother / Teresa Ochoa / Juan José Perinat”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 93). Besides this information, there is also an inscription of the city and date when María de los Dolores received this álbum: “Sevilla 27 de Noviembre de 1838” (“Seville November 27 1838”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 94).25 María de los Dolores’ is then the earliest one of the albums I consulted in Spain, while Aurelia

22 There are accent marks missing on the words “María” and “mas.” When quoting album entries, I will always maintain the original spelling and grammar of the contributors.

23 In the case of the quotes from the five albums included in the catalogue of the exposition at the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano (those belonging to María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco, Modesto Lloréns y Torres, G. Ll., Paulina Contreras de Alarcón, and Emilia Pardo Bazán), I will be including in the references the page number of the transcription of the text.

24 In his transcription of the albums’ content, Yeves Andrés uses italics to complete certain words that are abbreviated in the contributions. I am following Yeves Andrés transcriptions in the case of the albums included in the catalogue of the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano.
Picatoste’s and General Solano’s, inscribed 1886, are the latest. There is a period of forty-eight years between the dates of activity of these three albums, which reveals the longevity of the practice in Spain.

The dedication in the Vizcondesa de Solís’ album is very different from the ones written for the original recipients of the albums. This album has an inscription from the person who inherited the album and is transferring it to a third party, evidently interested in its value as a historical object. In the inside of the cover it says: “Para Sánchez Calvo, coleccionista impertinente. Recuerdo de su compañero de información …Fernández del Pino,” and right below he adds: “Este álbum perteneció a mi tía doña Joaquina Fernández del Pino y Tavira, Vizcondesa de Solís” (“For Sánchez Calvo, impertinent collector. A souvenir from his friend in information …Fernández del Pino. This album belonged to my aunt doña Joaquina Fernández del Pino and Tavira, Vicountess of Solís”; Álbum de la Vizcondesa de Solís). In this inscription we obtain information about the circulation of the Vizcondesa de Solís’ album, before it became part of the collection at the Biblioteca Nacional de España. From the Vizcondesa de Solís it became the property of her nephew, who gave it eventually to a friend of his, before someone ultimately donated it to the library. In the introduction to Emma Bain-Boudonville’s album we find a similar reference to the book’s trajectory, in this case written by its inheritor, M. Baptistien Guilhiermoz. The text starts with a direct quote from Emma’s testament used as epigraph, in an effort by Guilhiermoz to prove his authority as the holder of the book. The citation reads: “‘Mes livres, mes albums et les tableaux sous lesquels mon Père a écrit des vers
seront remis à mon ami, M. Baptistien Guilhiermoz.’ Extrait du testament olographe de Madame Boudonville” (“My books, my albums and the paintings on which my Father wrote verses will be handed over to my friend, Mr. Baptistien Guilhiermoz.’ Excerpt of the holograph will of Madame Boudonville”; Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville). The fact that Emma refers to “mes albums” in her statement reveals that she must have had more than one of these books and that not all of them were kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale.\(^{26}\) Maybe this was due to their deterioration, something that Guilhiermoz points out regarding this specific album: “L’Album sur lequel j’écris ces lignes était en si mauvais état que j’ai dû le faire réemarger et lui donner une reliure digne du bien cher et respectable souvenir qu’il me rappelle” (“The Album in which I write these lines was in such bad condition that I had to trim its margins and give it a new binding worthy of the cherished and respected memories that it brings me”; Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville).

After establishing his role in the preservation of Emma’s album, Guilhiermoz proceeds to offer a very detailed biography of her, in which he mentions how, ever since childhood Emma was surrounded by literary figures such as Pierre Jean de Béranger, Benjamin Constant, and Charles Nodier, among others who frequented Jouy’s salon. These connections were certainly important for the materialization of Emma’s album project. Guilhiermoz also mentions in his biography that Emma married her cousin, François-

\(^{26}\) Emma would not have been the only woman who had more than one album. In the 1967 catalogue of the Librairie Coulet-Faure there is an entry about the Album de Nina de Villard, in which Louis Forestier affirms that she did not only have this album that he is cataloguing, but must have had several (115).
Louis Bain-Boudonville, in 1817. This detail is essential for the interpretation of the contributions in her book, because the dates in them reveal that Emma started her collection four years before getting married, an event which might have impacted the nature of her album exchanges.

In some instances, the first contributions in albums also function as a way of welcoming viewers to enjoy the story narrated throughout the book, and, to potential contributors, as an invitation to participate in it. This is precisely what happens in Modesto Lloréns y Torres’ album, in which he inverts the typical dynamic of the practice and includes a self-authored first contribution that urges potential contributors to write something in the book. Entitled “A los artistas” (“To the Artists”), the thirty-five verse poem (it does not have separate stanzas) promises contributors that their sorrows will find comfort in the creative gesture. Lloréns y Torres personifies the album, affirming that it “os llama á sus hojas en plácido son” (“calls you all to its pages with a pleasurable rhythm”). Then, he uses an even more aggressive strategy to convince the artists to produce something for his book: “Venid los poetas venid los pintores…/ Y escuche mi libro su vaga inquietud./ ¡Sus ayes, sus quejas, sus trovas de amores/ Son lauros que forman guirnaldas de flores/ En cada laud!” (“Come poets come painters…/ And that my books listens to your vague worries./ Your laments, your complaints, your love ballads/ Are laurels that form flower garlands/ In each lute!”; Album de Modesto Lloréns y Torres 117). Thus, Lloréns y Torres wishes to inspire his acquaintances to write in his book,
insisting on the benefit that it would mean, not only for him, in filling the pages of his book, but also for them, in gaining the liberation the artistic expression offered.\textsuperscript{27}

The first entries added by other contributors usually display a certain pedantry linked to the privilege of starting the collection in the book. For example, Zorrilla’s opening contribution in Paulina Contreras de Alarcón’s album starts with a comment on the centrality of his intervention for her participation in the practice: “Paulina, sobre estas hojas/ que yo de Francia te traje,/ los poetas españoles/ vendrán á escribirte cantares” (“Paulina, in these sheets,/ that I brought to you from France,/ Spanish poets/ will come to write you songs”; \textit{Album de Paulina Contreras de Alarcón} 141). It was not enough for Zorrilla to invite poets to write in Paulina’s book, he also had to stress the fact that it had been he who brought those “sheets” for her, from France, one of the most coveted album markets. Paulina owes Zorrilla her involvement in the album fashion, and he makes sure to remind her and to ask for his well-deserved recognition. Later in the poem, Zorrilla directly expresses the reward he wants from Paulina: “Y cuando esté lleno el álbum,/ y ya en la tumba descanse/ el que de éste hizo presente/ para que de él te acordases,/ haz que tu hija, según crezca,/ esta página repase;/ […] Paulina, enséñala/ á que á Dios por mí demande.” (“And when the album is full,/ and already rests in the grave/ the one who made of this a gift/ so you would remember him./ make sure that your daughter, as she

\textsuperscript{27}Interestingly, there are two entries in Lloréns y Torres’ album dated 1855, a year before this written invitation to the contributors. Yeves Andrés suggests that the first requests for contributions must have been made orally, and that it was probably after there were already some entries in the book that the owner decided to add this opening poem welcoming further contributors (\textit{El álbum} 34).
grows up./ reviews this page; [...] Paulina, teach her/ to pray to God for me”; Album de Paulina Contreras de Alarcón 141). In exchange for his generosity, Zorrilla asks for a spiritual favor, which goes beyond the material presence of the object, and will come into effect after his death. This request gives Zorrilla’s poem a religious connotation that was usually absent in album contributions, seeing as these art expressions were usually created for the satisfaction of the album owner and for fulfilling the contributors’ goal of fame and popularity.

In the same vein of contributors evoking what they had offered to or done for album owners, Campoamor opens Mariana Paniagua’s album by declaring that writing the inaugural contribution is a privilege he has earned: “Bien merezco, Mariana, la fortuna/ de escribir en este álbum el primero./ porque sin duda alguna/ soy el que más y el que mejor os quiero” (“Mariana, I well deserve the fortune/ of being the first one who writes in your album/ because with no doubt/ I am the one who loves you best and the most”; Album de Mariana Paniagua). Campoamor implicitly compares himself to future contributors to Mariana’s album (even without knowing who they will be) and declares that he is superior to them, not because of his literary talent, but as a result of his sincere appreciation of her. The contributors’ respect or love for an album owner could have been, in specific instances, a factor that determined the placement of their entry in the book. This is the case in Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros’ album, the first entry of which is written by her husband, Manuel Bretón de los Herreros. The poem, written on April 16, 1842, seems to combine a love declaration with a love lesson for the future readers of the
album. “Los hombres dudarán, bella Tomasa,” declares Bretón de los Herreros, “aunque mi firma dé por testimonio,/ que un lustro va a cumplir mi matrimonio,/ ¡y el mismo amor que te juré me abrasa!” (“Men will doubt, beautiful Tomasa,/ even if my signature testifies it,/ that our marriage is going to reach its lustrum,/ and the same love that I promised you still burns me!”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). Without directly mentioning the album, Bretón does make an indirect reference to the future contributors (“Los hombres”) who will see his poem. Also for them, Bretón unlocks the secret of the success in his marriage: “Mas solo esta respuesta les prometo:/ ‘Mi muger no ha leído a Victor Hugo…/ ni yo voy a los Cafés: he aquí el secreto’” (“But only this answer I promise:/ ‘My woman has not read Victor Hugo…/ and I do not go to the Cafés: here is the secret’”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). Tomasa’s album becomes a source of relationship advice for its readers, as her husband, respected and admired writer in his context, shares the key for establishing a successful marriage. It is possible that in Bretón’s insistence on the stability of his relationship there was a desire to frighten any men who would have thought of trying to court Tomasa through an album contribution. The two main rules for a prosperous couple life that Bretón shares are, inevitably, linked to the literary scene in nineteenth-century Spain. According to him, letting a woman read Victor Hugo’s novels or getting involved in the social and political interactions that took place in cafés were dangerous gestures that would harm any marriage. It is interesting that Bretón did not think that Tomasa’s participation in the album fashion could also be detrimental for their relationship, given that this practice
promoted the establishment of personal exchanges that were worthy of any Victor Hugo novel or café.

**B. Meta-Fiction: Writing In the Album about the Album**

One of the most interesting tendencies of album contributions is the creation of entries that referred to owner’s requests, to the process of creation of the work of art, or to the album exchange in general. These self-referential contributions alter the typical dynamic of the practice, in which it was expected that contributors would create something specifically for the owner of the book, exalting their physical or moral attributes. These entries present the album practice from the perspective of the contributors, and frequently focus on their self-consciousness and insecurity about artistic creations as expected from them, or on their personal opinions about this craze. As a meta-fictional manifestation, this type of contribution in some way destroyed the fantasy that surrounded the album, revealing the fact that the contributions included in the books were not always inspired by the morality and virtue of their owners.

Jouy’s proposals about the establishment of certain rules to regulate the album practice, by limiting type and quantity of contributions, seem to have been based upon the actual complaints of contributors, who found it difficult to access the creative muse every time an album owner approached them. When consulting the albums, I found it fascinating to see many entries in which the contributors referred to their inability to create poetry, ironically, while writing in verses with a perfect rhyme. Dolores Saravia’s album has a contribution that exemplifies this tendency. Ramón M. Romay titled his
poem: “Por uno que no es poeta” ("Written by One Who is Not a Poet"), and accompanied it of a drawing of a butterfly surrounded by a garland of flowers. (See Figure 23) In the first four verses, he directly mentions Dolores’ request and warns her about the impossibility of his fulfilling her desire: “Me pedistes Lola mia/ En tu album algo pusiera/ Y si yo fuera poeta/ Sería gran dicha mia/ Mas mala la musa mia/ No contesta cual ando […]” ("You asked me, my Lola/ That I put something in your album/ And if I was poet/ That would be my good fortune/ But my bad muse/ Does not answer as I am [...]"; Album de Dolores Saravia). Even though, according to him, he is not a poet and his muse is not good enough, Romay was able to satisfy Dolores’ request and create a poem for her book that shows that he had at least basic notions of poetic creation.
Figure 23: Ramón M. Romay’s contribution in Dolores Saravia’s album (*Album de Dolores Saravia*).
In some instances, the creative block that the contributors suffered was the result of the inferiority they felt when they saw the names of the previous contributors to the album. Putting this fear into words, Javier G. de Lamadrid (?) wrote in Julia de Asensi’s album: “Ya tengo tu libro, y en él hoy apriendo/ que es mi nombre entre tantos ilustres,/ oscuro y pequeño” (“I finally have your book, and in it I learn/ that my name, among so many distinguished ones/ is dark and small”; *Album de Julia de Asensi*). José Alcalá Galiano seems to have had a similar reaction upon seeing the names of the writers who had already signed Mariana Paniagua’s album. In his contribution, dated 1877, Alcalá Galiano mentions these writers directly, in order to validate the apprehension that takes over him when trying to create his poem. “Y que gente!...,” announces Alcalá Galiano, “Y que gente!...,” announces Alcalá Galiano, “Y que gente!...,” announces Alcalá Galiano, “Y que gente!...,” announces Alcalá Galiano, “Y que gente!...,” announces Alcalá Galiano, “Y que gente!...,” announces Alcalá Galiano, “Campoamor, Zorrilla, Hartzenbusch, Ayala!/ Cuanto sublime cantor!.../ Yo no paso, no señor/ Yo me quedo en la antesala” (“And these people!.../ Campoamor, Zorrilla, Hartzenbusch, Ayala!/ So many sublime poets!.../ I will not go on, no sir/ I will stay in the antechamber”; *Album de Mariana Paniagua*). Alcalá Galiano’s use of the notion of walking or passing and his mention of the antechamber give his contribution a physical element that makes the album represent a space in which contributors actually gathered and exchanged texts, as they would have done it in person. In this description, the album becomes a metaphor for the space of the salon, typically used in nineteenth-century France and Spain for literary encounters to which many writers attended. If this had been

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28 The handwriting of this contributor was very hard to decipher, and, thus, it was complicated to decipher his name. I will use a question mark to designate illegible names or words in the contributions.
a real salon, Alcalá Galiano would not have even entered into the room, daunted by all the well-known writers who were already there: “Mas porque sepas que he estado,/ ya que á tu puerta he llegado,/ Dejo aquí, pobre poeta,/ Mi autógrafo tangente” (“But so you know I came,/ because I got to your door,/ I leave here, poor poet./ My tangential autograph”; Album de Mariana Paniagua).

Similarly frustrated when he saw the names of the contributors in Aurelia Picatoste’s album and realized the level of artistry required from him, B. de Melgar turns to the meta-representation of the album practice to narrate his experience in his entry. In his poem, entitled “A Aurelia,” de Melgar accuses the album owner of plotting against him when she sent him her album, knowing that he could not compete with the writers who had already contributed to it. “Gran chasco me has dado Aurelia/,” denounces de Melgar,

- siendo como eres tan lista-/ al enviarme tu álbum/ para que en él algo escriba:/ sabes que yo, de poeta/ por no tener…ni la pinta/ y, sin embargo, me has puesto/ ¡ay! En situación tan ?/ al lado de Núñez Arce/ de Grilo y de otros artistas,/ que ni me atrevo a decirte/ mil cosas que te diría/ y que ya te han dicho ellos/ en hermosas poesías (Album de Aurelia Picatoste, underlined in the original)

Great disappointment that you have given to me Aurelia/ seeing as you are so smart/ as to send me your album/ so I would write something in it;/ but you know that of poet/ I do not even have the demeanor/ and, nonetheless, you have put me/ Oh! In a situation so ?/ Next to Núñez Arce/ to Grilo and to other artists,/ that I do not dare to tell you/ a thousand things that I would tell you/ and that they all already have told you/ in beautiful poetry

De Melgar would have told Aurelia “a thousand” things, he could have praised her, or maybe even declared her his love. However, he can only write about the
impossibility of his writing. In his simultaneously tragic and comic tone, de Melgar condemns Aurelia’s gesture, implying that in her selfish desire to fill her book with contributions, she did not care about the honor of her contributors.

But not all album contributors who made reference to the album practice in their entries emphasized the difficulty of the artistic process or the atmosphere of rivalry that could exist among them. José Martí-Folguera’s contribution to Julia de Asensi’s album in 1875 presents a completely different type of contributor: the one who trusted his ability for artistic creation and appeared to truly enjoy album exchanges. In the first stanza of his poem, Martí-Folguera reassures the album owner that his “oven” to make verses never gets cold, and affirms that if he has already written a hundred thousand poems, the one he will create for her will be the “one hundred thousand and one.” Then, he insists on his unlimited productivity and accepts his responsibility as album contributor: “Pedidmelas, no me importa, yo he venido/ para escribir poesías á torrentes;/ todas nacen en mí –Dios lo ha querido–/ como nacen las aves en el nido,/ como el agua en las fuentes” (“Ask me for them, I do not care, I came/ to write poems in torrents;/ they all are born in me –God wanted it to be like that–/ as the birds are born in the nest,/ as water is in the fountains”; *Album de Julia de Asensi*). In Martí-Folguera’s entry there is a celebration of the poetic art and of the album itself that counters the complaints of other contributors, who saw their participation in this practice as an inescapable obligation.

The links that the potential contributors had with the husbands or fathers of some of the album owners allowed for the establishment of another dynamic in the album
exchange, based upon social commitments between male figures. Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros’ album is constantly intersected by the symbolic presence of her husband, who apparently determined many of the contributions in it. Thus, some of the contributors to Tomasa’s book refer in their entries to her husband’s intervention in her album. Peruvian born writer Juan de la Pezuela declares in his entry in Tomasa’s album that it was Bretón who, not asked him, but ordered him to add something in it: “Me manda Breton, Tomasa./ que entre tantos nombres graves,/ yo con métrica vanguardia/ el mío también estampe” (“Breton sends me, Tomasa,/ that among so many serious names,/ I imprint mine too/ with a metric avant-garde”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). In her album, Tomasa did not follow the typical dynamic described by Jouy and Larra according to which album owners would collect the contributions for their book themselves, instead letting her husband intervene in this process. As a respected writer in his context, Bretón de los Herreros would have been able to gather more entries for Tomasa’s album than she would have been able to by herself. In a later contribution, someone who signed as “El estudiante” (“The Student”) urges Tomasa to not request contributions from anyone: “pues tenéis en casa quien los confeccione así” (“because you have at home someone who will make them like this”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros).²⁹ As I

²⁹ The writing of “El estudiante” is significantly permeated by French grammar and vocabulary. In his contribution, he declares that even though he moved to Paris only three years ago, he already forgot “la habla de Monsieur el Cid” (“the language of Monsieur the Cid”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). One of the most serious vocabulary mistakes in the entry of “El estudiante,” which reveals the influence of French in his expression, is in his affirmation that, due to the poorness of the Spanish language: “persona se entiende en este país.” (“person understands each other in this country”; Album de
mentioned previously, Bretón de los Herreros did contribute to his wife’s album, but this certainly did not hinder Tomasa from wanting contributions from men other than her husband. In Aurelia Picatoste’s album there is also the presence of a relative who is an important literary figure. In this case, it was Constantino Caballeta who affirmed the difficulty of creating something worthy of her album: “Siendo tu padre escritor” (“Your father being a writer”; *Album de Aurelia Picatoste*).

Male album contributors were not the only ones who would create meta-fictional album poetry. In her transgressive gesture of becoming an album contributor, Spanish female poet Pepita Massanés also resorts to the self-referential practice, which acquires in this case a very humorous character. The negative tone of the 120 verse poem that Massanés contributed to Modesto Lloréns y Torres’ collection reveals her criticism of the album phenomenon and the type of interactions it required. In the first verses of the poem, the album is personified by Massanés as an entity that requires something from the contributors: “*Album, que en hora menguada/ Y por dicha ó desventura,/ Vienes pidiendo negrura/ Á mi pluma desgastada*” (“*Album, which in decreased hours/ And by good fortune or misfortune,/ You come asking for blackness/ To my worn out quill*”; *Album de Modesto Lloréns y Torres* 118). Massanés goes on to denounce the lack of quality among

*Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros*. “El estudiante” is the pseudonym that Antonio Maria Segovia e Izquierdo, Spanish journalist who moved to Paris in 1840 because of political reasons, used in his album contributions (*Yeves Andrés, El álbum* 25).
album contributions and the way in which in the book “sin distincion/ Malo y bueno se aglomera” (“without distinction/ Good and bad gather”; Album de Modesto Lloréns y Torres 118). After accusing the album of being a “moda acosadora” (“harassing fashion”), Massanés aggressively dismisses it in the last verses of the poem, insisting on giving the object human characteristics: “¡Ay! Album, Album! Te pido,/ Vuelvas por donde veniste,/ Que si mal te ennegreciste/ Culpa de tu dueño ha sido”30 (“Oh! Album, Album! I ask you./ that you go back to where you came from,/ Because if you are wrongly blackened/ It is your owner’s fault”; Album de Modesto Lloréns y Torres 118). Ironically, before aggressively expelling it, Massanés has already fulfilled the request, not so much of the owner, but of the album itself. While trying to censure the faults of the practice, this humorous contribution does nothing but nourish its characterization as an eccentric social custom.

Emma Bain-Bodonville’s album also contains a contribution that directly refers to the album phenomenon. In this case, the essay format of the entry suggests that the author had the intention of making of his text an informative one that would help other contributors or readers of the album understand the particularities of the craze. The Baron de Tremont starts his contribution declaring that two types of albums exist: “Il y a deux espèces d’albums: celui de l’amitié et celui des célébrités” (“There are two types of

30 In his transcription of Lloréns y Torres’ album, Yeves Andrés uses the notation “[sic]” to point out mistakes such as “veniste” and the two “u” in the last verse of this quote. I decided not to reproduce these corrections because I already mentioned that I will be respecting the original orthography of the contributions.
albums: the album of friendship and the album of celebrities”; *Album d’Emma de Jouy*). The main particularities of each one of these albums have to do with their use as historical objects: “L’un est destiné a la mémoire du cœur, l’autre a celle de l’esprit” (“One is destined to the memory of the heart, the other to the memory of the mind”; *Album d’Emma de Jouy*). Clearly, the latter was the type of album that was reserved for the “élus,” probably writers or important social figures who would be considered to have the intellect required to contribute to it. But for the Baron de Tremont the “album des célébrites” only represented the “satisfaction d’amour propre,” while being asked to contribute to an “album d’amitié” was a real pleasure for the contributor (“album of celebrities” “satisfaction of love of oneself” “album of affection” *Album d’Emma de Jouy*). According to him, the implicit message in a request for an entry to an “album de l’amitié” was: “Je sais que vous avez pour moi un sincère attachement; en demandant le témoignage, je vous donne une preuve du mien” (“I know that you have for me a sincere affection; in asking you for a testimony of it, I give you a proof of mine”; *Album d’Emma de Jouy*). The Baron de Tremont had information about the album that no one else, including Jouy, Larra, and the multiple writers who depicted the craze in their literature, provide. Who owned these different types of albums? Would an owner have two different albums, one of friendship and one of celebrities, or a person could only have one? It is useful to recall that Guilhiermoz, the inheritor of Emma Bain-Boudonville’s album, affirmed that she had left him her “albums,” implying that there were more than the one in which he was writing. However, in the albums that I consulted I did see a combination
of contributions by recognized writers and by family members, close friends, or figures who were not necessarily well-known in their milieu. If the existence of two categories of albums that were used for different audiences and purposes could be confirmed, this would add another dimension to the study of this object and to the historical implications of the practice.

C. Attempting to Follow the Rules of the Practice: Contributions Created for the Album Owners (And, Inevitably, Also for their Husbands.)

References to the husbands of album owners were not only common in entries that described how they intervened in their wives’ collection process. In many cases, contributions that should supposedly have been written for the album owner and focused on her attributes, were instead dedicated to her husband or to the couple as a unit. Philippe Dufour’s poem in Madame de Heredia’s album represents the tendency to appropriate a woman’s album to write to, and about, her husband. Entitled “à José-Maria de Heredia,” Dufour’s composition praises de Heredia, his talent, and his “sang du poète et du conquistador” (“blood of poet and conqueror”; Album de Madame de Heredia), while completely ignoring the album owner. Other than the indirect compliment inherent in the fact that she was able to obtain such an impressive mate, the only reference to the

31 Even Larra affirmed that the album was precisely a space in which different types of contributors coincided, and pointed out that the main difference among them was their level of intelligence. According to Larra, the album portrayed “los tontos al lado de los discretos” (“the stupid ones right next to the discrete ones”; 330). Discretion becomes here a judgment of behavior linked to knowledge. Probably the contributors who were not so smart were precisely members of the family or close friends of the owner who were not linked to literary or artistic circles, but who still wanted to participate in the popular album exchange and leave a token of their appreciation in the book.
album owner is in the epigraph of the poem, where Dufour points out that it is a
“respectueux hommage à Madame J.-M. de Heredia” (“respectful homage to Madame J.-
M. de Heredia”; Album de Madame de Heredia). But the true purpose of the poem was to
celebrate de Heredia, as its last verse makes clear: “maître, ami glorieux, ô gran
Heredia!” (“master, glorious friend, oh great Heredia!”; Album de Madame de Heredia).
Bretón de los Herreros similarly praised the husband of the album owner in his
contribution to Dolores Perinat de Pacheco’s album. The first stanza of Bretón de los
Herreros’ poem serves to establish why Dolores’ husband is an important figure of their
age: “Recuerdo en este instante,/ bellísima Dolores,/ que tu amable marido/ es Diputado
dła Cortes” (“I remember now,/ beautiful Dolores,/ that your kind husband/ is Deputy to
the Courts”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 96). But, unlike Dufour,
Bretón constantly mentions the album owner throughout his poem, and even insists that
Joaquín Francisco Pacheco’s greatest attribute is to have her as his partner. This dynamic
of dedicating contributions to the husbands of album owners evidences the triangular
nature of the interactions that occurred within the phenomenon. The contributors were
aware that the husbands of album owners were constantly reading the books, and thus
used their contributions as an opportunity to express their admiration. Pedro Antonio de
Alarcón wrote directly to Mariana Paniagua’s husband in her album: “Blasco, ¿qué
esperas de mí?/ ¿qué pudiera decir yo que no se te ocurra a ti?” (“Blasco, what do you
expect from me?/ what could I say that you could not think of?”; Album de Mariana
Paniagua).
Many of the contributions in the albums that I studied do refer to the owners of the book and exalt their physical and moral attributes. Barbey d’Aurevilly’s contribution in Madame de Heredia’s album perfectly fulfills the goal of praising the album owner: “Que vous dire, Madame, en cet album immense,/ dont la grandeur ressemble à Vous?/ pour vous offrir les vers que peut-être l’on pense/ il les faudrait beaux comme Vous!” (“What can I tell you, Madame, in this immense album,/ the greatness of which resembles your own?/ to offer you the verses that maybe one thinks of/ they would have to be beautiful like you”; Album de Madame de Heredia). Affirming that the “grandeur” of the album (which is a notion that can also imply size) is similar to Madame de Heredia herself, d’Aurevilly makes of the object a metonymy of its owner. The greatness and largesse of the album reflects the album owner’s moral attributes. For d’Aurevilly, it was not simply about creating verses. For him, it seemed necessary that his poetic contribution reflect to the beauty of Madame de Heredia, and that it be a written representation of her attributes. Probably that is why he decided to complement his entry with some visual elements that enrich its presentation. D’Aurevilly’s poem is one of the most visually attractive in Madame de Heredia’s album. In his inscription, d’Aurevilly used red ink to write the poem, and golden ink to make drawings of arrows to the left and on above the stanza. The long strokes of some of the letters make his contribution to Madame de Heredia’s album memorable. (See Figure 24)
Figure 24: Barbey d’Aurevilly’s contribution in Madame de Heredia’s album (Album de Madame de Heredia).
The visual aspect present in d’Aurevilly’s entry is more common in the other two types of contribution formats used in albums: music scores and drawings. Although significantly less common than poetry or written texts, there were illustrations and music scores in almost all the albums I consulted, and they had been created either directly to celebrate owners or as a gift for them. In Dolores Saravia’s album there is an 1857 music composition entitled “Lolita,” created for her by her uncle Guillermo Saravia. (See Figure 25) This entry demonstrates that, as mentioned previously, in many albums the contributions written by acquaintances with links to the literary scene usually alternated with contributions from close friends or family members. This is also the case for Tomasa Bretón de los Herrero’s album, in which her cousin contributes a drawing that, even though it is not of her, contains a sentimental reference to a memory they possibly shared. The title of the drawing, “Recuerdos gratos de quel,” reveals that there is a common understanding of the meaning of the image between the album owner and the contributor. The dedication also points out the intimacy between them, particularly through its use of the diminutive: “A Tomasita Bretón de los Herreros, su primo” (“To Tomasita (“little Tomasa”) Bretón de los Herreros, her cousin”; *Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros*). (See Figure 26) There are some instances of drawings that constitute an homage to the album owner or her family, such as the anonymous portraits of Emma Bain-Boudonville and her father, Jouy, included in her album. (See Figure 27)
Figure 25: Guillermo Saravia’s music score entry in Dolores Saravia’s album (Album de Dolores Saravia).
Figure 26: Drawing contribution entitled “Recuerdos gratos de quel” in Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros’ album (Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros).
Some of the contributions created by male contributors for female album owners seem to have an implicit sentimentality, which could constitute an attempt to actualize the
courting function of the practice. As I have shown, many contributors would make sure to mention the husband of the album owner in their written entries, in order to make it clear that, even if they were flattering her, they respected her marital status. Probably that is why, in cases when the contributor does not make any reference to the husband of the album owner, it may seem as though there is a hidden agenda of seduction in his artistic creation for her. A great example of this dynamic is Sebastián González Nandin’s 1838 contribution to Dolores Perinat’s album. In his poem, González Nandin addresses the Guadalquivir River, one of the longest rivers in Spain. After praising its current and the way it showers the walls of the great Seville, González Nandin directly asks the Guadalquivir: “¿adorna tu ribera/ otra Dolores Perinat… soltera?” (“Are your shores adorned/ By another Dolores Perinat… single?”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 94). Then, he adds two separate verses in which he describes the effect that just the idea of the existence of another, unmarried, Dolores has on him: “Quedo, al pensarlo, yerto,/ ¡Ay de mi libertad, si fuera cierto!” (“My body becomes rigid just thinking about it/ Alas! My poor freedom if this was true”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 94). González Nandin’s reaction to the potential existence of a single Dolores reveals his interest in the album owner and his desire that her marital status be different. Having the river as his confidant, the poet affirms that his freedom would suffer if there was a Dolores who was available, because he would no longer want to be free.
Dionisio López Roberts’ contribution to the Vizcondesa de Solís’ album in 1848 also has a connotation of courting, but in this case it seems like this type of exchange is not the first one between him and the album owner. López Roberts calls Joaquina an “hechicera/ la de abrasadores ojos” (“sorceress/ the one with burning eyes”) and then asks her why is she so fierce with him: “te di en prenda el corazón, y al desdeñar mi cariño/ me robaste una ilusión” (“I gave you my heart as proof, and by rejecting my love/ you stole an illusion from me”; *Album de la Vizcondesa de Solís*). In the Vizcondesa de Solís’ album there are many contributions that refer to her beauty and, specifically, to her stunning black eyes. However, López Roberts goes beyond the simple compliment, mentioning his suffering because of the Viscondesa’s rejection of his proclamation of love. López Roberts’ declaration may have well been a product of the fiction created through the contributions in the album universe. Or it could have also been a real expression of love, disguised as simple album poetry.

Album owners would usually spend several years gathering contributions to complete their collection, a period of time during which they requested entries from houseguests and acquaintances they met at public events. It is understandable that the contributions in the albums would sometimes reflect the continuity in the lives of owners and contributors and refer to events that were taking place simultaneously with the exchange. In Dolores Perinat de Pacheco’s album there is a contribution of mourning, in which the poet expresses his grief for the death of the her sister. The poem, entitled: “Á Dolores, en la muerte de su hermana” (“To Dolores, in the death of her sister”), was
interestingly the product of a direct request of Dolores to Fernando Calvo Rubio of a work of art that would comfort her in her loss. “Versos demandas á mi humilde lira,” declared Calvo Rubio, “Versos ¡ay Dios! para templar tu duelo” (“You request verses from my humble lira,/ Verses, oh God! to calm your grief”; *Album de Dolores Perinat de Pacheco* 111). This means that Dolores did not interrupt her process of collection because of the death of her sister, on the contrary, she made her involvement in the practice fit that event in her life, integrating it into the reality of the book.

Emma Bain-Boudonville does something similar in her album, in her case for the celebration of her birthdays. Emma has a contribution from November 17, 1813, the year when she celebrated her fifteenth birthday. In this entry, the contributor, “G.Y.,” reminds her that the “jeunesse” is the “age de l’erreur” and that frequently “elle s’égare en cherchant le Bonheur” (“youth is the age of mistakes” “it gets lost while searching for happiness”; *Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville*). It is understandable that a fifteen-year-old who had recently gotten her album would have been excited to collect contributions on her birthday. However, there is a later contribution from Jouy in Emma’s album, dated 1825, in which the writer is also celebrating “le jour anniversaire de la naissance” of his daughter (“the birthday”; *Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville*). This means that twelve years after having started her collection, Emma was still gathering contributions, particularly on special dates like her birthday. The latest date I found in Emma’s album is 1839, which means that she collected entries in her book for a period of around twenty-six years. This makes of her album not only the earliest one in France, but also the most
extensive in chronological terms. In Spain, as I mentioned previously, Dolores Perinat de Pacheco’s, which her parents gave to her as a gift in 1838, is the earliest album. But it is Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros the one which collection covers the longest period of time, having contributions from a period of thirty-two years (from 1842 to 1874).


The album craze allowed for the establishment of personal interactions that transcended physical space and were materialized through the contributions added to the books. The collection that album owners displayed in their books was then a representation of their public presence, of the appreciation that others had for them, and of their ability to convince acquaintances to materialize that admiration through the creation of artistic works for their book. The contributions that we find in albums today, more than a century after their period of activity, are material remnants and a proof of the social interactions established between owners (and family members) and contributors.

As I have already shown, there were many connections between participants in the album practice, which allows us to map a network and reconstruct some of the exchanges involving important figures from nineteenth-century France and Spain. In her album, Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros had contributions from writers such as Juan de la Pezuela, as well as from her husband, Manuel Bretón de los Herreros. In turn, Bretón de los Herreros had also contributed to Dolores Perinat’s album, whose own husband was an important man of politics of that milieu. Besides having a wife who herself had an album,
Pedro Antonio de Alarcón contributed to the album of Mariana Paniagua, who was married to another writer, Eusebio Blasco. Meanwhile, Madame de Heredia, married to Cuban-French writer José-Maria de Heredia, collected contributions in her album from other writers in her milieu, such as Barbey d’Aurevilly. Besides these, there are many other renowned writers and important social and political figures whose album contributions allow us to establish the reach of this phenomenon on the personal, social, national, and even transnational levels.

Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros is clearly one of the most well-connected album owners of the Spanish literary scene. Julián Romea, a Spanish writer who actually published some of his album poetry, praised Tomasa’s beauty and moral constitution with a twenty-four stanza poem he added to her book. In Tomasa’s album we also find some instances of transgression of the gender roles of the album dynamic, in the form of contributions by female writers Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and Carolina Coronado. These female contributions repeated many of the thematic patterns of male entries, as Coronado’s offering of “¡Una corona y de laurel, Señora!” and her mention of Bretón in the last verse of the poem prove (“A laurel crown, Madam!”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). Other prominent writers present in Tomasa’s collection include José Zorrilla, Antonio Gil y Zárate, and Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch. In a meta-referential gesture, both Gil y Zárate and Hartzenbusch quote Bretón de los Herreros’ opening contribution in their own subsequent contributions. Gil y Zárate states that even if Tomasa read Victor Hugo and her husband went to cafés: “es fuerza que amada seas/ y
hasta el sepulcro lo veas/ siempre rendida a tus pies” (“you have to be loved/ and have him to your feet/ until the tomb”; Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros).

Hartzenbusch refers not only to Bretón’s entry, but also to Gil y Zárate’s, echoing that he agrees with him and that, regardless of the circumstances, Bretón should never cease to demonstrate his love to his wife.

As one of the most important woman writers in her context, it is understandable that Gómez de Avellaneda’s contribution would have been solicited for multiple albums. The Señorita de Goyena was also able to obtain a poetic composition from Gómez de Avellaneda for her book. In first four verses of this poem, Gómez de Avellaneda describes life as a “mar mudable” (“changeable sea”) that can betray and cause suffering.

In the last stanza, the poet wishes Señorita de Goyena that her sea have no rage, that her sky have no dark clouds, and that flowers have no thorns (Album de la Señorita de Goyena). The Señorita de Goyena also had contributions by Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, Julián Romea, and Luis Mariano de Larra, the son of the analyst of social customs. Larra’s poem in Señorita de Goyena’s album seems to be a lament for an unrequited love. While the first verse of the poem is: “Angel hermoso á quien amar juré”, the last one declares: “dime por qué/ no me amas ya!!” (“Beautiful angel which I promised to love” “tell me why/ you do not love me anymore!!”; Album de la Señorita de Goyena). The title of Larra’s poem is: “A…,” which also makes me contemplate the possibility that he did not necessarily want to dedicate the poem to the Señorita de
Goyena, and instead simply put it there because he was uninspired to create something specific for this album owner.

Some of the contributors were so close to album owners that they would see them frequently and, therefore, have more opportunities to add contributions to their books. This was the case in the friendship between Spanish poet Antonio Fernández Grilo, Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, and, consequently, his wife Paulina. Fernández Grilo contributed to Paulina’s album five times, all of them poetic compositions dedicated to Paulina, to her husband and his literary prowess, as well as to their daughter. In the first poem that he dedicated to Paulina, added in the album in 1874, Fernández Grilo stresses her estimable qualities and justifies Alarcón’s infatuation with her. The admiration that Fernández Grilo feels for Paulina is such that whenever he wants to give a compliment to his own wife he compares her to the album owner and tells her: “Ya vas teniendo cosas de Paulina” (“You are already getting traits of Paulina”; *Album de Paulina Contreras de Alarcón* 145). The two poems that Fernández Grilo wrote for Alarcón are simply an excessive display of his admiration for the talent of the writer. The first poem, written by Fernández Grilo after he read Alarcón’s 1874 novel *El sombrero de tres picos*, is a form of toast in which he celebrates the writer and his skill to include in his literary works references as diverse as Africa and Italy. Focusing specifically on the last page of his novel *El escándalo* (1875), Fernández Grilo describes in the second poem how Alarcón’s writing provoked a flow of “lluvia bendita de mis ojos” (“blessed rain from my eyes”; *Album de Paulina Contreras de Alarcón* 146). He then goes on to mention each one of the main characters of the
novel, specifying the ways in which he identifies with them. He finishes this poem by declaring: “Alarcón inmortal! Por ti y por ellos/ bendigo á Dios y tu creación bendigo!!!” (“Immortal Alarcón! For you and for them/ I bless God and I bless your creation!!!”; Album de Paulina Contreras de Alarcón 146). Fernández Grilo’s idealization of Alarcón’s writing goes to the extreme of comparing it with God, through the gesture of blessing them both in the same verse. Thus, in these two instances, Paulina’s album becomes a space where an almost homoerotic exchange takes place, annulling the book’s original purpose to give pleasure to the owner through contributions created exclusively for her.

Fernández Grilo was not the only writer who manifested his respect for Alarcón and his literary creation in Paulina’s album. Dated June 19, 1870, in the third page of the album we find a contribution by Alexandre Dumas. This proves that the extension of the networks established among writers (and wives of writers) involved in the album practice was certainly not limited to national boundaries. Album owners and contributors formed an exclusive transnational community that valued the importance of this fashion and helped each other achieve the specific goals of their participation in it. These individual objectives of the participation in albums could be either filling their own book, collecting entries, or displaying their talent by creating art for others. In his entry for Paulina’s album, Dumas reproduces the frequent dynamic of ignoring the album owner and referring to her husband (who was in most of the cases either a writer or an important political figure). Adding his contribution right after the one Alarcón had written for his
wife, Dumas refers to the symbolic proximity to the Spanish writer that this position in the album offers him: “Madame permettez moi de rapprocher le plus possible ma Signature de celle de l’homme dont je garderai toute ma vie un souvenir reconnaissant” (“Madame permit me to bring my Signature as close as possible to that of the man of whom I will keep a grateful memory for all my life”; Album de Paulina Contreras de Alarcón 143). The use of the capital letter in the word “Signature” evokes the significance of this part of the entry as a written representation of the contributor and a validation of the feelings expressed in the text. Why was Dumas grateful to Alarcón? Probably because of his literary work, which would have put Dumas in contact with a social and intellectual context different from his own. The appreciation was mutual, because Alarcón also felt indebted to Dumas, who had been his “novelista favorito en la edad la que se sueña con imposibles” (“favorite novelist at the age when one dreams about the impossible”; Yeves Andrés, El álbum 55). It is understandable that, due to this reciprocal admiration and the personal link that resulted from it, Paulina had the opportunity to ask the French writer for a contribution to her album, which certainly made it more prized and sophisticated than the albums of other Spanish women.

But not the only the Contreras had connections in France. Dolores Perinat’s album also demonstrates the links between Spanish and French literary circles in the nineteenth century. The last contribution in Dolores’ album is from French writer Victor Hugo. However, in this case, the relationship was not as close as in Paulina’s, since it was not Dolores herself who secured the contribution, and it is neither dedicated to her nor to
her husband. According to a letter from Spanish writer Eugenio de Ochoa to Spanish painter Federico de Madrazo, Dolores had given him her album so he could collect some contributions for it on his trip to France. De Ochoa declares that he gave the album to French painter Adrien Dauzats, and that “él me ofreció al momento llevárselo a V. Hugo, a Nodier, etc (Dumas no está aquí)” (“he instantly offered me to take it to V. Hugo, to Nodier, etc (Dumas is not here)”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 25). In Dolores’ album there was the intervention, not only of a second, but also of a third party, responsible for the collection of some of its most valued contributions. The clarification about the absence of Dumas suggests that he was probably one of the most willing and available album contributors, and that the only reason Dauzats did not give him the album was the fact that he was away. Victor Hugo’s contribution is just a simple line: “Rêver, c’est le bonheur. Attendre, c’est la vie” (“To dream is happiness. To wait is life”; Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco 25). A type of general life lesson, Victor Hugo’s entry is not significant by itself but for what it represents and because of the intrigue that de Ochoa builds around it. After explaining to de Madrazo how he had given the album to Dauzats to obtain the contributions, de Ochoa tells him about how the album was partly destroyed while in the care of the French painter, with around 20 or 30 of its most beautiful engraved pages torn away. “Yo a nadie acuso,” affirms de Ochoa, “pero la verdad es que el hurto se ha cometido entre franceses, pues solo a ellos se lo ha dado Dauzats. Qué monos son!” (“I do not accuse anyone, but the truth is that the robbery has been committed among the French, because only to them did
Dauzats give it. How cute they are!”; *Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco*

25) Who could have stolen the pages from Dolores’ album and why? Paris was, according to Larra, one of the preferred album markets. Why would anyone want to steal pages from a Spanish album? And, especially, what could they have done with random pages that could not have been inserted in another, already bound album? Then, de Ochoa quotes Victor Hugo’s entry telling his interlocutor that: “El fatuo de Víctor Hugo ha escrito al revés, en la última hoja sólo este verso” (“The conceited Victor Hugo has written upside down, on the last page only this verse”; *Album de María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco* 25). The insult was probably justified, not only because de Ochoa was upset as a result of the damage that the “French” had done to Dolores’ album, but also because Victor Hugo did not try to create something specific for her or even bother to write his single line upright, to match the orientation of the book. Even if we consider the possibility that Victor Hugo opened the album from the wrong side and did not realize that he was writing on its last page, it is still possible to identify Victor Hugo’s arrogance in his indifference toward the rest of the entries that the album may have had (and that he did not consult, as contributors would normally do). This gesture evidences Victor Hugo’s awareness of how coveted his album contributions were.

Madame de Heredia also knew about the value a contribution from Hugo would add to her album. That is probably why she made sure to keep that note that Hugo wrote to her husband, and to include it in her book, glued it to one of its pages. The note, somewhat difficult to read, is an apology for not having responded sooner to a letter José-
Maria de Heredia had sent to Hugo: “Cher poëte, Votre lettre ne m’arrive qu’en ce moment. On ne console pas de telles douleurs, on les partage. Je vous envoie ma profonde sympathie. Du fond du cœur, Victor Hugo” (“Dear poet, Your letter just arrived now. One cannot console those pains, one shares them. I send you my deepest sympathies. From the bottom of my heart, Victor Hugo”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*).

This letter seems to be a gesture of condolence, following the death of a loved one. The fact that Madame de Heredia decided to add Hugo’s letter to her album reveals that the need to prove personal links with renowned writers was frequently more important than preserving the book’s homogeneity as a collection dedicated to praising its owner’s attributes. Her own husband’s contribution does not follow this requirement, being just a transcription of his poem “Antoine et Cléopâtre.” The poem, a reference to Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, opens precisely with an epigraph from the 1607 text. A drawing by painter Emile Lévy, who actually had another individual contribution in this album, accompanies the poem. (See Figure 28) With this contribution, de Heredia probably wanted to convey the idea that the deepness of their love was comparable to the one of Antony and Cleopatra, who commit suicide for one another in Shakespeare’s play. However, it seems questionable that, as a poet, de Heredia was not able to create an original contribution for his wife, which could capture the depth of his love for her equally well, if not better.
Figure 28: José-Maria de Heredia's contribution of the poem “Antoine et Cléopâtre” in his wife’s album (Album de Madame de Heredia).
José-Maria de Heredia’s circle of literary friends is very present in his wife’s album, in particular important figures of the poetic movement of Parnassianism to which he belonged. The second entry in the album is precisely Charles Leconte de Lisle’s poem “La Vérandah,” while later in it we find Théodore de Banville’s “Turbulent,” both published poems. The poem by Banville was actually dedicated to José-Maria de Heredia when published. There is also a poem by Catulle Mendès, another **parnassien**, entitled “La Mère.” I have not been able to identify this poem in collections, which means that it was probably created exclusively for Madame de Heredia’s album.\(^{32}\) Arsène Houssaye has also a contribution in this album, in his case a stanza about the deception of love originally published in *Les mille et une nuits parisiennes* (1875): “Tous les amours même l’amour maternel ont/ leurs angoisses et leurs déchirements. C’est que Dieu a crée une peine pour chaque joie. Les portes du Paradis s’ouvre sur l’enfer”\(^{33}\) (All types of love, even maternal love have/ their anxieties and their heartbreaks. This is because God created a sorrow for each happiness. The doors of Paradise opens on Hell”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*).

\(^{32}\) Unfortunately, I am not able to quote Mendès poem or verify the text to confirm if it was or not published with a different title because I do not have pictures of the page in which it was included in Madame de Heredia’s album. I was not authorized to take pictures of all the pages of the album, and, therefore, I had to skip some of them. Due to the pressure of time and of the vigilance of librarians, some of those pages later turned out to be, like in this case, important for my analysis of the albums. This specific contribution in Madame de Heredia’s album will certainly be included in my future projects about this album.

\(^{33}\) I keep Houssaye’s agreement mistake in my transcription and translation of the stanza.
A different type of text, Edmond de Goncourt included a long extract from his 1882 novel *La faustin* in Madame de Heredia’s album. Almost at the end of the album there is also a poetic contribution by Stéphane Mallarmé. This contribution was written in a piece of paper that is glued to Madame de Heredia’s album. Entitled “Le jour” (“The Day”), this poem is the first version of the one that was published in 1865 as “Don du poème” (“The Gift of the Poem”). Besides the title, the text of the version included in Madame de Heredia’s album has some differences from the second version. For example, in the published version the second verse starts referring to the “nuit d’Idumée,” mentioned in the first one, as “Noire,” while in the first version it was “Pâle” (“night of Idumea” “Black” “Pale”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*). Similarly, in the album version the female character did not show the relic, but rather abandoned it (“a montré” “a delaissé”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*). The father “trying an enemy smile” in the second version was “dreaming” in the previous one, and the “horrible birth” is only “sad” in the version for Madame de Heredia (“essayant un sourire enemmi” “revânt” “horrible naissance” “triste”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*).34 In a letter about this poem sent to Théodore Aubanel on December 6, 1865, Mallarmé gave him specific instructions about what to do with its original version: “déchire la première copie” (“tear up the first copy”; Mallarmé 193). Actually, critics of Mallarmé affirm that José-Maria de Heredia himself

34 I had access to the English translation of the poem, but it was very metaphorical and it did not serve my purpose of showing the changes in specific words from the first to the second version of the poem, so I decided not to use it.
got a copy of the early version of the poem with a letter in which the poet included details about some of the changes that he had made to the text. This must be precisely the version of the poem that Madame de Heredia included in her album almost twenty years later, on its original paper and in Mallarmé’s handwriting. This contribution certainly gives to her album a particular value that is linked, not only to the possession of an original manuscript of a published poem, but also to the artistic and personal implications of Mallarmé’s gesture of sharing it with her husband.

It is particularly interesting that these important writers did not create original entries for Madame de Heredia’s album. Almost as if they were too good for it, they all added in the book poetry that they had already published and that proved their status as talented poets. There are two other contributions that are also from important figures in the social network of Madame de Heredia and that, because of their spontaneity, seem to be created exclusively for her album. These two entries consist of very short comments

35 The editors of the edition of Mallarmé’s Œuvres complètes that I am using affirm that the poem that he sent to de Heredia only differs from its published version in the use of the word “Pâle” in the second verse. But then they explain that: “il semble qu’il y a eu du grattage, Mallarmé ayant écrit, primitivement Dans, corrigé en De” (“it seems there was a smudge, as Mallarmé wrote initially Dans, which was corrected with De”; Barbier and Gordon 195). The draft of the poem to which I had access in Madame de Heredia’s album was certainly scratched and faded because of the passing of time, but I could still identify that there were more than two words different from the published version. For this reason, I maintain my interpretation that Mallarme’s contribution added by Madame de Heredia to her album must be the version of the poem that her husband received from the poet in 1866, and in which other words are different from the second version of the poem. The sheet glued to the album still has the marks of the folding of the paper, which might be proof that it was sent at some point as a letter.

36 In his 1859 article about the album practice, Javier de Palacio affirms that the tendency of some contributors to reproduce fragments of their published works in their entries was “la muerte de los albums” (“the death of albums”; 151). For him, the main reason why albums were interesting was precisely because the texts included in it were not supposed to have been published.
on the album practice and reveal the contributors’ opinion about the phenomenon. The first one is a line by politician and historian Gabriel Hanotaux: “Il ne faut jamais rien écrire sur les albums” (“One should never write on albums”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*). (See Figure 29) It is understandable that Hanotaux, who was not a man of letters, might have preferred to not have to write in albums. This sort of aversion towards the fashion serves him as basis, precisely, to participate in it, giving him the ideological basis of his contribution. However, since he wrote in an album that one should never write in albums, it is difficult to determine whether this was a sincere critique of the practice, only one step removed from refusing to write anything at all, or rather a playful, tongue-in-cheek remark, intended to make readers laugh. It could as well be interpreted as a combination of the two: humorous but sincere critique.

![Figure 29: Gabriel Hanotaux's contribution in the album of Madame de Heredia (Album de Madame de Heredia).](image-url)
Paul Valéry is the author of the second entry, which I interpret as a reflection on the different approaches of contributors to album entries. “Plus on écrit, moins on pense,” starts Valéry, denouncing the excessive length of contributions in albums as a sign of a lack of intellect (“The more one writes, the less one thinks”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*). He finishes his thought affirming: “J’ai écrit,” in an effort to prove that he has written without thinking excessively about it (“I wrote”; *Album de Madame de Heredia*). (See Figure 30) Valéry’s declaration is a critique of all the contributors who identified the creation of an album contribution as a too complicated, time-consuming, and intellectual task. Like Hanotaux’s, the humorous tone of Valéry’s contribution proposes a satirical approach to the album practice, while suggesting that contributors used to overthink the content of their written entries for the book.

Figure 30: Paul Valéry's contribution in the album of Madame de Heredia (*Album de Madame de Heredia*).
Emma Bain-Boudonville is another French album owner whose collection evidences the social connections that she had in her milieu. As her album inheritor points out in his biography of Emma on the book’s opening page, many of these acquaintances were Jouy’s friends, who had known Emma since she was a little girl. Béranger is one of the contributors linked to Emma’s father, and one of his entries in her album is actually focused on her father, the social customs writer. Interestingly, an announcement precedes this 1818 contribution: those “Complets sans rimes,” created for the “fête de P. Ermite,” were “Ecrits sous la dictée de Béranger par Madame Boudonville” (“Full [verses] with no rhyme” “celebration of P. Hermit” “Written by Madame Boudonville under the dictation of Béranger”; Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville). In a parenthesis right after this disclaimer it is specified that these verses are “Inédits” (“unpublished”; Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville). This contribution introduces a particular dynamic in the act of collection: the album owner becoming a type of secretary for the contributor. The main limitation of this type of exchange is that it hinders the identification of the handwriting with the contributor and the inclusion of a signature, an essential part of a contribution because it emblematizes the commitment of the author with the content of his written entry. Besides Béranger’s collaborative entry with Emma, we also find in her album a contribution by Nodier. At the beginning of the century (his contribution must be from around 1820, according to the dates of the ones before and after it), Nodier was already doing what other poets reproduced around sixty years later in Madame de Heredia’s
album: including his own previously published poetry. Nodier adds his poem “Le sommeil” to Emma’s album in its full length, ten stanzas of four verses each.

As did Nodier, Victor Hugo also contributes a sample from his writings to Emma’s album. In Hugo’s case, his contribution is an extract from his 1831 novel _Notre-Dame de Paris_. This fragment portrays a conversation between Esmeralda and Gringoire, in which the poet asks the Egyptian woman about the difference between friendship and love. This topic was ideal for an album entry, since this practice promoted in multiple instances the questioning of the frontier between friendship and courting, as established and defied in the contributions. Hugo’s quote is from the seventh chapter of the second book of the novel, “Une nuit de noces” (“A Wedding Night”):

–Savez-vous ce que c’est que l’amitié? demanda-t-il
–Oui, répondit l’égyptienne, C’est être frère et sœur, deux âmes qui se touchent sans se confondre, les deux doigts de la main
–Et l’amour? poursuivit Gringoire.

‘Do you know what friendship is?’ he asked.
‘Yes,’ the gypsy answered. ‘It means being brother and sister, two souls touching but not merging, two fingers of the same hand.’
‘And love?’ Gringoire continued.
‘Oh! love!’ she said. ‘That is being two and yet only one. A man and a woman fusing into an angel. It’s heaven.’ (112)

37 Hugo omits at this point of the contribution a short description of Esmeralda’s physical reaction when responding to Gringoire’s question included in the original text: “et sa voix tremblait, et son oeil rayonnait” (“her voice trembling and her eyes radiant”; 118; Krailsheimer 112).
The inclusion of a fragment of such an important novel was useful to remind the readers of Emma’s album of Hugo’s literary status and, inevitably, of how well-connected she was in her milieu. Thus, Victor Hugo proves to be one of the most popular album contributors, emblematic of the networking that this practice promoted and of its transnational extension because of his presence in albums from both France and Spain.

IV. Encore: Alternate Album Uses. Or How to Defy the Rules of the Album Practice

In their essays about the album, Jouy and Larra establish certain parameters of this phenomenon, its manifestation and uses, the gender roles it promoted, and the social circles involved in it. The albums and contributions that I include in my analysis generally follow certain established patterns regarding the utility and function of this practice. Be it meta-referential poetry about the implications of the participation in the exchange, entries that praised the owner, or those that proved the social networking promoted in this fashion, the majority of the albums I consulted correspond to the model of the traditional notion of the book, including the type of contribution that was expected for it. However, there are some albums in which collection does not adapt to the ideal of the album, and which actually defy expectations of its purpose for owners and contributors. I interpret these albums as representations of alternate uses of the book, different from the generalized manifestation of the practice depicted by Jouy and Larra and that interests me, but still valid as a variation in the approach to it in the context.
One of the most interesting alternative uses of the album occurred in the case of the one belonging to Emilia Pardo Bazán. As I mentioned previously, Pardo Bazán’s is not a typical album, in which the owner collected contributions from her acquaintances. In her album, Pardo Bazán includes the poetry she had written as a teenager, in a gesture that, instead of promoting a masculine writing practice, allowed for an acknowledgement and validation of her own talent. Only a few entries in Pardo Bazán’s book break the homogeneity of its self-authored writing. At the end of 1871, the year when she gathered the collection, her friends Juan Montes and Leandro Prieto added some poems in it. And as Emma Bain-Boudonville had done earlier, in 1866 Pardo Bazán served as a secretary for Luis Vermell, writing in her album a contribution that he signed. Although her album, because of how it defies the traditional gendered use of the book, can be seen as a celebration of femininity and of the literary production of women in nineteenth-century Spain, men are not completely absent from this collection. Pardo Bazán has many poems dedicated directly to men, among which one was written for José Zorrilla. In this poem, Pardo Bazán urges Zorrilla to ignore the criticism of people who wanted him to leave Mexico and to go back to his country. Zorrilla had been living in Mexico for eleven years and in 1866, the same year in which Pardo Bazán composed this poem, he returned to Spain.

Besides the poems that she wrote for men, Pardo Bazán also included in her collection poems that she had written for other albums, including albums owned by men. In total, there are three album poems in this collection, two written for men and one for a
woman. Pardo Bazán herself identified the original destination of these poems in a note in parenthesis placed at the end of each poem, next to her signature and the date and city of the contribution’s creation. Contrary to many of the poems written by male contributors in women’s albums, the poems that Pardo Bazán wrote for Amancio Cabello and Alvaro Torres, in 1867 and 1870 respectively, do not praise the elegance or moral attributes of these men. Although having the self-referential title “En un álbum” (“In an album”), the first poem presents the trivial topic of the search for a necktie, while the one created for Torres uses the metaphor of an eagle to represent Spain as a nation. Thus, merging different meta-literary levels, Pardo Bazán adds these poems that had previously been created for others to her own collection. How was she able to quote these poems? I imagine that she must have had an original draft that she kept after she returned the albums to their owners.\textsuperscript{38} The most fascinating aspect of the particular use that Pardo Bazán made of her album is the significance of the literary creation included in it. In the specific case of her meta-albumistic poems, she not only became a transgressor in terms of the gender determination of the album, but also regarding the tendency of the artistic status preferred in the contributors. As a sixteen-year-old, Pardo Bazán was probably the youngest album contributor, a sign that announced her future success as a writer.

\textsuperscript{38} Romero Tobar affirms that in the case of poems that were created carefully and exclusively for an album owner after a request, the contributor would always keep a copy of the original text. He points out that there is evidence of this practice in recently edited manuscripts of Spanish Romantic poets, in which they would mention in the title of the poem the album to which it was destined (“Los ábumes...” 86).
As Pardo Bazán’s contributions written for male-owned albums prove, it was certainly harder to create works of art dedicated to men. The tendency to use the album as a space to compliment the owner limited the creative possibilities in the case of male-owners, especially considering that the vast majority of contributors were men. Evidently, contributors would not have wanted to transgress the rules about same-sex communication, creating a contribution that could have been considered too homo-erotic for the context. I have already mentioned how many contributors would praise the husbands of album owners, exalting their artistic and intellectual attributes. But what could they do if they were not able to identify superior qualities in a male album owner?

In order to avoid their entry to be interpreted as excessively flattering, some contributors would add to albums literary texts that, not only did not have any reference to the owner, but did not treat any topic that could evoke love, relationships, or the admiration of personal talents. Contrary to the poetry or extracts of texts that recognized writers added to women’s albums, in the case of these contributions there is an intention of making the entries the least personal possible, while proving the literary abilities of the contributors. This is what happens in some of the entries in Ramón Pérez Costales’ and the General Solano’s albums. In the case of Pérez Costales, there is a seven-page long contribution of a whole scene of a play’s first act. Included in the album by Julián Manuel de Sabando y Alcalde, the play to which this scene belonged was entitled “El Día de Roncesvalles:”
Drama trajico, and does not seem to have been published.\textsuperscript{39} The scene develops in a context of war among five male characters, a topic that Sabando y Alcalde thought Pérez Costales would probably appreciate (Album de Ramón Pérez Costales). Carlos Fernández Shaw’s fragment of a legend in the General Solano’s album is as impersonal as this contribution by Sabando y Alcalde. Fernández Shaw’s contribution also responds to an aesthetic that privileged non-poetic literary contributions. The extract from “La Cruz de las sombras,” which apparently was not published either, describes the arrival of winter and all the climatic changes that this season implies (Album del General Solano). It is important to point out that in the General Solano’s album there are as well many contributions that consist of drawings of soldiers with shotguns. These visual entries evoke the General Solano’s personal life and, probably, also his personal interests.

The final alternative function of albums that I would like to examine is the use of some of their pages to include signatures. Not linked to any written contribution, these signatures stand for themselves in the albums, and their gathering symbolizes the community of friends and connections of the book’s owner. In this practice, the pages that serve for the collection of signatures function as the “autograph books,” which were closely related in function to the album. Ramón Pérez Costales’ album has a very elaborate signature page, with a frame of wavy lines and quotes in each corner of the

\textsuperscript{39} Julián Manuel de Sabando y Alcalde is the complete name of the contributor, but in Pérez Costales’ album he signs as “Julian Manuel de Sabando,” and does not even accentuate the ‘a’ of his first name (Album de Ramón Pérez Costales).
page. In the center there is a white circular space in which contributors signed. Two hands shaking support this signature area in the bottom. These hands are clearly a male and a female one, which is ironic since among the signatures above, none belong to women. Perhaps the representation of both genders in the drawing was an evocation of the original album dynamic, which was not reproduced in this specific signature page. (See Figure 31)

![Signature page in Ramón Pérez Costales' album (Album de Ramón Pérez Costales).](image)

Two of the quotes included in this ‘altar’ of signatures caught my attention. The first one is in Latin and it works as header that crowns the whole image: “Utinam impleam hanc amicis veris!” (Album de Ramón Pérez Costales). This expression is not
original to the owner of the album. It was copied from Phaedrus’ fable “Socrates ad amicos” (“A Saying of Socrates”) which is about Socrates’ idea of friendship. Responding to one of his neighbors’ question about why a man like him had such a small house, Socrates responds: “Ah, if only I could fill it with true friends” (Gibbs). Pérez Costales appropriates this Phaedrus quote to convey his feelings about his album: he wishes that only sincere friends contributed to it, and that he had enough to fill at least that signature page. The second phrase on this page that deserves attention is a direct invitation from Pérez Costales to his potential signers, in which he conveys what their contributions to that page mean for him: “Firmad, y en cada firma una memoria,/ Encontraré del tiempo que ha corrido/ En cada letra encontraré una historia,/ Hallaré en cada nombre, él de un amigo” (“Sign, and in each signature a memory/ I will find of the time that has passed by/ In each letter I will find a history./ I will find in each name, the name of a friend”; Album de Ramón Pérez Costales). Thus, Pérez Costales makes the signatures on this particular page representative of the personal story that his whole album should tell, privileging the signers over the contributors who would add full entries in the other pages of the book.

Dolores Saravia also has an autograph section in her album, which actually covers two pages. Different from Costales’, in which all the signatures were together in a common space, in Saravia’s album there are designated squares for each name. Many of these signature are illegible, but there is one that stands out from all the others: “Prim” (Album de Dolores Saravia). Juan Prim y Prats was a Spanish politician and military man
who participated in the first Carlist War (1833-1840), was a leader of the revolution of 1868 against Isabel II, and was assassinated because of his opposition to the Bourbon dynasty and his support for the imposition of an Italian king in Spain in 1870. The inclusion of this signature gives Dolores’ album a political connotation that is not common in the albums that I consulted. In her case, the signature page does not seem to be as important as in Pérez Costales’. On the contrary, her collection of signatures seems to gather people that Dolores had met at least once, but with whom she did not have a close relationship, and that is why they could not create a real contribution for her.

Dolores was not the only female album owner I encountered who had a signature of an important politician of her context in her album. In one page of Emma Bain-Boudonville’s album is glued a piece of paper that has the signature “Bonaparte.” Because this signature is almost illegible, a caption was added below to explain it: “Signature de Napoléon général en chef de la république/ an 6” (“Signature of Napoléon commander in chief of the republic/ year 6”; Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville). Emperor of France from 1804 to 1814, Napoléon Bonaparte may have well interacted with Jouy and his daughter during the time he was in power. The signature included in Emma’s album could even be from his last year as emperor, as she had started her collection in 1813. In order to understand the function of that small piece of paper with the last name of the emperor in Emma’s album, it would be necessary to know what interaction led to its collection and, most importantly, whether it was really created for Emma. In any case, the interest of Jouy’s daughter in the figure of Napoléon was not
limited to saving his signature and adding it to her album. After the inclusion of the
autograph of the last name of the emperor, his first name appears in a subsequent page
with an explanatory inscription: “herbes cueillies sur le tombeau de Napoléon” (“herbs
gathered from Napoléon’s gravestone”; Album d’Emma Bain-Boudonville). The name
“Napoléon” is formed with grass that was collected from the emperor’s tombstone and
then stitched to a piece of paper that was glued to Emma’s album. (See Figure 32) The
notion of collection and the interpretation of the object as metaphor for a body, a name,
or an individual that the album itself conveys acquire new dimensions through this
gesture. Emma Bain-Boudonville gave material existence to a second version of
Napoléon’s name, with multiple objects gathered from where his dead body was resting.
Then, she included this symbolic meta-collection in her own album collection, in a
contribution that was possibly created by and for herself, but which evoked someone else.
This action definitely constitutes a fascinating alternative use of the album, as it
emblematises the fixation of many album owners with objects and the projects of social
networking that got them involved in this practice.
V. Conclusion

As my analysis of actual nineteenth-century albums shows, Jouy and Larra were not necessarily correct in all of their observations about this phenomenon as it played out in their context. The album owners were not always women, the contributors were not all men, the entries were not only written to praise the owner, and not all contributors felt pestered by the request to participate in a collection. The information that I was able to gather in my examination of albums does not serve, however, to refute or deny Jouy’s and Larra’s portrayal of this phenomenon, but rather to enrich it with new evidence of the nuances of its manifestation. The album did have a gendered essence that determined the particularities of its exchanges and the motivations of the participants in the practice.
Nonetheless, the exploration of the historical object reveals the complexities of this trend and how the economic, social, artistic, and other multiple aspects influenced its prevalent gender pattern.

One aspect of Jouy’s and Larra’s discussion of the album that is unmistakable is their observations on the popularity and spread of this fashion in their social milieu. Because of the presence and impact of this practice, albums belonging to important women who were linked to the nineteenth-century literary scene in France and Spain, as well as by other less well-connected women, were considered historical objects worthy of being held at libraries for over a century. The value that Larra insisted albums could merit after they were full of contributions, which could be enough to constitute the dowry of its owner, turned out to be cultural and not monetary. The contemporary availability of these books offers us access to the fascinating universe of the album, allowing for an understanding of the practice that goes beyond the contextual theory or fiction written about it. The albums conserved in archives and identified as “manuscripts” defy this classification, as they are not written by their owner, and are not even created by one single person. While perusing books that had been owned, handled, and signed by individuals who were interconnected in their milieu, we can submerge ourselves in the reality of the album (which has already become fiction) and simultaneously participate in the story it narrates. Thus, the historical object carefully protected at a French or Spanish library in the twentieth-first century ends up being a metaphor for the album, a symbol
that reproduces in its material microcosm the significance of this craze in the nineteenth century.
Chapter 3: “Uses and Abuses of the Album: Understanding the Condition of Archival Albums through the Analysis of Literature”

Vive con su madre en un cuarto tercero, tan elevado como humilde. Madruga, borda, lee novelas, manda reténir sus vestidos; restaura personalmente su calzado cuando este solo ha padecido leve detrimento; se hace la pomada, tiene álbum, asiste de vez en cuando á teatros de segundo órden, y va á ver la parada, si la parada se verifica en día festivo. ([The tacky young lady] lives with her mother in a third floor room, as elevated as humble. She gets up early, embroiders, reads novels, sends for her dresses to be dyed; she fixes her shoes herself when they have been only slightly damaged, she puts on ointments, she has an album, she goes occasionally to second-class theaters, and she goes see the parade, if the parade takes place on a holiday.)

Roberto Robert, “La señorita cursi” (1871)

The passion for collecting autographs may be ridiculed if we so choose to do; and in many cases where it is carried to excess or pursued in a hap-hazard manner, it deserves all that can be said of it.

Edward W. Bok, “How I Made My Autograph Album” (1889)

While the analysis of the essays on social customs that depict the album offered us a pseudo journalistic and historically-specific perspective of this practice’s development, the exploration of the actual albums further nourished our understanding of the exchange and the circumstances of its materialization in nineteenth-century France and Spain. The information that the essays and the albums offer forms the basis of my approach to the depiction of the practice in literary texts. In the case of the writings on social customs, it is interesting how Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy and Mariano José de Larra briefly become, in specific passages, participants in this fashion. However, the two of them mostly remain as narrators who portray, judge, and criticize the circumstances surrounding the evolution of the album fashion. In this chapter, I transition from those essays, which present a combination of factual and fictional elements, to texts in which
the appearance of the album fulfills a completely different role for the narration. While the essays on social customs studied the album itself, with a sole purpose of discussing different aspects of this practice, in the literary texts the album appears based on the characters and events narrated. All the “theory” about the album that we had previously obtained in the essays and the information that the study of the actual albums offer, will be put into action now by examining how the protagonists use this object in their respective stories. Once again, the lines between fiction and reality blur, as we witness the insertion of a real, historical phenomenon in fictional stories, and as we imagine albums (like the ones I saw in French and Spanish archives) in the hands of literary characters who owned or contributed to them.

The literary texts that depict the album present different angles of this practice in accounts that are determined by the particularities of each genre. My analysis of literature that portrays the album aims to establish a link between the fictional presentation of this fashion and the information I obtained through my analysis of historical nineteenth-century albums. Thus, I examine the circumstances, motivations, and outcomes of album exchanges in literature, and put these scenes in dialogue with the material appearance and condition of actual albums.

One of the aspects of historical albums that I present in my analysis of the physical appearance of the books is the condition of the pages and the occasional variation in the color and texture of pages within the same album. Several of the albums that I consulted in archives in France and Spain had pages that had been cut or torn.
There were even cases in which a trace of paper in the binding of the album revealed that a whole page had been pulled out. The albums belonging to Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros, the Duchesse de Camastra, Ramón Pérez Costales, and Dolores Saravia all have some damaged pages. Besides the absence of pages, I also noticed that in some cases the color and texture of the pages varied, and different colors and type of page could be present in the same album. For example, the pages in the Vizcondesa de Solís’ album are white, light blue, dark blue, and brown. Similarly, the Princesa de Anglona’s album has blue, beige, and brown pages. This diversity in the colors of pages allowed me to propose in my analysis of archival albums the possibility that owners might have added pages to their albums. As their collection kept growing and as they continued to establish social connections, they would need to add more pages to expand their collections. This would explain the heterogeneity regarding the type of pages in some albums.

Interestingly, some of the literary texts that depict the album custom include exchanges that present the mutilation of albums and the addition of pages or parts of pages to these books. I analyze these scenes acknowledging the possibility that they offer us information that could be useful to explain the potential reasons for the alteration of historical albums. In this section, I analyze a short story and a play that portray characters tearing out pages of albums: Juan de Ariza’s “Historia de un album” (1847) and Manuel Bretón de los Herreros’ El cuarto de hora. Comedia en cinco actos (1848). I was also able to identify a play which suggests an explanation for the circumstances behind the
existence of albums with pages of different colors and textures that were possibly added after the original binding of the book: Henri de Meilhac’s *L’Autographe. Comédie en un acte* (1858).

I. Gender Battles. Or on the Reasons to Eliminate and Add Pages to Albums

A. De Ariza’s and Bretón de los Herreros’ Biographies and the Place of the Album in their Work

The authors that depict the intentional elimination of pages from albums, de Ariza and Bretón de los Herreros, coincided in Spain’s literary scene in the mid-nineteenth-century. However, Bretón de los Herreros seems to have been more successful in his literary career, as revealed by the attention paid by literary critics to his artistic production, both in his milieu and today. In the case of de Ariza, who wrote the short story about the mutilation of albums one year before Bretón de los Herreros published his play on the same topic, it is actually difficult to find biographical information about him.¹ Some of the few critics who have written about de Ariza point out that this is due to the lack of interest in his oeuvre or in him as a literary figure (Ayudarte Granados “Biografía de Juan de Ariza”). Born in Motril, Granada, in 1816, de Ariza seems to have moved to

¹ It is important to point out that Bretón de los Herreros was still pioneer in the depiction of the album practice in literature in Spain, as he had already written another theater play on this topic in 1838. This is the first literary text on the album fashion that I could identify in Spain. I will discuss this play later in this study.
Madrid in his twenties, at some point between 1842 and 1845.\(^2\) Before his arrival in the Spanish capital, de Ariza had established some links with important members of Madrilean literary circles, which would be useful in the development of his own career. De Ariza had met Bretón de los Herreros in an enactment of one of his comedies in the Alhambra, and he had also met writers Ventura de la Vega and Julián Romea in Granada. Interestingly, these writers that de Ariza had encountered before arriving in Madrid had something in common: they were all album contributors, as I was able to verify in several of the albums I consulted in Spain. In the case of Bretón de los Herreros, as I have pointed out, his role of album contributor combines with his interest in portraying this practice in literary texts. The participation of his acquaintances in the album practice might have fascinated de Ariza, to the point that he wanted to acknowledge the importance of this phenomenon in his milieu by writing a literary account of it.

Eventually, de Ariza himself became an important member of the literary circles in Madrid. A character in Benito Pérez Galdós’ *Las tormentas del 48* (1902) even mentions him as one of the attendees of a literary meeting that gathered important nineteenth-century Spanish writers: “De literatos he visto a Rubí, Navarrete, Larrañaga, Antonio Flores, Ariza y Villergas” (“Of the literary men I have seen Rubí, Navarrete, Larrañaga, Antonio Flores, Ariza y Villergas”; Ayudarte Granados “Biografía de Juan de Ariza). De Ariza wrote poetry, theater plays, historical novels, and collaborated with several

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\(^2\) Ayudarte Granados disagrees with other critics, and affirms that it cannot be confirmed that de Ariza arrived in Madrid in 1842.
newspapers by writing short stories and articles on social customs. He died in 1876 in Havana, Cuba.

Due to the success of his literary production in his milieu, there is a significant amount of biographical information available about Bretón de los Herreros. Bretón de los Herreros was born in 1796 in Quel, a small town in the province of the Rioja. His arrival in Madrid was not linked to youth’s cravings for urban life, but to a family move when he was only ten years old. Due to the death of his father, Bretón de los Herreros went to live with an uncle who treated him so poorly that he decided to enroll in the army to fight against France in the War of Independence. Taking advantage of a period of special permission from the army, he wrote his first comedy, *A la vejez viruelas* (1824) when he was twenty years old. Bretón de los Herreros translated numerous French plays (including some by Jean Racine, Augustin Eugène Scribe, Voltaire, among others) and adapted Spanish plays from the *Siglo de oro* era (“Manuel Bretón de los Herreros”).

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3 It would require significantly more space and time than I have in this chapter to review all the critical works dedicated to Bretón de los Herreros’ literary production. In his book *Las ideas teatrales de M. Bretón de los Herreros*, Pau Miret offers a review of existing scholarly works about Bretón de los Herreros’ journalistic and theater works. Miret shows how Bretón de los Herreros has been carefully studied for more than a century. In his revision, Miret includes the works that Bretón de los Herreros’ contemporaries dedicated to him, including Eugenio de Ochoa’s “Don Manuel Bretón de los Herreros” (1836) and Antonio Gil de Zárate’s “D. Manuel Bretón de los Herreros” (1842). In 1909, Georges Le Gentil published his doctoral dissertation on Bretón de los Herreros, which is an extensive study on how the literary works of the Spanish writer expose the customs of his country in the period from 1830 to 1860. During the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century, there was a revival in the interest for Bretón de los Herreros’ literature, as proved by multiple studies published in these years that examine different aspects of the production of this writer. In 1996, an International Conference to celebrate the centenary of Bretón de los Herreros’ birth took place in Logroño, Spain, and in 1999 they celebrated for the second time the “Jornadas Bretonianas,” both activities that promoted the production and exchange of different approaches to the oeuvre of Bretón de los Herreros.
importance of Bretón de los Herreros’ theater production lies in its constitution as an important source for understanding different social customs and ways of life in the Madrilean society of his moment. Bretón de los Herreros’ plays have also been identified as a symbolic transition between the production of his predecessor, Leandro Fernández Moratín, and the “alta comedia” (“high comedy”) of the 1840s and ‘50s. Bretón de los Herreros insisted on the Aristotelian notion that “‘el teatro debe ser una imagen perfecta’ de la humanidad” (“‘theater should be a perfect image’ of humanity”; Miret 134). For him, the foundation of all dramatic plays should be “verosimilitud,” because without it “nada razonable se puede hacer ni decir sobre la escena” (“authenticity,” “one cannot do or say anything reasonable in scene”; Miret 115). As the most prolific Spanish playwright of the nineteenth century, Bretón de los Herreros’ published hundreds of literary texts, among which, besides theater plays, there are poems (that are mainly satirical and humorous), theater criticism, and “costumbrista” articles (“Manuel Bretón de los Herreros”). Mariano José de Larra, precisely one of the main Spanish “costumbristas” and author of the Spanish essay on the album that I analyze in this study, praised Bretón de los Herreros’ theater production, pointing out that he had no rival in the “pintura de algunos caracteres cómicos, en la viveza y chiste del diálogo, en la pureza, fluidez y armonía de su fácil versificación” (“painting of some of his comic characters, in the liveliness and the jokes of the dialogues, in the purity, fluidity and harmony of its easy versification”; Miret 20). Meanwhile, Eusebio Blasco, the husband of Mariana Paniagua, one of the album owners whose album I consulted at the Museo del Romanticismo in
Madrid, affirmed that: “En el teatro de D. Manuel Bretón de los Herreros está, no pintada ni descrita, sino retratada con asombroso parecido toda una generación” (“In Manuel Bretón de los Herreros’ theater there is a whole generation, not simply painted or described, but portrayed with astonishing resemblance”; Miret 22).

The particularities of the depiction of the album in de Ariza’s and Bretón de los Herreros’ texts is certainly determined by the literary genre of each text. In the case of “Historia de un album,” the original appearance of this text in a newspaper causes its frequent identification as a newspaper article. However, because of its length, structure, and the type of narration it presents, I have chosen to categorize and analyze this text as a short story. “Historia de un album” does not appear to be classified as short story in the biographies that attempt to exhaustively list de Ariza’s literary production (“Gices XIX,” Ayudarte, “Biografía de Juan de Ariza,” and “El legado de Juan de Ariza”). In fact, “Historia de un album” is simply not mentioned in some of these lists, an absence which I interpret as a result of its classification as a newspaper article. Some of the sources I was able to consult for de Ariza’s biography even refer to his “aún no conocidos artículos periodísticos”, which would justify the general lack of awareness of this short story (“still unknown newspaper articles”; Ayudarte “El legado de Juan de Ariza”). Interestingly, de Ariza is recognized for his short stories, which are classified according to their focus on popular traditions, folklore, and sentimental topics (“Gices XIX”). It is particularly interesting that, considering the interest of some critics in categorizing de Ariza’s complete short story production, “Historia de un album,” which I would identify as an
important short story that reveals a great deal about gender constructions in nineteenth-century Spain, has been ignored for so long.

“Historia de un *album*” was published in 1847 in *El renacimiento*, a newspaper directed by writer Eugenio de Ochoa and painter Federico de Madrazo. Also founded in 1847, *El renacimiento* was the second newspaper project of Ochoa y Madrazo, who together had published the newspaper *El artista* until 1836. In his article about the development of *El renacimiento*, Borja Rodríguez Gutiérrez points out that the inclusion of short stories was essential to the format of *El artista*, but less so for *El renacimiento*. Only three short stories were published in *El renacimiento*, including “Historia de un *album*.”

*El renacimiento* intended to escape the romanticism that had characterized *El artista*, which is likely why even its name referred to a “rebirth.” This move away from romanticism is probably why the editors agreed to publish “Historia de un *album*,” since this short story is not strictly romantic. Instead, it is classified as a “cuento costumbrista de tono humorístico […] una modalidad del cuento romántico” (“short story on social customs […] a variation of the romantic short story”; Rodríguez Gutiérrez 83).

Because “Historia de un *album*” has as its main topics the social custom of the album and a humorous description of the romantic complications that participation in this practice entailed, it is imaginable that the story would convey the distance from the tragic romanticism that had been present in *El artista*. Rodríguez Gutiérrez affirms that the

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4 It is important to mention that *El renacimiento* only lasted for nineteen weeks, which probably explains the limited selection of short stories published in this newspaper.
short stories in *El renacimiento* do not deal with impossible loves, mysterious characters, or a sinister environment, and that they all present the idea of “social satisfaction.” Of “Historia de un album,” in particular, Rodríguez Gutiérrez affirms that this short story presents a “visión [sic] humorística, pero no crítica” (84; “humorous, but not critical vision”). I disagree with Rodríguez Gutiérrez. It would be unfair to reduce the complexity of “Historia de un album” to a text that simply offers a humorous version of a romantic story. Since Rodríguez Gutiérrez’s approach to this story is limited by his article’s focus on the establishment and evolution of the newspaper *El renacimiento*, it is evident that he did not consider the larger social impact of the album, or the important information the study of this phenomenon offers about social transactions. De Ariza’s short story provides valuable insights about the constitution of gender roles in nineteenth-century Spain, through his depiction of the dynamics that determine a specific album exchange. The humor that de Ariza uses in his depiction of the album conveys the scorn with which he, and many other nineteenth-century Spanish and French writers, viewed this phenomenon. The interpretation of this practice as a female fashion that represented women’s social interactions and romantic relationships is taken to an extreme in “Historia de un album,” through the portrayal of a personified album that suffers the impact of its owner’s constant interactions with men. There is definitely criticism in “Historia de un album,” a criticism that responds to the conceptualization of women as superficial beings, whose fixation with fashion and ambition for gaining public presence, could result in the
continual removal of pages from albums based on the women’s changing suitors and romantic fortunes.

Bretón de los Herreros’ theater production has its own particularities within the genre. In his 1836 review of Bretón de los Herreros’ work, Eugenio de Ochoa affirmed that: “Cualquiera que sea la opinión que tenga cada cual del mérito literario del Dr. Bretón es innegable … que este poeta ha sabido formarse un género aparte, un género suyo que ni se parece al de los antiguos ni al de Moratín ni al de nadie. Este género debe llamarse, y se llama en efecto, entre los inteligentes de la literatura contemporánea el género de Bretón” (“Notwithstanding the opinion that each person may have about the literary merit of Dr. Bretón, it is undeniable … that this poet has been able to create an original genre, a genre that is his own and that is not similar to Moratín’s or to anybody else’s. This genre should be called, and actually it is called, among the connoisseurs of contemporary literature, the genre Bretón”; Bravo Vega 322). Integrating in his plays many of the characteristics of the Siglo de oro theater, Bretón de los Herreros was able to create a particular style that made him stand out in his literary context. The classical root of his comedies is enriched by several characteristics that are typical of his writing, such as the brevity, the comic language, the humorous plot, and the moral offered at the end of the story (Bravo Vega 349).

Within Bretón de los Herreros’ particular theater genre it is possible to identify El cuarto de hora in the sub-category of the “comedia de enredo” (“knot comedy” “comedy
Mainly used in the theater of the *Siglo de oro*, the notion of “enredo” refers to the genre of humorous comedy, to the mechanisms that allow for it to happen, and to its technique. The “enredo” results then from a gradual complication of the play’s plot (or plots), which outcome is a festive ending or provides the readers with a moral (Bravo Vega 340). The plot of a “comedia de enredo” fluctuates between entertaining the viewers, censoring or satirizing the social issues presented in the play, and even providing an instructive approach to those topics. These elements of the “enredo” will be essential in my analysis of *El cuarto de hora*. Understanding the particularities of this sub-genre allow for a more accurate interpretation of Bretón de los Herreros’ intention when depicting the album practice in this play.

B. Between Humanized Albums and Marriage Proposals: Scenes of the Mutilation of Albums in Literary Texts

Notwithstanding their different genres, “Historia de un *album*” and *El cuarto de hora* are both written in a humorous tone that determines the presentation of the album and reveals the position of the authors toward this fashion. The literary structure of the

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5 Although form a different literary and cultural context, the notion of “comedy of errors” has been used frequently to translate “comedia de enredo,” because of the similarities in the dramatic structure of both types of theater compositions. The English concept derives from William Shakespeare’s play *The Comedy of Errors* (1594?). Although in my search I found other possible English translations of the concept of “comedia de enredo,” such as “comedy of situation,” “comedy of intrigue,” and “hit-and-miss comedy,” I decided to use “comedy of errors,” because I think this expression really conveys the circumstances in Bretón de los Herreros play.

6 In his article “Raíces áureas del teatro breve de Bretón de los Herreros: el enredo,” Julián Bravo Vega explores the aspects in which the production of the nineteenth-century writer is similar to the *Siglo de oro* theater.
short story allows for the establishment of several narrative frames. This meta-narrative element is essential for the plot of the story and for the depiction of the album, not as an object, but as a humanized entity that is able to experience sensations and to narrate them. In the case of the theater play, the album maintains its status of object, being used as a stage prop that is constantly moved around by the characters in the majority of the scenes. In both cases, the album as an object conveys a story about its owner, her social networks, and her exchanges with men. The stories presented in these albums are not limited to the contributions added in the books, but also include those eliminated from them. Thus, the circumstance of the removal of contributions becomes in these texts a source of information that allows the reader to reconstruct that other narration, the one created through the destruction of albums and that reveals the true dynamics of this phenomenon as a space of a continuous battle for control between female album owners and male album contributors.

The plots of “Historia de un album” and El cuarto de hora share an element that is constantly identified as one of the main functions and purposes of the exchange established through the album: the use of the book for the courtship and, eventually, for the materialization of an amorous relationship. In the case of El cuarto de hora, this dynamic is actually established between the protagonist, doña Carolina, and two suitors: the poet Ortiz and the annoying Pedro Marchena. Carolina rejects the marriage proposal that Marchena puts in her album. This rejection leads to the emergence of a “doble enredo” (“double knot”), common in the plays of Bretón de los Herreros and based on the
interactions of two different couples. While Carolina requests from Ortiz an album contribution that would advance their sentimental link, Marchena feigns to seduce Carolina’s aunt, doña Liboria, in an attempt to take revenge for the humiliation of her refusal. It is Carolina’s rage because of Marchena’s actions and denial of his marriage proposal that incites her to mutilate her own album, as she is about to start a relationship with Ortiz. In the short story, the combination of different narrative levels enriches the plot structure. At the beginning of the story, the first narrator encounters on his desk an album in which he is supposed to contribute. This album then acquires human traits and appropriates the narration, creating a second narrative level. In its account, the album shares its experience as an object used for the materialization of this fashion, responsible for holding the collection gathered by its owner. Through the description of a series of album exchanges established by its owner, as well as their outcomes, the album conveys the physical and psychological suffering to which it has been subjected. The most important aspect of both de Ariza’s story and Bretón de los Herreros’ play is the depiction of the desire of both women and men to control the narrative contained in the album. While the women in these stories cannot write in their own albums, they discover a way to manipulate the content of their books, a violent gesture that allowed them to censor and edit the story about them narrated by the contributors.

De Ariza establishes very clearly in the title of his short story that the album will be the central topic of the narration. The title of Bretón de los Herreros’ play, however, focuses on the possibilities that the female characters will have of establishing
relationships with men. To have a “cuarto de hora” (“quarter of an hour”) means precisely to have an opportunity to enjoy something positive or beneficial. At the very end of the play, in the sort of instructive summary that Bretón used to include in his plays, Ortiz affirms: “No hay muger que no tenga su cuarto de hora” (“There is no woman who does not have her quarter of an hour”; 86). At that point, all the female characters in the play reflect on their own “cuarto de hora,” its implications, and its outcome. Thus, the album is a vehicle for Bretón de los Herreros to develop a plot to educate women about the things to consider when having a “cuarto de hora” with a man, including the risks of having a sentimental relationship.

De Ariza and Bretón de los Herreros offer at the beginning of each text a description of a male figure that is one of the album contributors portrayed in the story. The analysis of this character is essential in order to understand the approach to the album in each text. In El cuarto de hora, the poet Ortiz is the only character that viewers and readers encounter in the first scene, and he, as the stage directions specify, “(Aparece escribiendo)” (“(Appears, writing)”; 4). This image is clearly an evocation of the process of literary creation indispensable in the album practice and a reminder of the identity of “poet” that was preferable in album contributors. Ortiz is revising the latest sonnet he

7 Although the generalized expectation established in the literary texts and in the actual albums is that the contributors should be poets, musicians, or men linked in some way to the creation of art, there are exceptions that reveal that, in some cases, men in general, notwithstanding their artistic status, were asked for contributions. Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy declares in “Des Album” that “tout home soupçonné de savoir lire et écrire” was asked for an entry, which implies that there were no real standards when gathering a collection (“all men suspected to know how to read and write”; 149).
wrote, and in his soliloquy we can discover the rigidity of his edition process. Besides criticizing the quality of his sonnet, Ortiz also reveals the origin of his inspiration: he is in love and wants to create a poem to declare his feelings to that “divina muger” (“divine woman”; 4). Ortiz seems to be a male figure capable of fulfilling the responsibility of creating album contributions, since he has the poetic talent essential for this role. Later in the play, Bretón de los Herreros introduces Marchena, a male character who is incapable of creating the poetry required in album contributions. This circumstance allows for the depiction of a situation in which the typical structure of the album exchange is altered. While the man who is the object of a request should be the author of that entry, Bretón de los Herreros presents one of the possibilities for men who did not have the talent to create their own contributions: to ask poets to create the entries they would add in albums. This circumstance is the origin of one of the main “enredos” in the play.

De Ariza crafts the tale in such a way that the main contributor in the story essentially depicts himself, since the writer portrayed in the short story is one of the two narrators that controls the plot. This character starts his narration warning his readers that, if he was not “de mal humor,” he would tell his “bellas lectoras” a story (“in such a bad mood” “beautiful female readers”; 93). Then, he makes it clear that he is writing exclusively for women, when he adds that “con mis lectores nada quiero” (“I do not want anything to do with my male readers”; 93). This declaration is similar to the one that Larra makes at the beginning of his essay on social customs about the album, in which he explains that the majority of his readers will not comprehend what he is talking about,
and probably will not even understand the term “album.” Only his “elegantes lectoras” (“elegant female readers”), affirms Larra, are able to grasp the meaning of the notion of the “album.” Although the narrator in de Ariza’s story has not yet mentioned the album, his readers will understand this warning later in the story. Considering that “Historia de un album” has a moral that could be useful for men involved in the album practice, it is confusing as to why de Ariza’s narrator would want to exclude men from reading his account of this fashion. This declaration allows us to differentiate between the real and the fictional readership of the story. Of course, de Ariza knew that among the readers of El renacimiento there would be many men who would enjoy the story about the album notwithstanding the specification of the narrator about the selected public for which it was written. The readership of El renacimiento must have been mainly composed of men, since the literacy rates in Madrid for the decade of 1840 were 66.19 percent of men and 35.19 percent of women (Soubeyroux 252-54). The stated indifference of the fictional narrator toward his male readers reiterates the identification of the album as a shallow feminine practice. Ostensibly, only women who were themselves album owners and were dedicated to the practice of collecting contributions would be able to appreciate this account of the widespread trend.

Just like in Bretón de los Herrero’s play, there are references in de Ariza’s story to the reputation of the main male character for being a skilled literary figure. Even the description of the room where this male protagonist keeps the album evokes the process of courtship, frequently established through this practice, and the consent or rejection it
requires: “una sala amueblada con poco lujo; fría como un no; grande como el campo que abre un sí” (“a humbly furnished living room; cold as a no; big as the field that opens a yes”; 93). The books on his desk reveal that he is an avid reader with a diverse taste, which hopefully influences his ability to create an album entry. On his desk, he has books of history and morals and Spanish translations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Du contrat social* (1762) and of Eugène Sue’s *Martin, l’enfant trouvé ou les mémoires d’un valet de chambre* (1846-47). On top of these books and some newspapers, and next to the quills and the penknife, is the box containing the album featured in the short story. In Bretón de los Herrero’s play, the album appears for the first time in the third scene, while in de Ariza’s story it is mentioned in the third paragraph. Considering the length and narrative structure of each text, it is possible to say that the suspense in the presentation of the album and the effort of de Ariza and Bretón de los Herreros to give their readers (and viewers) some context for the interpretation of the album scenes is comparable in the short story and the play.

The first mention of the album in *El cuarto de hora* is determined by the intervention of an intermediary who will facilitate the process of the collection of contributions. Larra points out that it was a common practice for album owners to send the book to the contributors with a footman. In Bretón de los Herreros’ play, it is the servant, Petra, who gives the album to Marchena, the first male character who contributes to Carolina’s album. Marchena asks Petra if her lady, Carolina, read the note he left for her. Petra’s response leads to the first appearance of the album in the play. The servant
explains to Marchena that her lady did not leave him a note in response, but simply told her that she “autoriza á usted en forma/ para que escriba en su album/ lo que guste” (“authorizes you in good form/ to write in her album/ whatever you want”; 7). It is particularly revealing that Petra uses the verb “autorizar” or “authorizing” to transmit Carolina’s wishes and instructions to Marchena. If the album owner was authorizing the potential contributor to add something to her book, this means the initial request was not hers. Marchena must have asked Carolina in that note he sent to her if he could contribute to her album, demand to which she replied with an “authorization.”

In their essays about the development of the album phenomenon in France and Spain, Jouy and Larra describe the process of collection of contributions as one in which the female album owner usually approached the contributor to request an entry for her book. Jouy even points out how women would pester men with the recurrent question: “Ne ferez-vous rien pour mon Album, vous qui avez mis de si jolies choses sur l’Album de toutes ces dames? (“Would not you do something for my Album, you who have put such pretty things in all those women’s Albums?”; 149). Also, among the contributions I analyzed in archival nineteenth-century albums there are frequent references to the dynamic of the woman directly requesting the entry from the contributor. For example, in his contribution in Dolores Saravia’s album, Ramón M. Romay declares: “Me pedistes Lola mia/ En tu album algo pusiera,” making it clear that his contribution is the result of her request (“You asked me, my Lola/That I put something in your album”; Album de Dolores Saravia). Thus, what we see in Bretón de los Herrero’s play represents a
complete rupture with the typical dynamic of the album practice, in which men could be flattered by a request, but would never ask themselves for the opportunity to add a contribution. As we will see later, in the case of this album exchange there was no real interest of Carolina in having Marchena’s entry in her album, and it was him who was basically imposed his presence in her book.

In the scene of the album transaction between Petra and Marchena there is no description of the physical appearance of the album. Considering that the album was used as a stage prompt in the play and that the viewers would be able to see its color, size, and some other details of its material construction, it is understandable that it is not described in detail in the text. In the short story, on the contrary, there are constant references to the physical condition of the album. However, only one of these descriptions occurs before the album becomes narrator, and thus is not created by the album itself. The main narrator of de Ariza’s story first conveys the deterioration of the case, pointing out that it had been “tan llevado ya y tan traído, que dejaba ver el color del terciopelo que guardaba” (“brought back and forth so much, that it revealed the color of its velvet”; 93). Then, he describes how after opening the “mugriento estuche” he was able to contemplate “un album carmesí con cantos y cierre de oro, pero casi en tan mal estado
como la mutilada caja” (“filthy case” “a crimson album with gold pieces and lock, but almost as in bad shape as the damaged box”; 93).  

Although album cases were meant to protect albums, it is understandable that the condition of the book was not always significantly better than that of its box. It is important to remember that albums were handled by many contributors, who, besides adding their entries, would glance through the books to read the previous contributions. Frequently, albums were kept in the living room of the house as a decorative piece that guests could admire and even read if interested in learning more about the owners through contributions that praised them. Understandably, all this activity had an impact on the physical condition of albums. Among the albums I consulted, the one that belonged to Mariana Paniagua was kept in a case, and I can confirm that there was no significant difference between the state of the book and that of the box: both were equally damaged.  

In the case of de Ariza’s short story the bad condition of this album allows readers to imagine the intensity of its owner’s collection process. In its years of glory, the crimson album with gold lock must have been stunning. At the moment of the narration, the album is materially deteriorated, which hinders the contributor’s appreciation of its beauty.

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8 As Jouy and Larra had done before him, in this story de Ariza writes always the word “album” in italics. I imagine it was probably underlined in the original manuscript. It is clear that the three of them wanted to convey the newness of this term for their nineteenth-century readers.

9 I have to point out that, from all the albums I consulted in France and Spain, Mariana Paniagua’s was in the worse condition. Many of its pages had completely fallen out and were kept in separate plastic covers.
Notwithstanding the condition of the album, the narrator points out that he took it out of its box sharply and abruptly, not taking into consideration that his lack of care could worsen its physical state. It is this gesture that allows the album to manifest its human attributes. De Ariza’s short story becomes an almost fantastical account, when the narrator affirms that he heard the album moan in pain. Although it would have been illogical to believe that an object could produce a sound as a reaction to a physical contact, the narrator does not question what he has heard and even begins a conversation with the album, asking it: “¿Te quejas?” (“Are you complaining?”; 93). In the fictional space of de Ariza’s story, it is acceptable that an object expresses itself as a human being. The response and justification of the album, which declares: “Me quejo […] con razón,” somewhat worries the narrator, who devoutly crosses himself a couple of times (“I complain […] with good reason”; 93). However, he goes on to carry on a conversation with the album, inquiring it about the origin of its grievance. When the album proposes the narrator to tell him its story, he gladly accepts. Clearly, de Ariza’s narrator could not be overly troubled by the supernatural essence of this encounter, since it was necessary for the materialization of the second level of the narration to establish this exchange. The narrator’s response that he did want to listen to the album’s story brings about a shift in the point of view of the narration, and the imposition of the album as the new narrator that now controls de Ariza’s story. Through the album’s narration, we will learn about the sentimental life of its owner, the different lovers that have contributed to it, and how these contributions are linked to its current physical condition.
Although the first contributor presented in the play is Ortiz, the character who first contributes to the album is Marchena. The character of Marchena represents the stereotype of the “figurón,” very common in Bretón de los Herreros’ comedies (“big male figure”). The “figurón” is a gentleman who is ready to get married, but who is actually too grotesque, extravagant, or caricatural to be able to actually do it (Bravo Vega 331). The depiction of the “figurón” in Bretón de los Herreros comedies has a moral and didactic purpose, as it will always imply the punishment of this pretentious figure. And this is precisely what happens in El cuarto de hora. The limitations of Marchena are evident since the beginning of the play, when, once having obtained Carolina’s album, he acknowledges that he will not be able to create an entry for it. Petra affirms that the only requirement that her lady imposed for this new contribution is that it had to be written in verse. This is actually not a caprice, but a “mandato” of Carolina (“mandate”; 9). As I could see in the archival albums that I consulted, the vast majority of the written contributions were in verse, genre that normally requires a highest level of literary skill. Unfortunately, the rules of prosody are a mystery for Marchena, and thus he will have to find someone who can create the poetic contribution that he will add in Carolina’s album. This implies that Marchena’s entry will go against the rules of the practice, since it would be written by a third party who was not the contributor. Jouy and Larra had stressed the issue of originality that was fundamental in the album practice, pointing out the pressure put on contributors for the creation of unique entries specifically dedicated to album owners. Marchena’s gesture of adding in Carolina’s book a contribution created by
someone else defies this requirement of the album practice and implies a deceitful representation of himself as a talented album contributor.

Petra is aware that the requirement about the genre of the contribution means an obstacle for Marchena. Thus, she suggests the “figurón” to request Ortiz, the poet whose creative process we witnessed at the beginning of the play, to compose the verses that he will add in her lady’s album. Bretón de los Herreros elevates the poet as a figure of remarkable talent, who, thanks to his artistic abilities, can offer others certain types of services. When he approaches Ortiz to ask him to create the verses for Carolina’s album, Marchena tells him a false story about the circumstances that led to this contribution, a version of the facts that is convenient for his male position in this album exchange.

Marchena affirms convincingly that, having already declared his love for her in person, Carolina’s request is a proof of her acceptance of it and of her desire to boast about having him as suitor: “quiere hacer alarde/ sin duda de su trofeo” (“she wants to boast/ without a doubt about her trophy”; 11). The notion of “trophy” was frequently used to refer to album contributions, as Larra proved when he said that the album was for the female owner a “templo colgado de todos sus trofeos” (“temple in which all her trophies were displayed”; 332). Thus, Marchena creates a fiction of his participation in this album, a false story that allows him to present himself as a coveted contributor and as Carolina’s soon-to-be husband.

In an attempt to avoid having to fulfill Marchena’s request, Ortiz tries to convince him that Carolina’s requirement regarding the genre of the contribution must not be that
important if it is true that she has already accepted his marriage proposal. But that is precisely the problem: Carolina has not given Marchena her word and has not promised him that she will marry him. Contradicting the fiction he had previously constructed about his link with Carolina, now Marchena has to acknowledge that: “Lo que es palabra formal,/ todavía no la dio” (“What you would say formal word, she has not given it to me yet”; 13). Notwithstanding his initial hesitancy, Ortiz agrees to fulfill Marchena’s demand. However, as the viewers and readers of Bretón de los Herreros’ play will learn later, Ortiz does not make an outstanding poetic composition for Marchena’s contribution in Carolina’s album. In fact, he sabotages Marchena’s performance as contributor, creating for him a mediocre entry that did not demonstrate any type of poetic talent. The reason for this is Ortiz’s own interest in Carolina: she is the object of the sonnet he is composing at the beginning of the play. These intertwined sentimental interests will be the basis for the “enredo” in Bretón de los Herreros’ play, which will be materialized in the album.

Marchena creates a fiction of his participation in Carolina’s album and lies to the poet (and even to himself) affirming that she requested his contribution. Meanwhile, in de Ariza’s short story there is a meta-fictional account controlled by the album itself, which has a very specific purpose, besides offering a different perspective about the album practice. The structure of the text changes and the album begins its meta-narration with a flashback, using the past preterit to transport its interlocutor to the moment when its life as an object holding its owner’s collection begun. Larra’s essay on the album, in which
he describes this fashion as being at its peak, is from 1835, and de Ariza’s story is from 1847. Because of the description of the excessive damage that this album had suffered, I imagined that de Ariza’s fictional album would have been from the second half of the decade of the 1830s, which means that it would have been circulating for about ten years. However, the album makes clear at the very beginning of its narration that it has had only three years of activity: “Era yo en el año de gracia de 1844 un album, como todos los de mi especie, algunas páginas más o menos” (“I was, in the year of our grace of 1844 an album, just like any other of my kind, some pages more or less”; 93). Back then, this album was not in the battered condition of its later narration, but in a better state that made it look similar to other albums. The use of the notion of “kind” establishes the difference between the narrator-album and its interlocutor, the narrator-man. Thus, the object acknowledges its difference regarding the humanity of the narrator, while still claiming the role of narrator for itself and pointing out that its appearance, at the moment when its story began, was similar to that of other albums.

If this album deteriorated so much in only three years, it is possible to imagine that the level of social activity of its owner was more than the book could endure. The album explicitly refers to the superiority of its owner over other women involved in this practice, declaring that she was “la más seductora joven que ha tenido un album jamás” (“the most seductive young lady that has ever had an album”; 93) It is then understandable that the proprietor of the narrator-album was successful in her participation in this fashion, since she had the physical attributes that would allow her to
establish the interactions that would lead to album requests. Aware of her beauty, this album owner uses her agency to advance her collection. As the condition of her album reveals, she has been successful in the materialization of this project.

The album structures its narration focusing on three main contributors who emblematize the use that its owner has made of it, and the outcomes of her interactions with men. The first contributor that the album mentions is, unsurprisingly, a poet, a twenty-two year old “admirador de Victor Hugo y romántico como Antony” (“admirer of Victor Hugo, and romantic like Antony”; 93). Being the album a phenomenon frequently considered “romantic,” album contributors must have certainly known literary figures representative of romanticism, such as Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, the author of the 1831 play, Antony.10 The fact that both of literary influences used to give credibility to the Spanish album contributor are French reflects the positioning of this practice as a model in the Spanish development of this phenomenon, as Larra points out in his essay on social customs.

In de Ariza’s tale, the contributor then adds an entry of one-hundred fifty hendecasyllabic verses to the very first page of the album praising the album owner’s beauty. The contributor’s gesture of artistic creation has a physical effect on the personified album, which does not really understand the sensations that it is feeling:

10 One of Leonardo Romero Tobar’s articles about the album is precisely entitled “Los álbumes de las románticas.” Romero Tobar discusses in this article the identification of the album practice as “romantic,” considering the type of poetry normally included in albums and the typical characterization of owners and contributors.
“Como no estaba acostumbrado a los arrebatos del genio, juro que temí por mi vida al sentir rechinar la pluma sobre mis hojas satínas” (“Since I was not used to the outbursts of genius, I swear that I feared for my life as I felt the quill grinding on my satin-finished pages”; 94). The intensity that the album feels in the contact of the quill against its pages is a physical manifestation of the contributor’s passion for the album owner and even of the effort he is putting into his artistic creation. This first acknowledgment of sensations makes the album realize that it is not a simple object like others, and that it has something akin to humanity, which allows it to experience, and, thus, to view and narrate the album phenomenon from a very different perspective. This is de Ariza’s purpose: to make of the album in his short story a character responsible for the meta-literary depiction of this practice.

The sensations that the album experiences after this first contribution are not limited to the writing of the contributor, but also include the reaction of the owner when she obtains her book once again. The album affirms that its lady must have been “satisfecha del desempeño de mi misión,” because when she gets it back after it receives its first contribution, she “me estrechó contra su pecho y cubrió de besos mis hojas” (“satisfied with the performance of my mission” “held me and covered my sheets with kisses”; 94). The excitement the album owner shows after recovering her album reveals that the book emblematizes much more for her than simply her insertion in a fashion considered frivolous by many. Instead, the album signifies its owner’s presence in the social space and conveys her desires to have control over a collection that was gathered
by her and created for her. The owner’s gesture essentially hugging the album could be interpreted as a narcissistic expression, as it conveys how she feels about obtaining a flattering contribution that is a mimetic representation of herself. However, her reaction has more to do with how she feels about the author of this contribution in particular. She has clearly an emotional link with this contributor, and thus her excitement results from the satisfaction of seeing the interest of this suitor materialized in her album.

The main narrator of de Ariza’s story listens patiently to the album’s metanarration about its experiences receiving contributions dedicated to its owner. In Bretón’s play, Marchena’s fiction about the origin of his participation in Carolina’s album will not have such a passive audience. In an encounter with Carolina and her aunt, doña Liboria, right after he added the contribution in the young lady’s album, Marchena affirms that Carolina wanted him to confess his passion for her in the book. Carolina refutes this lie by stating that: “El deseo era de usted:/ solo ha habido de mi parte/ condescendencia…” (“The wish was yours:/ from my part there has only been/ condescension…”; 18).

Carolina ridicules Marchena and his construction of himself as an obliging suitor and ideal album contributor. By revealing that she did not ask for his contribution and that she only agreed to his proposal of creating it, Carolina attacks Marchena’s ego in front of her aunt, and makes it clear that she has never been really interested in him. The conflict between the characters in this scene is represented through the constant movement of the album, necessary for the interaction between doña Liboria, Marchena, and Carolina. This movement is conveyed through stage directions, such as: “(Presentando el album),”
“(Tomando el album),” and “(Registra el album),” which remind the readers of the structure of the play and of the function of the album as a stage prompt (“Presenting the album,” “Taking the album,” “Registers the album”).

The issue of the importance of authorship in album contributions is evoked in this scene through the presentation of the contribution that Marchena adds in Carolina’s album, which was created by Ortiz. This composition is a tacky eleven-verse stanza, which includes ridiculous and not particularly flattering phrases that could hardly be conceived as courting. Doña Liboria reads the entry out loud for her niece: “‘A la Hermosa Carolina,/ á la bella de las bellas,/ cuyos ojos son centellas,/ cuya boca es purpurina,/ cuyo talle es jaletina,/ y cuya frente serena/ abochorna á la azucena,/ tino, fiel, firme y fogoso/ ofrece mano de esposo/ Pedro Nolasco Marchena’” (“‘To the beautiful Carolina,/ to the beauty of beauties,/ whose eyes are lightning,/ whose mouth is glittery,/ whose waist is jelly,/ and whose serene forehead/ puts lilies to shame,/ correct, faithful, firm, and passionate/ offers his hand as husband/ Pedro Nolasco Marchena’”; 19). The tasteless metaphors used by Ortiz to praise Carolina in Marchena’s contribution reveal the poet’s sabotage, which is meant to hinder the establishment of a love relationship between them. Right before his signature, Marchena adds a detail that clarifies the confusion that existed regarding the request of the contribution and his marriage proposal. By stating that he is proposing “his hand as husband,” Marchena accepts that he is basically not asking Carolina to marry him, but offering himself to marry her. His
complete signature at the end of the contribution certifies this proposal, rather ironically, as it is preceded by a stanza that is not of Marchena’s authorship.

After exalting the quality of Marchena’s entry in her niece’s album, doña Liboria leaves the lovers alone so they can freely talk about what she believes to be a mutual love. Carolina is then able to give Marchena the expected response to his pseudo marriage proposal: “Pues no, y veinte veces no” (“Well no, and twenty times no”; 21). There is in *El cuarto de hora* a circumstance that makes the album exchange completely different from the one depicted in “Historia de un *album*.” In de Ariza’s short story, it seems that the female protagonist, responding to Larra’s observations about the practice, sends her album with a footman that takes it to the contributors and then back to her. Thus, she has no opportunity to declare to her contributors in person how she feels about them and about their contribution, and has to express her feelings to the album itself. Carolina, on the contrary, has the opportunity to tell Marchena face to face how she feels about him, and reject his marriage offer.

Notwithstanding the conviction and assertiveness in Carolina’s response to Marchena, it is not that easy for her to completely dissolve the link that he has established between them through his contribution. Completely perturbed by her answer, Marchena tells Carolina that her refusal is implausible, that he does not believe her, and that it is too late to make that decision. For Marchena, Carolina has no right to deny her engagement to him: “Como usted me permitió/ pedir su mano querida…” (“Since you allowed me/ to ask for your hand, dear”; 21). Authorizing him to write in her album is for Marchena an
unquestionable proof of Carolina’s agreement to marry him, and thus presumably even of her love for him. Marchena’s approach to the album in the microcosm of Bretón de los Herreros’ play implies the conceptualization of this practice as one in which contributions had always a romantic connotation, upon which both participants in the exchange agreed. Even more, this album exchange proposes the establishment of the book as a platform of marriage proposals. Was this an actual use of the album in nineteenth-century France and Spain? Or is Bretón de los Herreros depicting this type of exchange to satirize the practice? The use of the album to propose marriage is not mentioned by Jouy or Larra in their essays on this phenomenon, and is not evident in the contributions in the archival albums that I consulted. Considering the impossibility to verify the historical accuracy of this representation of the album exchange, we can only interpret its implication in the fictional space of the play.

The album exchange between Marchena and Carolina fails because of the divergence in the intentions of each one of them in this interaction. In “Historia de un album” there are also several failed album contributions. After that first exchange narrated by the album in detail, which had caused its owner great satisfaction, the album keeps circulating through the studios of poets and painters who agree to honor its owner by contributing. A specific event causes a rupture in this practice of continual collection. While de Ariza’s text could easily have been a linear story about a love relationship initiated with courting through the album, there is an important twist that alters the plot and hinders the possibility of creating a fairytale ending. The album narrates that one
morning, abruptly and unexpectedly, its owner took it and, contrary to its expectations of being caressed by her once again, she started mutilating it: “cuando de repente me abre, coge con sus dedos rosados la mi primera hoja, la tantea, y con furia inaudita de un solo empuje me la arranca” (“when suddenly she opens me, takes the first page with her pink fingers, grasps it, and with an outrageous rage, tears it out at once”; 94). The album owner tears out the very first page of her album, that one on which the poet had added the one-hundred fifty hendecasyllabic verses. To the poor album, it is unconceivable how a material expression of admiration that had previously brought her so much joy suddenly transforms into the source of her anger. What were the reasons for this violent attack of the lady against her own album? Why did she want to destroy the specific page on which the poet added that emblematic entry, which the album had described in such detail? An examination of the motivations behind the album owner’s actions can help us understand the circumstances that might have precipitated the defacing of historical albums that had belonged to actual women. Perhaps the motives of this fictional album owner for tearing out a page in her album were similar to the reasons behind the missing pages of many of the albums I consulted in my archival research.

It is important to analyze the owner’s gesture of mutilating her own album in de Ariza’s story, taking into account her agency in the process of collecting contributions. Acquiring an album was a voluntary decision that resulted from the needs and desires of a woman (or man) to gain presence in the public sphere and participate in a social custom wide spread in the nineteenth-century French and Spanish context. The gesture of
gathering contributions also offered female owners the possibility to establish communication with men. After they requested contributions and entrusted the albums to contributors, album owners effectively gave up control over its content. Customarily, male contributors appropriated a woman’s book, adding entries that represented the owner and conveyed a specific story about her. Functioning as a sort of “exquisite corpse,” the ensemble of the contributions in an album narrated its owner, through the praises that exalted her physical and moral attributes.\textsuperscript{11} Although it may seem that a woman’s agency over her album ended once she gave it to her contributors, de Ariza proves in “Historia de un album” that this was not the case. Album owners ultimately had some control over the representations created of them in their albums. All it took was their willingness to mutilate the luxurious, expensive, leather-bound book, which certainly had been somewhat expensive.

\textsuperscript{11} Although invented by the Surrealists around 1925, the notion of “exquisite corpse” could be used to understand the type of production that takes place in the album dynamic. The technique of the “cadaver exquis” consisted of creating a collective collage of words and images through a parlor game that was played by several people, “each of whom would write a phrase on a sheet of paper, fold the paper to conceal a part of it, and pass it on to the next player for his contribution” (“About Exquisite Corpse”). André Breton, Yves Tanguy, Marchel Duchamp, Jacques Prévert, and Benjamin Péret were some of the main participants of the “exquisite corpse” game in the gatherings at the 54 rue du Château in Paris. There are several aspects in which the dynamic of the “exquisite corpse” is different from that of the album. For example, in the album there is no folding of the sheet, and contributors could read the entries already added in the same page where they were adding theirs or in previous pages. Also, the album was not passed from one contributor to the next, but there was always the intervention of the owner who would ask directly to each contributor for his entry. However, I think the image of the “exquisite corpse” can be related to the album interaction in the sense of the collective collaboration that was required in both practices. Also, the image of the body is pertinent to understand the album dynamic, as the book was frequently seen as a material representation of its female owner’s relationships with men and, therefore, of her level of physical and moral purity.
Since the narration focuses on the point of view of the album, with its human attributes, the readers, as well as the album’s interlocutor, will not obtain an immediate explanation for the album owner’s actions. The album will manipulate the information readers receive, focusing on its own physical experience as a result of its mutilation. “Considera cuánto dolor sentiría al verme desmembrar,” declares the album, attempting to obtain its interlocutor’s sympathy and compassion (“Consider how much pain I felt as I saw myself being dismembered”; 94). Once again, the album presents itself as an entity that experiences human sensations. Contrary to an earlier time, when it had experienced its owner’s care and appreciation, now the album is a victim of the suffering that can result from having corporeal sensations. This description may be humorous for the readers of de Ariza’s story, but certainly not for the album itself. The album tries to identify an explanation for its owner’s actions, a justification for her violence, but it is incapable of finding a “pecado de heregía” (“sin of heresy”) that could excuse the way in which she manifests her anger.

The second contributor that we get to know through the album’s narration is related in some way to the owner’s need to destroy the page with the first contribution. Still with blood coming out of its wounds (“Brotando sangre de mis heridas”; 93), the album explains that right after the mutilation performed by its owner, it is sent to the studio of a young and handsome painter, who adds a beautiful pencil drawing on its page twenty-nine. The album’s owner welcomes it back with expressions of satisfaction that evoke those she had when she first received the poet’s contribution. In a gesture that
annuls the harshness of just a couple of hours before, the album’s owner caresses it tenderly, expressing her contentment for having it back with the longed-for contribution. Attempting to ensure its interlocutor’s interest in the story, the album affirms that this reaction of its lady made it understand the cause of her previous behavior, but that it will reveal it later in its account. Of course, the clever readers of de Ariza’s story have established already the link that the album promises to explain to the main narrator later: the lady had to eliminate the first contribution from her album because it revealed information that she did not want the second contributor to see. Her reactions when she obtained each one of the contributions, and her rage at the moment when she mutilated her album, reveal that her process of gathering her collection was deeply linked to her emotional life.

One of the main uses of the album practice was to allow communication between men and women that could lead to courtship and to the establishment of a romantic relationship. In the case of album contributions, a sincere poem that simply meant to exalt the physical or moral attributes of the album owner could end up being the flame that originated a love relationship. Perhaps many of the poems I read in surviving nineteenth-century albums functioned precisely as the initial manifestation of links that eventually transformed into courtship. In this vein, fictional accounts might shed light upon possible interpretations of facts we can glean from historical albums, facts such as missing pages. We could imagine that many of the albums with cut or torn pages were damaged precisely because of conflicts that could result if their owners had several contributions
that evidenced the evolution of their sentimental life. Many of those pages left a trace in the binding of the album that reveals the crime of the mutilation and that allows us to draw speculations about the stories behind these contributions that were created more than a century ago.

As we saw in *El cuarto de hora*, the type of communication established between men and women through the album could be based on a relationship proposal that was not supported by both sides of the exchange. Carolina directly rejects the marriage offer that Marchena puts in her album, thus invalidating the original purpose of that contribution. Notwithstanding Carolina’s oral refusal of Marchena’s love, the contribution of the “figurón” remains in her album, as a material evidence of his failed attempt to court her. But like the album owner in de Ariza’s story, Carolina has more than one suitor who puts his contribution in her album, circumstance that leads to her need to mutilate it. The poet, Ortiz, is interested in the strong and highly sought-after Carolina, and this justifies his sabotage of Marchena in the verses he creates for his supposed contribution to her album. In addition to being a poet, Ortiz can also draw, as he proves to Carolina in a lesson he gives to her. This exchange leads to Carolina’s praise of Ortiz’s multiple talents, which will allow him to build the confidence necessary to create something for her. Ortiz was fairly insecure about the quality of his production, as proves his self-criticism in the first scene of the play, when he is editing his sonnet. Evidently, he needs Carolina’s compliments in order to be able to create an entry worthy of her album.
Carolina’s invitation to Ortiz to write in her album does not have a submissive tone and is actually not a request, so much as an order: “le ordeno/ que me dibuje algo bueno/ en el album que está allí” (“I order you/ to draw something good for me/ in the album that is over there”; 36). It is important to point out that Carolina requires specifically a drawing, a genre of contribution that was not the most common and that certainly made it harder to convey a love declaration. Flattered by the opportunity, Ortiz cannot imagine that Carolina is exalting his art precisely to make sure that he creates an entry of exceptional quality for her book. Carolina acknowledges that, although talented, Ortiz is somewhat dull and requires an extra impulse to trust his artistic creation. The structure of the play allows Carolina to say something during her conversation with Ortiz that only the spectators at the representation hear, a phrase that is precisely separated from the regular dialogue by a parenthesis: “(El pobre es corto de genio,/ y hay que animarle un poquito)” (“(Poor guy, he is a simpleton,/ and it is necessary to somewhat encourage him)”; 36). This observation about Ortiz contradicts the image about him that the readers and spectators have obtained in the previous scenes of the play, in which he appears as the talented artist who was in charge of creating poetry for other contributors. Thus, Carolina is flexible regarding the issue of the artistic status of the contributor, stressed by Jouy and Larra and present in many of the literary texts that portray the album phenomenon. Evidently, she wanted to have Ortiz entry in her album, enough to overlook the fact that he was not the most talented contributor that she could have invited to participate in her book.
The main motivation for Carolina to have Ortiz’s entry in her book has to do with Marchena and his courting efforts, which did not stop after her rejection of his marriage proposal. Carolina can use Ortiz’s contribution to show Marchena that she has a new suitor and make him stop trying to convince her to marry him. Marchena suspects that an emotional connection is starting to develop between Carolina and Ortiz and is so hurt that, in revenge, he tries to seduce doña Liboria. This gesture leads to the establishment of another instance of the “enredo” in Bretón de los Herreros’ play. Carolina’s aunt thinks Marchena is sincere and that the love he declares to have for her is real. In a separate love triangle, Petra, the servant, reveals her love for Ortiz and affirms to be convinced that he corresponds to her. The different levels of fiction and reality in these potential amorous relationships create the constant conflict that justifies humorous tone of the play.

Marchena does not limit his retaliation for Carolina’s rejection to his attempt of seduction of her aunt. In a bogus declaration that contradicts his previous attitude towards Carolina, Marchena even denies the sincerity of the contribution that he added in her album, classifying it as a “capricho fugaz” (“fleeting impulse”; 46). Then, he has the audaciousness to add that the poem was not created for her, and that he had already repeated it in forty albums: “En cuarenta álbumes—/ ¡qué revesado plural!—/ la he puesto ya, por mi cuenta/ […] Con solo variar/ el nombre de la agraciada/ sirve para todas” (“In forty albums/ what a complicated plural!/ I have put it, myself/ […] Only by changing the name of the lucky woman, it works for them all”; 46). Of course, Marchena was aware
that the repetition of the same contribution in several albums was common among contributors, and that Carolina would be extremely hurt to learn that his contribution was not original for her album. In his essay about the album, Jouy had precisely acknowledged the tendency of contributors to repeat the same contributions in all albums, situation that he attributed to the pressure put onto men for the creation of original contributions. “Il inscrit mot pour mot le même compliment sur chaque Album,” affirms Jouy, “quels que soient l’âge et la figure de la propriétaire” (“He puts, word by word, the same compliment in each Album, disregarding of the age and the appearance of the owner”; “Des Album” 150). With this false revelation, Marchena pretends to annul his marriage offer, proving that it was not created for Carolina or based on feelings that he had for her. Having lost his honor, due to Carolina’s rejection, Marchena denies the love declaration, in an effort to reinstate the gender power dynamics of courtship in the album practice.\(^\text{12}\)

Marchena’s lie about the origin of his contribution responds to his need to regain the respect he had lost in his affair of the marriage proposal to Carolina. However, now it will be Carolina herself who will need to do something to recuperate the honor taken by Marchena in his denial of his love declaration. In de Ariza’s story, we witnessed a way to restitute the honor that the album owner had lost through an album contribution that was not convenient for her. By the mutilation of her album, the female protagonist of the short story...

\(^\text{12}\) Bravo Vega affirms precisely that the main topics of the “comedia breve bretoniana” are determined by a dominant structure, articulated around the alternate axis of love-honor (“brief bretoniana comedy”; 336).
story eliminates the evidence of a previous relationship that would have been an obstacle in the establishment of a new relationship with the second contributor. Similarly, Carolina’s reaction to Marchena’s denial of his contribution will have a material effect on the album. When Ortiz returns the album to Carolina, after he was supposed to add his contribution, she takes it with anger and anxiously starts looking for a specific page that she claims is extra. Of course, she was searching for Marchena’s contribution, a page emblematic of Carolina’s hatred for him.

Once Carolina finds the page with Marchena’s contribution she orders: “Unas tigera” (“A pair of scissors”; 51) to Ortiz, who immediately gives her a pair. Worried about the use that Carolina is going to make of that pair of scissors, Ortiz inquires her if she is going to cut the page of the loathed contribution. Then, he warns Carolina about the effects that her impulsive reaction could have: “Se echará a perder el álbum” (“The album will be ruined”; 51). As I pointed out in my analysis of historical nineteenth-century albums, these luxurious, leather-bound books must have been rather expensive. In his essay on this practice, Larra points out that a superior album had to include the richest materials and that the initials of its owner should be engraved on its cover, conditions that implied a higher price. Clearly, some of the albums could be considered themselves as art creations that were going to hold the collection of poetry, drawings, and music scores created by the contributors. It is thus understandable that Ortiz is perturbed by Carolina’s decision to mutilate her album. For her, however, the material value of the book is not as important as the symbolism of the contribution. Carolina’s response is
essential for my approach to the album fashion and its role in the construction of social identities: “El album es lo de menos,/ pero esta injuria no basta” (“The albums is the least important,/ but this insult is too much”; 52). Considering the ethical implications of keeping Marchena’s entry in the book, Carolina decides to sacrifice it physical aspect, since, unlike the false poem, this would not have an impact on the constitution of her public image.

While in de Ariza’s short story the mutilation of the album occurs in private, only between the owner and the album itself, in Bretón de los Herreros’ play Carolina has a witness of her action. After questioning Carolina about the destructive nature of the action she is about to complete, Ortiz observes her as she, according to the stage directions: “(Hace pedazos la hoja)” (“(Breaks the sheet into pieces)”; 52). Ortiz’s intervention in the scene goes from questioning Carolina about her action, to helping her materialize it. When he realizes that there is still an edge of the page that Carolina destroyed hanging from the album, Ortiz asks her if he should finish the work she started, pulling out that part of the page. But Carolina is clever enough to find an immediate solution to the issue of the material condition of her album. “No,” she warns the poet, “[s]e planta/ otra encima” (“No. We put/ another one on top”; 52). Several of the albums I consulted in my research in France and Spain had pages that, because of their different texture and color, clearly did not belong to the original construction of the book. Some of these pages seem to have been added in what could have been a second binding of the book, when they did not have access to the type of page included originally in the book.
However, many album owners did not add a whole new page, but a piece of paper or a card that covered only part of the original page. Perhaps those new and virginal pieces of paper are covering, still today, contributions that the album owners wanted to hide because of what they represented in terms of their public image. The album which belonged to Dolores Saravia, for example, has pages that were cut and other pages that must have been added after the original binding of the book. Many of these pages have different designs embossed in them, which makes them stand out from the pages used for the original construction of the album.

In Bretón de los Herreros’ play there is only one instance of mutilation and reconstruction of the album. However, in de Ariza’s short story there is a repetition of this instance, which responds to the cyclical structure of the account that the album is sharing with its human interlocutor. The narration of the album’s encounter with the third contributor offers a new twist to de Ariza’s depiction of this tendency. Interestingly, this contributor is not identified by the album as a writer, painter, or artist in general, but as a “mayorazgo” (“eldest son”). The notion of “mayorazgo” in the case of an individual refers to the first-born son of a man who owns property that is inherited among the members of the family, according to certain conditions established when it was acquired or by the law (“Mayorazgo”). This contributor adds “dos líneas sin ortografía” in the album, and then starts looking through the book and seeing the previous contributions (“two lines with no orthography”; 94). Inevitably, he finds the pencil drawing that the painter had added, and, in an extremely invasive and violent gesture, “lo cortó con un
cortaplayas á raíz de la encuadernación y se lo guardó en su cartera” (“he cut it with a penknife to the root of the binding and stowed it in his wallet”; 94). The album owner had proven previously her authority over her book, having torn out a page with a contribution that was no longer convenient for her to keep. Now, the third contributor reiterates the male control over the book. Besides determining the story of the female owner through their own entries, according to de Ariza’s story, some contributors might have felt the desire to censor the other entries in the album. The physical damage done to the album by this contributor signifies a transgression that corrupts the original intention for a request for an entry. Instead of creating a valuable contribution that compliments the moral and physical attributes of the album owner, this contributor writes a mediocre entry of only two lines, and then proceeds to mutilate a more cherished page of the album. De Ariza then presents a contributor who, like a jealous suitor, transforms the role of the male figure in the album exchange from one of creation into one of destruction. Ortiz’s participation in Carolina’s mutilation of her album is not comparable to what this contributor did, since in that case he was following instructions and contributing to a project carried out by the female owner of the book.

The next encounter of the lady with her album will be, inevitably, determined by another physical trauma for this object capable of human sensations. As the previous interactions with her album had proved, this female owner has the tendency to manifest on her album the emotions that her suitors awaken in her. Even though the first scene in which she expresses her excitement physically to the album reveals that there is a certain
level of vanity and self-love in her reactions, the caresses, hugs, and especially the violence that her album receives are actually addressed to the contributors. But there is a particular circumstance in the album exchange depicted in de Ariza’s story that prevents this album owner from expressing all these emotions to her contributors in person: she does not give the album to the contributors herself, but instead has it delivered. Because she did not give the album in person to her contributors, when the lady in de Ariza’s story realizes what the third contributor did to her book, she can only take revenge on the object itself. It seems that those two mediocre lines that the last contributor put in her album reveal the crime he commits in her book. For after reading them, she looks desperately for the pencil drawing that her previous contributor added in her book. The album vividly narrates its owner’s reaction when she does not find that contribution: “su aliento se hizo ronco como el del tigre, inflamáronse sus megillas, despidieron llamas sus ojos, y apoderándose de la hoja que contenía los dos renglones, la despedazó con sus uñas, la mordió con sus agudos dientes, y arrojándome sobre el pavimento estampó su pequeño pie sobre mi cubierta carmesím” (“her breath became hoarse like the tiger’s, her cheeks swelled, flames came out of her eyes, and taking the sheet that contained the two lines, she tore it to pieces with her nails, she bit it with her sharp teeth, and throwing me against the asphalt, she smashed her little foot on my crimson cover”; 94).

The attention that the album had paid previously to faithfully portraying the suffering it has experienced because of its treatment by its owner and contributors is now focused on the violent reaction of its owner. In El cuarto de hora we just get a brief
reference to Carolina’s rage in the scene of her destruction of the page of Marchena’s contribution. The narrator-album in de Ariza’s story, on the contrary, offers a detailed depiction of the fury of its owner and the fear she produces it as she transforms into the sort of beast that would unleash all its rage against it. The beautiful and seductive young lady that the album praises at the beginning of its narration now acquires animalistic characteristics that reveal how important the painter’s contribution was for her. Once again, the physical reaction of the owner against the blameless album symbolizes the emotions she feels for the contributor, who has the nerve to mutilate her album and proudly announce it to her in his contribution. Notwithstanding the fact that the “feminine” essence of the lady is completely altered in this scene, the album makes sure to point out that it was her “little foot” that trampled it. The visual image of this delicate foot on the elegant crimson cover of the album somewhat alleviates the discomfort of the reader when picturing this image. The album narrates this scene in an extremely dramatic tone, but for the readers of de Ariza’s story it might only have humorous impact, considering the improbability of the existence of an album capable of physical sensations and of being able to narrate its story orally.

The album has no need to reiterate the “dolores de una amputación” that it describes in the scene of the mutilation that the contributor commits against it (“pain of an amputation”). Going beyond its material suffering, at this point the album only refers the emotional humiliation caused by the actions of its owner. But the album acknowledges that the destiny of albums, this group that he identifies as a “kind,” is,
precisely, to endure difficulties: “el album lo mismo que el hombre ha nacido para
padecer” (“just like man the album has been born to suffer”; 94). Rather than pointing out
a physical similarity between men and albums, this album establishes a moral comparison
that is a parody of the Catholic idea that life is suffering. The book’s suffering is then
characterized as a means of purification, just as it would be for humans. De Ariza is not
the first one to propose a metaphorical link between men and albums. Jouy had also
acknowledged the parallels between these two “kinds,” in this case relating the evolution
of members of both groups: “Ces pauvres livres, sortis tout blancs de la main du relieur,
et d’autant plus barbouillés, qu’ils circulent dans le monde, ressemblent fort aux enfans
des hommes, qui perdent leur candeur à mesure que l’esprit leur vient” (“These poor
books, which come out completely white from the hands of the bookbinder, and become
increasingly sullied as they circulate around the world, resemble children, who lose their
innocence as they gain knowledge”; 146). Although there is no way to know if de Ariza
had read Jouy, it is possible affirm the French author had in some way initiated the idea
of the album’s personification that de Ariza fully and fictionally develops thirty-six years
later. Of course, in the case of the Spanish writer the humanity of the album does not only
result from its candor and its loss of whiteness, but also from its ability to feel, talk, and
create a narration based on its own existence.

The primary theme that de Ariza’s short story and Bretón de los Herrero’s play
share is the representation of the mutilation of albums performed by owners and, in
specific cases, even by contributors. There is, however, an even more important aspect of
the album phenomenon that these literary texts allow us to explore. The approach to the album as a space of a constant battle for control between men and women is present in both texts. Through their creation of contributions, men were able to dominate the narration about album owners exposed in the books. In “Historia de un album” and El cuarto de hora we have two female album owners who do not accept passively the constructions of them made by the contributors in their books and defy this established male power. The gesture of eliminating contributions from their albums is in both cases a mechanism of defense through which the owners annul the writing of the male contributors and their privilege to narrate their stories. In his exploration of the album phenomenon, Larra establishes the parallelism between a woman and her album, emphasizing on the link between the material condition of the book and the moral of its owner. Larra views the whiteness of the album pages in its original state as a representation of the sexual purity of its owner. An album with the majority of its pages still white signified an almost virginal woman whose few relationships with men had not stained it significantly. In this comparison, each contribution would represent a suitor of the album owner or a man with whom she had established some type of sentimental relationship. Larra warns women that “cada una de ellas no tiene más que un album que dar a llenar,” a reminder of the album’s role as a material signifier of their virtues (“each one of them has only one album to fill up”; 332). Women should then be very careful with the content of their albums and try to control the way in which the contributions from their acquaintances and potential suitors depicted them.
The young woman in de Ariza’s story and Carolina reverse the effect of the portrayal that male contributors make of them by eliminating specific contributions from their albums. The first entry that the lady in the short story pulls out from her album is the material evidence of a previous relationship. In order to maintain her honor, she had to eliminate this contribution before giving her album to her next suitor, since its content probably revealed the nature of that link. The destruction of the second entry is more of a gesture of revenge against the contributor who had the audacity to damage himself her album, pulling out an entry that apparently made him jealous. For Carolina, the mutilation of the album is necessary because of Marchena’s invalidation of his contribution and mockery of her by claiming that it was not original, as well as by courting her aunt. In addition to this, Marchena’s contribution stating that he offered his hand as husband could have damaged Carolina’s social image, transforming her into a woman who had seemingly been engaged. This material and moral stain could have been an obstacle for Carolina’s establishment of relationships with other men in the future, so the destruction of this entry was mandatory. Both the lady in “Historia de un album” and Carolina are described as young women, which means they have to be careful with the fiction about themselves created in their albums if they want to be able to find eventually a man with whom they could establish a relationship beyond the space of the album exchange.

The ending of both the short story and the play include a moral that is linked to the portrayal of the album as an important social custom. In the case of de Ariza’s short
story and, therefore, of the meta-narration controlled by the album, this lesson, as I stated before, would be useful for male readers. The album summarizes the account it just shared with its interlocutor, the narrator-man, and goes on to directly blame the three contributors as being responsible for its current condition. Attempting to awaken the compassion of the narrator-man, the album reminds him how each one of those contributions ultimately meant the sacrifice of one of its pages. Then, it declares to its interlocutor that it has a very important request for him, a demand which is the reason for sharing its story. “Si eres amante de mi señora, ruegote, por Dios, que no escribas para que no sufra por tu causa una nueva desmembracion; y tengo derecho a reclamar alguna indulgencia de tu parte, porque te he contado mi historia” (“If you are my lady’s lover, I beg you, for the love of God, not write so I do not suffer a new dismemberment because of you; and I have the right to demand some indulgence from your part, because I have told you my story”; 94). The use of the notion of “lover” at the end of the story works as a kind of punch line, revealing the potential status of this contributor. The account that the narrator-album offers to the narrator-man is not a simple gift or a gesture of generosity. The album has its own agenda when sharing its story, which is to convince the potential contributor to not write anything in it, if he is in fact its lady’s lover, because of the risk this represents for the album’s physical condition. Even though it is already significantly deteriorated, the album makes this effort in order to preserve its remaining pages. Thus, the motivation of the album for creating this narration is not related to any type of literary inspiration, but instead an impulse of self-preservation.
The narrator-man also has his own agenda when sharing this story. It is important to remember that he says at the beginning of the narration that he is writing exclusively for his “beautiful female readers,” a clarification that could be linked to the goal of his story and the message he wants to transmit. However, he allows the album to manipulate the point of view of the narration and also to include its request regarding his contribution. It seems that the main narrator, the narrator-man, has in mind his male readers as well, who would benefit from having access to the album’s story in order to understand the outcome of album contributions and reconsider their participation in the practice. Thus, having grown empathetic to the album’s plight, the narrator-man allows the album to appropriate his story because he knows that its perspective would be more valid when trying to denounce the potentially disastrous effects of the album exchange.

In Bretón de los Herreros’ play there are also some lessons for men involved in the album fashion. First, through the character of Marchena, album contributors could witness the adverse results of forcefully adding a contribution in an album for which it had not been requested. Men who got to see (or read) Bretón de los Herreros’ play in nineteenth-century Spain could learn specifically about the outcome of including an unwanted marriage proposal in an album. Marchena’s failure could constitute a lesson for these future contributors, regarding the way in which ego and honor were intrinsic to the album practice. The main moral of El cuarto de hora is, however, for women. As I mentioned previously, at the end of the play the notion of “cuarto de hora” reemerges, and there is a reflection of each female character about the way in which they managed
their own “quarter of an hour.” The “cuarto de hora” refers in the context of the play to having an opportunity to establish a relationship with men. Petra, the servant, affirms that her “cuarto de hora” came with salt and pepper, and adds that it was an “afrenta” for her (“affront”; 86). Of course, Petra is referring to her love for Ortiz and how deceived and insulted she was when she learned that he was in love with Carolina. In the case of doña Liboria, she addresses her moral to women, stressing how careful they should be when believing in love declarations of men. Doña Liboria points out that it is very hard for women to free themselves of a “cuarto de hora fatal,” and regrets having trusted Marchena, whose betrayal hurt her honor (“fatal quarter of an hour”; 87). The moral women would obtain through the character of Carolina is more strictly related to the album. Perhaps Bretón de los Herreros wanted to convey the caution that women should exercise when collecting contributions for their albums. It seems that album owners had to learn not to simply “authorize” a contributor to include an entry in their books, if they were not genuinely interested in establishing a relationship with him. Ironically, this lesson would be contradictory with the original and generalized function of the album, which was to gather contributions to prove the extension of the owner’s social networks. If taken seriously, this warning would imply a significant reduction in the quantity of contributions that women would collect, which would impact the development of the album fashion.

Beyond the fictional frame of the texts, it is also possible to examine de Ariza’s and Bretón de los Herreros’ agendas when writing this short story and play on the album
phenomenon. The satirical approach to the album in both texts proves that they wanted to ridicule this trend and the multiple clichés it implied. De Ariza portrays the generalized type of female album owner who uses the book as a reminder of her multiple physical and moral attributes, and as a material representation of her links with men. Due to its owner’s constant alternation between suitors, her album suffers intense physical mutilations that humanize it and authorize it to narrate this practice from the perspective of the object upon which the album exchange depends, and upon which it is directly carried out. Meanwhile, Bretón de los Herreros depicts a “figurón” who fails to complete a courtship through an album contribution. This circumstance originates the “enredo” based on the opposition love-honor, which eventually is the cause for the mutilation of the album in the play.

De Ariza and Bretón de los Herreros make it clear for both male and female readers and spectators that the album exchange may have dangerous results, in terms of the material condition of the books, and also regarding the relationships established among the participants in this social custom. Was de Ariza trying to suggest, through the request of the album to the potential contributor, an end to the album practice? In the conclusion of the story, the narrator-man confesses that he was moved by the album’s tale, and, thus, “tomando en cuenta su demanda dejé en el tintero mi pluma” (“taking into account its request, I put back the quill in its inkwell”; 94). The album finally succeeds in preventing this contributor from writing in it. This outcome could be a premonition of the decline of the album phenomenon, or at least of the beginning of its decline. The fact that
the man put his quill back into the inkwell after heeding the album’s request can only lead readers to interpret this as evidence that he is in fact her new paramour. The readers of de Ariza’s story are left to wonder whether he decides not to begin a relationship with the album owner, knowing what he knows now. The album’s lady will no doubt be dismayed that her new love interest did not contribute, and ironically, may even take out her disappointment on her poor album, despite its best efforts to prevent having to endure her romantic wrath once again. Yet, the advent of an album request catalyzes the chance for the album to relate its woeful tale, and by extension the romantic misadventures of its lady. In addition, this event grants the album the opportunity to convey its request to the story’s other, newly-sympathetic narrator, a request which, by extension, might be interpreted as a request for all male potential contributors to refuse to participate in this practice, and of women to stop requesting contributions. This could be linked to the implications of the moral in Bretón de los Herreros’ play, which can be interpreted as a warning for female album owners about the risks of being careless when collecting contributions from men in their social circles.

While he has already demonstrated the dangerous results of a failed album exchange through the character of Marchena, the ending of Bretón de los Herreros’ comedy seems to offer some kind of hope about the possibility of having a successful outcome of this practice. Similarly to Marchena’s, Ortiz’s contribution in Carolina’s album is a love declaration, but a much more subtle and sophisticated one. The drawing presents a beautiful young lady with the dilemma of having to decide between the two
male figures which approach her: one representing pride and the other one Cupid. Carolina tries to confuse and discourage Ortiz, saying that she does not recognize the man who is portraying love, which is actually a self-portrait of the poet. Cleverly playing with his emotions, Carolina tells Ortiz that she does not understand the drawing, and suggests that they reenact it to see if that would help her to interpret it. At this point, the drawing, besides being an album entry described in Bretón de los Herreros’ play, becomes the inspiration for a meta-fictional theatrical representation. Carolina and Ortiz’s mise-en-scène of the image includes dialogue, which allows for the poet to include the obligatory: “¡Yo te adoro!” that seals his love confession (“I adore you”; 83). It is Carolina who finally makes the fictional love scene real, clarifying to Marchena, who has witnessed it, that the poet is “mi marido” (“my husband”; 85). Carolina’s acceptance of Ortiz’s love declaration signifies the success of this album exchange and the vindication of his talent as an artist, something that precisely Carolina had questioned before. While in the case of Marchena it failed, for Ortiz the courting that started with an album contribution succeeds. Thus, El cuarto de hora presents two different outcomes of the album exchange, both referring to its most basic and stereotypical use: romance.

C. Meilhac’s Caricatured Portrayal of the Purchase of an Album Contribution

Meilhac’s first job as a cartoonist and humorist writer for the Journal pour rire when he was only twenty-two years old was certainly influential in his eventual interest in comedies when he developed his theater career. In 1856, Meilhac made his debut as a comedy writer with the one-act music comedy La Sarabande du cardinal. L’Autographe,
the play in which Meilhac depicts the album, is from 1858, precisely two years before Meilhac met Ludovic Halévy, with whom he started a collaboration that lasted over twenty years and that influenced considerably the production of comical libretti in the nineteenth century (“Heri Meilhac” *Manitoba Opera*). Halévy was a playwright and librettist of operas and operettas. Together, they created several “operas bouffées” for German composer Jacques Offenbach, which were an original genre in between the vaudeville and the operetta (“Meilhac, Henri” *Encyclopædia Universalis*). Meilhac and Halévy’s most famous collaboration is the libretto for George Bizet’s *Carmen*, created in 1875. The majority of the biographical information existing today about Meilhac focuses precisely on his partnership with Halévy. No information that could suggest any link of Meilhac with the album phenomenon, either as contributor or direct witness of album exchanges, exists. However, it is evident that the development of this social custom in his milieu caught Meilhac’s attention, so much so that he had to give it a central role in one of his comedies. Meilhac was elected to join the *Académie Française* in 1888, to fill the chair of playwright Eugène Labiche. He was born in Paris in 1830 and died in the same city in 1897.

The title of Meilhac’s play, *L’Autographe*, introduces one of the most symbolic elements of the album dynamic: the notion of the handwriting and the signature as a material representation of the contributor. This comedy revolves around the institution of marriage and the conflicts regarding love and honor that threaten it. As in *El cuarto de hora*, there is in Meilhac’s play a main misunderstanding (or “error”) that will be related
to the creation of an album contribution. However, in this case the focus is on the process of creation itself of the entry, its material representation, and its insertion in the album. In the play, the “Comtesse” has been unsuccessfully requesting an album contribution from Chastenay, a writer and acquaintance of the family.\(^\text{13}\) As in “Historia de un album,” and, certainly, in many of the actual nineteenth-century album exchanges, there is a second artist who fights for the attention of the album owner. Flavio, a young pianist who used to be the object of the Comtesse’s devotion, does not contribute in her album and is not precisely in love with her. However, he is troubled by the Comtesse’s newly developed interest in literature in the form of the writer Chastenay and denounces her to Riscara, the Comtesse’s husband, explaining that she is not interested in listening to him play anymore. There is some irony in Flavio’s comment, as it exposes the fact that the Comtesse’s choice has nothing to do with aesthetics. This accusation about the Comtesse’s sudden interest in literature, which is clearly linked to her desire to advance her album collection, is the origin of Riscara’s project to mock Chastenay and obtain the contribution that the Comtesse coveted for her album. The servant Julie, a witty Champenoise, is essential in the materialization of this scheme that Riscara creates against Chastenay, around which revolves the plot of the play.

\(^{13}\) Contrary to the contributors in “Historia de un album” and El cuarto de hora, who are specifically identified as poets, Chastenay is only described as an “homme de talent” and author of the “livre rouge” that plays an essential role in the contribution that he will create for the Comtesse’s album. Thus, I refer to him only as a “writer.”
Unlike the servant in Bretón de los Herreros’ comedy, who was foolish and believed, without having any proof of it, that Ortiz was in love with her, Julie is very clever and has the persuasiveness that is necessary to deceive Chastenay. It is precisely through the character of Julie that Meilhac can develop the humorous tone of the play, as her characterization and dialogues allow for a continuous sarcasm that reveals Chastenay’s gullibility and justifies the mockery aimed at him. Julie represents a common theatrical figure in French comedy, developed particularly after Molière. It is possible to establish some parallelisms between Julie and the character of Figaro, in Beaumarchais’ *Le Barbier de Séville* (1775). Also clever and humorous, Figaro helps his master, the Count Almaviva, in his project to seduce Rosine. Notwithstanding the differences between the gender of these two characters and the type of project in which they collaborate, it is important to acknowledge the similarities between them, as later in *L’Autographe* there is a direct reference to *Le Barbier de Séville*, which reveals Meilhac was using Beaumarchais’ play as a reference when creating his literary portrayal of the album phenomenon.

Contrary to Bretón de “los Herreros’ play, in which the album is constantly used as a prop, and mentioned as such in the stage directions, in Meilhac’s play it is the characters who refer to the book and to its movement throughout the different scenes. For example, in the first scene, although other objects on stage, the doors, the piano, and the tables, are included in the stage directions, the Comtesse refers to her album, which is absent from the stage, when she reminds Chastenay that she is waiting for his
contribution. Chastenay takes refuge in the overrated excuse of the difficulty of creating an album contribution to justify his delay in the creation of this entry. This exchange brings up the issue of the required creativity of contributors and the stress put on them by album owners when requesting their entries, addressed by both Jouy and Larra in their essays about the album practice. Jouy even wonders: “Ne serait-il pas possible […] de prévenir les malheurs, de concilier tous les intérêts, de contenter tout le monde et les dames, sans trop exiger des beaux-esprits?” (“Would it not be possible to prevent the misfortunes, to conciliate all interests, to satisfy everyone and the women, without demanding too much from smart men?”; 151). It is particularly interesting how Jouy identifies women in a separate category, in order to convey how their demands regarding the quality and quantity of contributions they wanted for their books were beyond what would be expected from “tout le monde.”

Chastenay’s explanation about the cause of his delay in creating the contribution for the Comtesse is not, however, as frivolous as Jouy would have imagined. In fact, his defense reveals that Flavio and Riscara were right in worrying about Chastenay’s presence in the Comtesse’s life: “Vous comprenez bien que je ne puis pas écrire sur votre album ce que j’écrirais sur le premier album venu,” confesses Chastenay to the Comtesse, “il faut quelque chose d’original… une pensée sublime ou un calembourg très-réussi…” (“You understand well that I cannot write in your album what I would write in the first album that comes, it has to be something original, a sublime thought or a very successful play on words…”; 3-4). Chastenay’s apology should actually be flattering for the
Comtesse, because it implies that she deserves a contribution of superior quality, one that requires detailed thought and that could not be easily improvised. It seems that Chastenay is sincere in his defense, because he next tells the Comtesse that he does have a short and intense phrase to tell her, “une phrase qui me brûle les lèvres. Mais que jamais au grand jamais, je ne prendrai la liberté d’écrire sur votre album” (“a phrase that is burning my lips. But that I would never, ever, take the liberty of writing in your album”; 4). In this instance, Chastenay’s approach to the album is opposed to what happens in Bretón de los Herreros’ play, where both Marchena and Ortiz dare to include their love declarations in Carolina’s album. Although we do not have access to the content of the contributions in the album of the lady in de Ariza’s short story, this is presumably also the case, and the cause of the mutilation of the album in that text. Unfortunately, the Comtesse does not really care about Chastenay’s feelings or about the materialization of a potential love declaration in person. She is only interested in the status of her collection. Thus, she announces to Chastenay that he will be prisoner in her house until he creates the expected contribution.

Somewhat jealous of Chastenay because of what Flavio revealed to him about the relationship between the Comtesse and this “homme de talent” (“talented man”; 7), Riscara starts to carry out his project to ridicule the writer. First, he quotes in front of the Comtesse a contribution that Chastenay had added in another album, in order to sow discord between his wife and the writer. Riscara reads the contribution and then questions Chastenay about it with the sole purpose of making the Comtesse aware of the active
participation of the writer in this fashion: “‘Quand le diable eût été créé l’or pour nous perdre, Dieu, pour nous sauver, créa la charité.’ N’est-ce pas vous qui avez dit cette jolie phrase?.. […] Je l’ai lue dans un album” (“‘When the devil created gold to doom us, God, to save us, created charity.’ Was it not you who said this beautiful phrase?.. […] I read it in an album”; 22). There is no additional information about this album entry: we do not learn whose album it was or how Riscara had access to it. Was he simply reading the entries in this album or also contributing to it? Riscara’s revelation forces Chastenay to assume authorship for this contribution, which makes the Comtesse remind him of her own request: “Et mon autographe…à propos, je ne l’aurai donc jamais?” (“And my autograph…by the way, am I not going to ever receive it?”; 22). The dynamic between the Comtesse and Chastenay has transformed from a regular request for an entry, into an oppressive interaction that reveals the Comtesse’s fixation with her album. Obtaining Chastenay’s contribution is no longer for the Comtesse a need regarding the quantity of contributions in her album, but an issue of respect and honor.

Continuing his project of coercion against Chastenay, Riscara proposes that the writer stays at the house by himself creating his contribution, which should be ready when he and the Comtesse come back from visiting their cousin. There is, points out Riscara, paper, ink, and all-new quills for Chastenay to use. As in “Historia de un album,” we get a glimpse of the space where the contributor writes the album entry and of the materials he uses in it. The absence of Riscara and the Comtesse gives the saucy maid Julie the intimacy she needs with Chastenay to complete the second part of the
project to ridicule him, the step that implies the creation of the album contribution. The plan is established between Riscara and Julie and consists on a lie: Julie will tell Chastenay that she is illiterate and that she needs a reading lesson. The text that Chastenay will produce in this class will eventually become part of the Comtesse’s album. Riscara originally offers Julie twenty-five “louis” for her participation in the project, but the sharp servant haggles with him until she makes him promise he will pay her more, only because “[e]n Champagne, Monsieur, les louis sont encore de vingt-quatre livres” (“in Champagne, Sir, the louis are still of twenty-four pounds”; 16). On the way to their cousin’s house, Riscara reveals to the Comtesse his plan to mock Chastenay, which means that she knows about the creation of the bogus album contribution in advance.

Julie’s main weapons for the materialization of the plan against Chastenay are her flirtatiousness and feigned naiveté, which inevitably seduce the writer. The servant knows that a good way to nourish Chastenay’s ego will be to compliment him before she asks him to be her reading instructor. In their private encounter once the Comtesse and Riscara leave, Julie’s asks Chastenay if he is the author of that “livre rouge” that the Comtesse has, and expresses her desire to learn to read “pour lire ce que vous avez écrit” (“red book” “to read that which you have written”; 27). Flattered by Julie’s compliment, Chastenay cannot deny anything to the servant. As a writer, Chastenay would be the best person to offer Julie the gift of literacy. Thus, he surrenders to Julie’s charming and feigned shyness, stating that he will do it “puisque c’est pour me lire” (“since it is to read me”; 28). While previously his literary talent was indirectly questioned, as he was unable
to create the album contribution for the Comtesse, now Chastenay gets to prove his status as a man of letters, by giving a service to a coquettish young lady who, in turn, makes him feel as if he is a respected writer and teacher.

The scene of the reading lesson that originates the album contribution in Meilhac’s comedy is a reproduction of a similar scene in Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670). In the seventeenth-century play, Molière revisits, through the character of M. Jourdain, the topic of the “bourgeois balourd” who wants to become an aristocrat.\(^\text{14}\) M. Jourdain puts into practice different techniques for his transformation into an educated and reputable gentleman, among which acquiring new, custom-made clothes and taking classes of fencing, dance, music, and philosophy. One of M. Jourdain’s philosophy lessons is the scene that inspires the exchange between Julie and Chastenay in Meilhac’s play. The “maître de philosophie” asks M. Jourdain if he has already some type of knowledge, “quelques principes, quelques commencements des sciences?,” and the student replies that he does: he can read and write (“some principles, some initiation on science”; 49).\(^\text{15}\) This detail should make the exchange between M. Jourdain and his teacher different from the one between Julie and Chastenay, since in this case the student has the basic knowledge that the servant pretends to lack. M. Jourdain makes it clear that

\(^{14}\) This topic had been already developed by L’Arétain in *La Cortigiana* (1534) and by Portuguese writer Francisco Manuel de Mello in the comedy *O Figalgo aprendiz* (1665) (“Le Bourgeois gentilhomme. Notice”).

\(^{15}\) The two different translations into English of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* that I consulted were not appropriate for my purposes of analysis of the play, since they were specialized for actors and for the actual performance of the play. For this reason, I am using my own translations of the play.
he wants to learn about everything: “car j’ai toutes les envies du monde d’être savant”
(“because I have a strong desire to be educated”; 49). Thus, the philosophy teacher offers
him different areas on which he can develop his lesson, including logics, morals, and
physics. However, for M. Jourdain the descriptions of these disciplines contain “des mots
qui sont trop rébarbatifs,” and so he asks his teacher to simply teach him orthography
(“words that are too repellant”; 51). The main difference between the scenes of the
lessons in the two plays is, clearly, the gender of the students, which allows in
*L’Autographe* for Julie’s seduction of Chastenay, a gesture that mirrors the album
dynamic. While normally it was the male contributor who seduced the female album
owner through the praising in the contribution, in this case it is the woman in charge of
collecting the contribution who flirts with the male figure in the album exchange, which
reveals her agency in this process.

In order to start their reading lesson, Julie points out to Chastenay the availability
of the materials they will need: “Il y a là du papier” (“there is paper over there”; 28). The
same materials that the Comtesse had indicated previously that were supposed to be used
by the writer for the creation of her album contribution are now pointed out by Julie as
the resources for their reading class. This double use of the paper provided by the
Comtesse is emblematic of the main conflict in the play, which will lead to its
dénouement. The Comtesse had not been able to persuade Chastenay to write directly in
her album, but now Julie will obtain from him a written text that eventually will
constitute part of the Comtesse’s collection.
The scene of the actual reading lesson in *L’Autographe* reproduces the structure and humorous techniques that Molière applies in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*.

Interestingly, Molière was not completely original himself in the creation of this scene. It has been said that Molière borrows some of the instructions that the philosophy teacher gives to M. Jourdain from Gérauld de Codemoy’s *Discours physique de la parole* (1668).

In a scientific tone, very different from the one used by Molière and Meilhac in their plays, Codemoy explains in this text the movement of the jawbone that produces the sounds of the vowels. Molière transforms this almost medical discourse into a pseudo orthography lesson, which is actually a pronunciation class. The philosophy teacher explains to M. Jourdain what to do with his mouth to make the pronounce the vowels:

“La voix A se forme en ouvrant fort la bouche: A. […] La voix E se forme en rapprochant la mâchoire d’en bas de celle d’en haut: A, E. […] Et la voix I, en rapprochant encore les mâchoires l’une de l’autre, et écartant les deux coins de la bouche vers les oreilles: A, E, I” (“The vowel A is formed by opening widely the mouth: A. […] The vowel E is formed by moving the lower jaw closer to the upper jaw: A, E. […] And

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16 The exact quote, included in the “Notice” of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* on the website Tout Molière, reads: “Et si l’on approche encore un peu d’avantage les mâchoires l’une de l’autre, sans toutefois que les dents se touchent, on formera une troisième voix en I. Mais si au contraire on vient à ouvrir les mâchoires et à rapprocher en même temps les lèvres par les deux coins, on formera une voix en O. Enfin si on rapproche les dents sans les joindre entièrement et si en mème instant on allonge les deux lèvres en les rapprochant, sans les joindre tout à fait, on formera une voix en U” (“And if one moves even closer the jaws one to the other, without having the teeth touch, one will create a sound of I. But if, on the contrary, one opens the jaws and brings together the lips at the same time by the corners, one will form the sound O. Finally, if one brings together the teeth without having them touch completely and if, at the same time, one stretches out the two lips while bringing them closer without actually touching, one will make a sound of U”; “Le Bourgeois gentilhomme. Notice”).
the vowel I, by bringing even closer the lower and upper jaws and moving the corners of
the mouth toward the ears”; 53). The teacher continues, and M. Jourdain repeats every
single vowel, enthusiastic about the new knowledge his obtaining.

Almost two centuries after Molière’s contemptuous depiction of the bourgeois
eager to learn orthography, Meilhac creates a scene of a reading lesson that partially
mimics Molière’s. In this case, Julie ridicules Chastenay’s pseudo teacher role and
literary talent, which is especially invalid because of her feigned illiteracy. Chastenay
teaches Julie the basic syllable combinations: “b et a… b devant a fait ba.. b… a… ba
[…] B et é font bé […] B et I font bi. B, I, bi” (“b and a… b in front of a make ba.. b…
a… ba […] B and e make be […] B and I make bi. B, I, bi”; 29). As in Le Bourgeois
gentilhomme, the phonetic combination of the syllables in Chastenay’s lesson evokes a
rudimentary language level that, in the living performance as well as in the written
transcription, makes this whole passage of the play extremely humorous. As a novice
instructor, Chastenay falls into the trap of Julie’s ingenuity, unaware of the ultimate use
that the servant will make of that writing.

The sheet of paper used in Julie’s reading lesson will become part of the
Comtesse’s collection in her album. In Bretón de los Herreros’ comedy, it is Carolina
herself, the album owner, who puts the additional page in her album, specifically on top
of the remaining corner of the one she pulls out from it. In Meilhac’s play, however, there
is an essential intervention of the servant in the process of collection of album
contributions for the Comtesse’s book. The alteration of the Comtesse’s album is then
basically Julie’s and Riscara’s responsibility, and the result of their project to mock Chastenay. Even though she is the owner of the book and should be in charge of gathering the collection in it, the Comtesse has no agency in the inclusion of this particular entry, as she does not participate in the organization of Riscara and Julie’s plan.

In Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, M. Jourdain celebrates his new knowledge of orthography and his awareness about the physical movement of his mouth with phrases like: “Vive la science!,” lamenting not having studied all that before (“Long live science!”; 53). Julie also celebrates her acquisition of literary knowledge, but in her case the scene acquires an intense sexual connotation, as she declares the impact that this lesson has on her: “Comme c’est drôle d’apprendre à lire, ça me fait un effet… ba bè bi bo…” (“How it is funny/strange to learn to read, this has such an effect on me… ba be bi bo…”; 30). The sexual innuendo that tricks Chastenay into the writing of those syllables also makes him completely forget about the Comtesse’s album request. When she comes back and inquires about the contribution that the writer was supposed to create, Chastenay realizes that once again he has failed to fulfill his role of contributor: “L’autographe! Ma foi, je vous demande pardon, je n’ai encore rien trouvé” (“The autograph, I apologize, I have not found anything yet…”; 31). Chastenay cannot resort to the excuse of the difficulty of improvising something original for the Comtesse’s album, since he had the time to work in private on the contribution.

Notwithstanding Chastenay’s affirmation that he has not created the album entry, there is material evidence that he has been writing: one of the quills, which were new
when the Comtesse left, is now stained with ink. Chastenay insists to the Comtesse that he did not write anything during her absence, to which she responds: “C’est la scène du *Barbier de Séville* que vous faites jouer là. Mais Rosine mentait mieux que vous” (“It is the scene from *The Barber of Seville* that you play here. But Rosine was a better lier than you”; 32). The Comtesse refers to the exchange between doctor Bartholo and his ward, Rosine, in the eleventh scene of the second act of *Le Barbier de Séville*. Rosine attempts to hide the fact that she wrote a letter to the Count Lindor (who is actually the Count Almaviva), but her guardian is too suspicious of her behavior. Besides counting the quantity of pages still left in his notebook, and realizing there is one missing, Bartholo questions Rosine about a specific quill: “Et la plume qui était toute neuve, comment est-elle devenue noire!” (“What about the pen here, which was a new one? How has it come to be all black?”; 313; Anderson 44). By adding this direct meta-literary reference to Beaumarchais’ play in *L’Autographe*, Meilhac accepts his indebtedness to precedent masterpieces of French theater, and authorizes his viewers and readers to establish links to these works in his literary production.

It is finally Riscara who proves Chastenay to be untruthful, when he appears triumphantly announcing and that he has found the contribution. “Le voici cet autographe…,” declares Riscara, “Il est court… mais il ne manque pas d’une certaine originalité” (“Here it is this autograph… It is short… but it does not lack certain originality; 32). Consisting of the syllables “Ba… bé… bi…” (32), Chastenay’s autograph is clearly an embarrassment for the talented man, a bad addition to his record
of literary production. The Comtesse is not surprised by the bad quality of Chastenay’s contribution, because her husband had already told her of his partnership with Julie to scorn the writer. The sheet of paper with the pseudo contribution will now be included by the Comtesse in her album, probably glued on top of another page or added in a new binding of the book. This contribution defies on several levels the typical materialization of the album exchange, as depicted in the essays on social customs or in other literary texts. First, this entry is not created consciously by the contributor and is not meant to be added in an album. Chastenay is misled by Julie and the writing that he creates for the bogus reading lesson becomes his contribution for the Comtesse’s album. Also, this text is not written for the Comtesse and does not have any specific reference to her. Actually, the entry is not a literary composition at all, as it does not have any literary structure or real content. Most importantly, this contribution is created on a separate sheet of paper, which means it does not respect the book’s original homogeneity in terms of pages. This instance portrayed in Meilhac’s comedy evokes the multiple albums that I saw in my archival research that had a diversity of colors and textures among their pages. Those pages were probably added after the initial binding of the album, in circumstances in which it was not possible to acquire the sheets that were used originally in it.

Nevertheless, it seems implausible that there is a story like the one Meilhac depicts in this play behind the condition of all the albums I consulted. Meilhac creates a caricature of an album exchange which exists only in the fictional space of his play, and which offers a
comical explanation for real modifications that can be observed in the condition of historical albums.

Chastenay acknowledges the ruse to which he fell victim, organized by Riscara and materialized by Julie. The topic of marriage, essential in the play, reappears when Chastenay refers to the affront organized against him. Riscara, responding to Chastenay’s complaints, declares that basically this was an issue of honor: “Dans la situation où nous nous trouvions, il fallait nécessairement que l’un de nous deux se moquât de l’autre” (“In the situation in which we were, it was necessary that one of us mocked the other”; 33).

The album exchange becomes the space of an indirect courtship-related duel. Among the nineteenth-century albums I analyzed, I discovered several in which the husbands of the owners had added contributions. Bretón de los Herreros, for example, wrote in the album of his wife Tomasa a contribution in which he referred precisely to the success of their relationship, which he attributed to the fact that he did not go to cafés and his wife did not read Victor Hugo.17

Riscara does not contribute directly to his wife’s album, or at least not in the time and circumstances represented in the play. However, he does intervene in it to make sure that the entry of his rival, a potential suitor of his wife (according to the information that Flavio has given to him), is of poor quality in terms of artistic creation. The babble that

17 The entry reads: “Mi muger no ha leido a Victor Hugo…/ ni yo voy a los Cafés” (Album de Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros). I analyze this contribution, its motivations, and implications in the second chapter of this study.
will now become Chastenay’s album entry for the Comtesse will certainly not arouse in her any special interest for this contributor. Notwithstanding the mediocrity of the text, the Comtesse still wants to include it in her album. It is important to remember that obtaining this entry has been the priority of the Comtesse for weeks. After her constant insistence to Chastenay, the Comtesse wants to preserve the final product of her effort, even if it was not created for her. In order to culminate the album exchange, the Comtesse asks Chastenay to add what is missing in the entry: his signature. By putting his name next to the syllables he had created for Julie’s reading lesson, Chastenay is assuming authorship for this inferior text and accepting its status as album entry. The “Ba… bé… bi…” will now represent, not only Chastenay’s homage to the Comtesse, but also his talent as contributor.

Meilhac stresses the centrality of the topics of marriage and honor once again at the end of the comedy, when Chastenay, attempting to confirm all the levels of the treachery of which he has been victim, asks Riscara if Julie knows how to read. “Qui?... Julie?...,” responds Riscara, “[e]lle sait lire, écrire, compter… compter surtout! Votre autographe me coûte cher” (“Who?... Julie?... She knows how to read, write and count… count especially! Your autograph is expensive for me”; 34). Of course, Julie’s help in the materialization of this project is not a simple result of her submissiveness to Riscara as her master. Meilhac’s depiction of the interaction between Riscara and Julie adds a new level to the consideration of the economic circumstances of the album practice, a different approach that is not present in de Ariza’s story or in Bretón de los Herrerос
play. Riscara had to pay to obtain an album contribution for his wife’s album, not directly to the creator of the entry, but to a third party who facilitated the process. The notion of the worth of album contributions acquires a different meaning in this exchange, since Chastenay’s entry is defined not by its literary value, but by the difficulty to obtain it. The Comtesse’s album will now have a contribution that alters the homogeneity that should characterize the collection, an entry that was originally a reading lesson, in which two other participants (Riscara and Julie) interfered, and which came to exist, not because of her insistent requests, but because of the economic intervention of her husband.

In his portrayal of the album phenomenon in L’Autographe, Meilhac points out the complications that this exchange meant for both owners and contributors. The character of the Comtesse represents the album owners who had to insist and ultimately harass contributors to get their entries. Chastenay, on the other hand, evokes the album contributors who lacked the required skill to create entries under the pressure of time and space constraints. The portrayal of the album dynamic in this comedy includes aspects that are present in the essays on social customs and other literary texts, such as the potential courting that could be established through the exchange (which, in this case, never materializes), the inability of some contributors to improvise entries, and the issue of honor that was frequently at stake in this practice. However, Meilhac presents a non-traditional album exchange, in which a text that was created with a different purpose eventually becomes part of a collection. As many of the albums I saw in my archival research, the Comtesse’s has an additional page which does not belong to its original
construction. By ridiculing Chastenay for his inability to create the album contribution and his naïveté regarding Julie, Meilhac warns men about the risks of the album trend. As with de Ariza and Bretón de los Herreros, Meilhac had his own agenda when portraying the album fashion. His advice, as in the previous cases, is once again directed to men. First, they should fulfill their responsibilities as contributors as soon as possible, because the longer they take, the more pestered they will be by the owners, who will always find a way (directly or indirectly) to obtain their contribution. Second, and most importantly, Meilhac cautions men about how they should protect themselves from gracious, seductive women in general, and servants in particular. A moment of weakness could imply the writing of an involuntary album contribution, which quality could tarnish permanently the reputation of the contributor and hinder his future participation in the album fashion.

II. Conclusion

De Ariza, Bretón de los Herreros, and Meilhac all had different motivations and purposes when approaching the album phenomenon and portraying it in “Historia de un album,” El cuarto de hora, and L’Autographe, respectively. Within the fictional frame of these texts, the narrative voices present diverse manifestations of the album practice, all of them determined by differences in the gender interactions and in the expectations about the collection that each fictional owner is completing. Inevitably, I also have my own agenda when approaching the album exchanges depicted in these short story and plays. A twenty-first century reader, my aim is to understand the dynamics that
determined certain types of album exchanges. The fictional narrations in which several characters tear out pages, cut contributions, and add new pages to albums gives me insight into how to interpret the historical albums I saw, which had been subjected to a similar type of damage. Probably many of the cut pages that I saw in archival albums in France and Spain resulted from outbursts similar to the ones that the lady in de Ariza’s story and Carolina experienced. Perhaps the pages of different colors and textures that I discovered in those albums contained contributions that were not originally meant to be such, as in the case of the Comtesse’s album. Unable to reconstruct history, I can only speculate, using literature to help imagine the courtship, suitors, and love triangles that were behind album contributions. The majority of the albums I consulted were in a good condition, considering that they are documents that have survived since the nineteenth century, and this probably means that they did not suffer, as did the album in de Ariza’s story.
Chapter 4: “Blurring the Frontier between Reality and Fiction: Gender and Economic Exchanges in the Depiction of the Album in Literary Texts”

[Frédéric] prit, par contenance, un des albums traînant sur la table. Les grands artistes de l’époque l’avaient illustré de dessins, y avaient mis de la prose, des vers, ou simplement leur signatures; parmi les noms fameux, il s’en trouvait beaucoup d’inconnus, et les pensées curieuses n’apparaissent que sous un débordement de sottises. Toutes contenaient un hommage plus ou moins direct à Mme Arnoux. Frédéric aurait eu peur d’écrire une ligne à côté. ([Frederic] picked up one of the albums lying about on the table. The great artists of the day had illustrated it with drawings; some had written pieces of prose or verse, or simply their signatures. Among the famous names there were a great many nonentities, and the original thoughts were lost in a mass of platitudes. All these entries contained a more or less direct expression of homage to Madame Arnoux. Frédéric would have been afraid to write a single line beside them.)

Gustave Flaubert, *L’Education sentimentale* (1869)

The depiction of the album in nineteenth-century French and Spanish literature allows us to reconstruct different aspects of the development of this phenomenon in that milieu. From details like the current material condition of albums and the type of entries they include, to the circumstances of album requests and the intentions of each participant in the exchange, the scenes that present the album offer important information about this practice. The perspective of the authors of these texts, and their experience with the album as a dominant trend in their context, certainly determines their portrayal of it in their literature. Previously, I examined literary texts that present album scenes that provide useful insights to interpret specific circumstances of the physical state of archival albums. The plays by Manuel Bretón de los Herreros and Henri Meilhac and the short story by Juan de Ariza offer potential explanations for understanding the material
alteration of some of the albums I consulted, based on the treatment of owners and contributors.

Beyond the information regarding the material condition of the books, the literary texts that portray the album also reveal particularities about the gender exchanges, economic, dynamics, and ideas of art in the development of this practice in nineteenth-century France and Spain. In their essays on the album, both Victor-Joseph Etienne de Jouy and Mariano José de Larra insist on the strict gender role division established in this social custom. Jouy declares that the album was “pour le bonheur d’un sexe et le désespoir de l’autre” (“for the happiness of one sex and the despair of the other”; 145). A similar distinction is evident in Larra’s essay, in which he even links the whiteness of the album with the moral condition of its female owner, insisting on the use of this exchange for courting purposes. Jouy and Larra also address, directly or indirectly, the issue of the social class interested in this fashion, mentioning the neighborhoods in which it flourished and the quality expected in the material construction of the books, which impacted their market value. These aspects of the album are insistently present in the majority of the literary texts that I consulted that depict the practice. In this chapter, I explore precisely album scenes that convey the centrality of gender and economic transactions in this phenomenon. The main texts that I analyze in this chapter are two realist novels that deal mainly with the gender interaction in the album: Honoré de Balzac’s *La Muse du département* (1837) and José María de Pereda’s *Pedro Sánchez* (1883). I also analyze another comedy, *El poeta y la beneficiada. Comedia en dos actos*
(1838), in which Bretón de los Herreross presents a transgression of the gender roles in the album exchange through the character of a male album owner. Three short stories complete my selection of fictional texts in this chapter. Leopoldo Alas Clarín’s short story “Album-abanico” (1898) portrays the courtship use of the album and introduces the use of fans as albums. I will also explore the link between the gender and the economic aspects of the album phenomenon, through the analysis of Antonio Flores’ “Cuadro cincuenta y uno. Placeres de sobremesa” (1863) and Juan López Valdemoro’s “El álbum” (1886).

I. The Album in Honoré de Balzac’s and José María de Pereda’s Œuvre: The Depiction of a Social Custom as a Central Narrative Element

It is understandable that the two scenes that present more in detail the process of the album request and its gender connotations are in novels. The typical structure and length of this genre certainly allow for a more detailed development of characters and events, which, in these cases, leads to the portrayal of social customs such as the album.

My analysis of Balzac’s and Pereda’s novels requires a reflection about the significance of these two nineteenth-century writers’ gesture of including this phenomenon in their literary production. Critics identify Balzac (1799-1850) as the pioneer of the literary movement of Realism and Pereda (1833-1906) as representative of
this movement in Spain.\textsuperscript{1} If they aimed to depict lived reality in their novels, then their inclusion of the album implies this was an essential element of their historical context. In both novels, many elements reveal important components of the social practices and material culture in the French and Spanish milieus: salons, dance nights, card games, and fans. It was inevitable for Balzac and Pereda to include the album in their novels if they wanted to offer their readers a truthful representation of the social exchanges and fashion tendencies that surrounded them.

In the “Avant-propos” of his \textit{Comédie humaine}, Balzac declares that the original idea to create this masterwork came to him from an acknowledgement of the diversity among men, which was analogous to that found among animals. Balzac offers himself as responsible for accomplishing an analysis regarding these differences in society. Although Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott had already done some work in the same narrative style that Balzac wanted to develop, there is an evident “défaut de liaison” in his work (“want of connection”; 286; Sedgwick IX).\textsuperscript{2} This lack offers Balzac the possibility of presenting himself as author and savior of a particular type of history often forgotten by the majority of historians: “celle de mœurs” (“the history of human manners”; 287; \textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} John van Horne affirms that Pereda objected to being called a realist because “he feared that the term identified him with a school and, what is more, with a foreign school” (77). Pereda also wanted to make sure that his link with Realism would not lead people to think he was a representative of Naturalism. He makes this clear in his preface to the novel \textit{De tal palo tal astilla} (1880): “Si por realismo se entiende la afición a presentar en el libro pasiones y caracteres humanos y cuadros de la naturaleza, dentro del decoro del arte, \textit{realista} soy” (“If by realism you understand the tendency to present in the book human passions and characters and portrayals of nature, within the decorum of art, I am a \textit{realist}”; Bassett XXII).

\textsuperscript{2} All of Balzac’s quotes in this section are from the “Avant-propos” of the \textit{La Comédie humaine}. 
Sedgwick X). Balzac is conscious of his responsibility in the creation of this new history: “La Société française allait être l’historien, je ne devais être que le secrétaire”3 (“French society was to be the historian, and I but the secretary”; 286-87; Sedgwick X). As the secretary of this society, Balzac’s role would be different from that of typical historians: while they paid attention to the public life of nations, the French writer would focus on everyday life facts (secret or public) and on individual acts, considering their causes and effects. The almost 3,000 characters included in this project represent an era organized in different frames (“cadres”) and galleries that constitute the six different sections of the collection: Scènes de la vie privée, Scènes de la vie de province, Scènes de la vie parisienne, Scènes de la vie politique, Scènes de la vie militaire, and Scènes de la vie de campagne. “Dans ces six livres sont classées toutes les Études de mœurs qui forment l’histoire générale de la Société,” affirms Balzac, “la collection de tous ses faits et gestes, eussent dit nos ancêtres” (“In these six books are classified all the Studies of manners and morals that make up the general history of society, or, as our ancestors would have said, the collection of its deeds and exploits”; 302; Sedgwick XXII). La Comédie humaine presents a summary of all the social customs existing in nineteenth-century France, so it is understandable that Balzac featured the album in one of the collection’s novels. La

3 Even though Balzac acknowledges that his accounts are limited to French society in his context, he still names his collection La Comédie humaine, a somewhat pretentious title that implies that the events and characters presented in it transcend space and time, and represent humanity in general.
Muse du département, belongs to the *Scènes de la vie de province*, specifically to the group of *Les Parisiens en province*, along with *L’Illustre Gaudissart* (1834).

In the case of Pereda’s literary production, there is also an intention of offering a historical account of the circumstances of his milieu. Although he has frequently been identified as a representative of the “novela regional” (“regional novel”) and as a costumbrista, Pereda’s costumbrismo is significantly different from the one developed by Larra. While Larra, a journalist, focused on observing and analyzing the cultural practices he identified in his urban context, Pereda was interested in depicting the customs of his rural reality, the “montaña” (mountain) from where he was originally. Thus, Pereda proposed a sub-genre of the novel based on the portrayal of the cultural and geographical particularities of his context. In his discourse of acceptance of his position in the Real Academia Española, Pereda makes a vigorous defense of the *novela regional*, declaring that, if a Spanish novel exists it must be a novel about the province, the countryside, the coast, and its people, a novel that reflects on the pureness of a space that is not contaminated with the laws, customs, miseries, and worries of the urban reality.

In his article about “conservatism” in Pereda’s œuvre, van Horne affirms that Pereda was so rooted in his beliefs that in his writing he goes to the extreme of glorifying his “beloved montaña” and protesting against innovations (79). Pereda’s main purpose in his novels is precisely to create an ideal portrayal of life in the *montaña* that will remain as a written legacy for future generations. He fears the moment when cultural differences cease to exist between peoples and nations, and when everyone will look, dress, and think...
the same way. When that concern becomes a reality, people will have art in general (and
certainly Pereda’s literature in particular, although he does not say it directly) as a
reference of an ideal past in which practices and customs determined variety among
humans: “quédeles, por misericordia de Dios, el refugio del arte de estos tiempos, como
fie1 archivo de las olvidadas costumbres nacionales” (“may there remain for them, by
mercy of God, the refuge of art in these times, as a faithful archive of the forgotten
national customs”; “Discurso” 28). By identifying the art that is focused on depicting
cultural particularities as an indispensable source of historical knowledge, Pereda is
judging his own literary feat as a crucial point of reference for understanding nineteenth-
century life in the Spanish montaña. In this sense, Pereda’s project of the novela regional
is not so different from Balzac’s proposal in the Comédie humaine, since both aimed to
depict the diversity among humans. The main aspect in which Pereda’s mission differs
from Balzac’s is that, while the latter was more ambitious in the coverage of his analysis,
pretending to include all possible manifestations of humanity (specifically in his Études
de mœurs, as I previously mentioned), the Spanish writer’s production was limited to the
characters and way of living of his specific regional context. While Balzac would be the
“secretary” of his milieu, Pereda would be the “historian” of his, creating a written
archive of the singularities of life in the montaña.

Pedro Sánchez does not belong to any specific series in Pereda’s œuvre. Even
though it was published between some of his most important novels, such as De tal palo
tal astilla (1880) and Sotileza (1885), it did not awaken particular interest in its context or
even among contemporary critics. It has been said that Pedro Sánchez includes autobiographical references of Pereda’s experiences when he moved to Madrid in 1852 to attend school and prepare to enroll at the Artillery Academia in Segovia (“José María de Pereda”). Pereda did not finish those studies he was supposed to do in the Spanish capital because, similarly to Pedro, he was a victim of the multiple distractions of the city, including the coffee shop conversations, the theater, and the dances.

In Balzac’s and Pereda’s novels there is an exhaustive presentation of the main characters, who will be the participants in the album exchange, before the album scenes take place. This allows for the complexity in the introduction of this phenomenon in each story, and for the impact it will have at different levels of the narration. Interestingly, the protagonist who participates in the album exchange in each novel is of a different gender: in Balzac’s novel the main character is a woman, while in Pereda’s it is a man. This means that each novel portrays a different perspective of the album practice, that of the owner in the French novel and that of the contributor in the Spanish one. Through the analysis of these scenes, I propose to develop a complementary perspective about the differences between the male and the female approach to the album, taking into consideration the responsibilities of each participant in the exchange.

Along with the divergence in the gender and role of the participant in the album, there is in these novels a movement between the countryside and the city that is emblematic of nineteenth-century space dynamics. In each novel, the male and female main characters move from the province or the mountain to the city, and this movement
has different motivations and outcomes. Thus, Pereda continues in this novel a tradition developed largely by Balzac. Other novels in which Balzac portrays the displacement of provincial characters to the city are *Illusions perdues* (1837-1843) and *La Rabouilleuse* (1842). Franco Moretti analyzes the opposition of these two spaces in the nineteenth-century European *Buildungsroman*, pointing out the advantages that made the city appealing in these texts. The “great capitals,” such as Paris and Madrid, the cities where the protagonists of *La Muse* and *Pedro Sánchez* move, offer a “cosmopolitan scenario” that was certainly tempting for these provincial characters. Moretti explains the differences between what he identifies as the three spaces of the European *Buildungsroman*: the “villages,” “provinces,” and the “capital city.” The most important of these variations are related to the age and the quantity of characters portrayed in each space. In the village, there are older and fewer characters, while the capitals are more crowded with younger characters (64). Moretti stresses one specific aspect in which the city is inescapably superior to villages and provinces, and it is fashion: “this great metropolitan idea designed for young people (and by them); this engine that never stops, and makes the provinces feel old and ugly and jealous– and seduces them forever and a day” (65). In *La Muse* and *Pedro Sánchez* the notion of fashion is constantly linked to the space of the city through the album phenomenon, which depends on contributors who come from or go to the city and also leads to an eventual movement of the protagonists to the city.
Pereda has been identified by critics as J.O. Swain as “a writer of two cities, or, rather, of one city and one village” (65). This identification could only come after the publication of _Pedro Sánchez_, which allowed Pereda to expand the geography of his novels. Emilia Pardo Bazán affirmed precisely that Pereda decided to write a novel located in the city as a response to the accusations of his provincialism and of being unable to depict geographical variety in his novels. In _La cuestión palpitante_, Pardo Bazán exposes the current situation of literature in her milieu, analyzing French and Spanish literary publications. Pardo Bazán affirms that Pereda’s talent is like a beautiful garden, aromatic, finely cultivated, but of very limited horizons:

Pereda se concreta a describir y narrar tipos y costumbres santanderinas, encerrándose así en breve círculo de asuntos y personajes. Descuella como pintor de un país determinado, como poeta bucólico de una campiña siempre igual, y jamás intentó estudiar a fondo los medios civilizados, la vida moderna en las grandes capitales, vida que le es antipática y de la cual abomina. (170)

Pereda limits himself to describe and narrate the types and customs from Santander, shutting himself up in a small circle of subjects and characters. He stands out as painter of a specific region, as a bucolic poet of a countryside that is always the same, and he never tried to study in depth the civilized ways or the modern life of big capitals, life which is obnoxious for him and which he abominates.

Offended by Pardo Bazán’s accusation that he portrayed only narrow geographical perspectives in his literature, Pereda wrote _Pedro Sánchez_ to prove his ability to present urban reality in his production and to show his perspectives were not limited to regional writing: “cuando nos da la gana dejamos de ser novelista regional, nos salimos del huerto paterno y caminamos por cualquier senda en que nos coloque” (“whenever we want we
stop being regional novelists, we come out of the paternal garden, and we walk along any path in which we are put”; Akers 23). While insisting on his ability to cover any geographical space or circumstance in his literature, Pereda follows in Balzac’s footsteps, taking his characters through the path from the countryside to the city, where they would encounter the album phenomenon.

A. On Transforming Failed Life Projects into (Un)Successful Album Exchanges: The Album in *La Muse du département* and *Pedro Sánchez*

1. The First Steps toward Becoming Album Owners and Contributors

The album appears in Balzac’s and Pereda’s novels after the readers have obtained an extensive description of the characters, their milieu, and their life situation. The protagonists of both novels get involved in a series of art-related events that I identify as projects that will serve as a preparation for their participation in the album phenomenon. In my analysis, I propose that these instances determine the intellectual growth of the female album owner and the male contributor and their evolution as art connoisseurs and members of the social networks that were essential for the materialization of the album exchange. In *La Muse*, the main character is Dinah de la Baudraye, who, having married a miserly and tedious provincial nobleman, is permanently condemned to geographical and personal constraints that oppose her adventurous spirit. Identified as a “femme supérieure” who had multiple intellectual and artistic impulses, Dinah is rejected as dangerous in her provincial reality of Sancerre. This inadequacy fosters her need to constantly create projects that offer her a temporary
possibility of escape of her circumstances. One of those projects is the album. In Dinah’s case, the album leads to a courtship and to the establishment of a love relationship that eventually takes her to Paris, the idealized city. This movement has extreme negative consequences for Dinah and symbolizes the failure of her multiple artistic ventures, including the album. Patrick Bethier summarizes the plot of the novel even more succinctly: “le mari est avare, l’amant est journaliste, la fable est politique” (119).

For Pedro, from Pedro Sánchez, the album exchange is precisely what guarantees his stay in Madrid. Originally from the countryside, the montaña (“mountain”) in Santander, Pedro is invited to the city to pursue a job position that he never receives. Pedro’s installation in the city offers him access to multiple social practices and art manifestations, among which the album. Having already manifested poetic impulses since his teenage years, Pedro materializes his talent publicly becoming an album contributor. This gesture implies for Pedro complete success in his Madrilenian adventure, since after his participation in the album fashion he becomes a journalist and, eventually, a respected writer who even writes the novel of his life.

Since their youth, both Dinah and Pedro showed an inclination for art that certainly justified their interest on the album later in life. As readers, we do not get significant background information about the education and family story of the album owners and contributors in the plays and short stories that depict the fashion. The structure of the novels, however, allows for this type of broader characterization of the protagonists. Raised in the Calvinist religion, the young Dinah Piédefer stood out at the
boarding school of Chamarolles by her beauty and her intelligence. Dinah proves her cleverness at the age of seventeen, when she converts to Catholicism out of ambition, hoping that the Cardinal would take her under his protection and guarantee her a successful future. It is precisely as a result of this understated arrangement that she ends up getting married to Polydore de La Baudraye, an “avorton” (“runt”) whose ambition leads him to manage his father’s scarce inheritance so wisely that he becomes one of the wealthiest owners of the region through his acquisition of the land and castle of Anzy in Sancerre. The fortune of her husband does not secure Dinah’s happiness, since he was extremely miserly and did not allow her to enjoy (or enjoy himself) his capital.

Pedro’s personal story is actually shared with the readers by himself, through the first person narration that structures the novel. But the Pedro who shares this account is not the young one who participates in the album practice, but an elderly one who reflects on the events and situations that determined the outcome of his life projects. Because of the social status of Pedro’s father, “por ser yo hijo de quien era” (Pereda, Pedro Sánchez 1428), Pedro is able to obtain a better education through the parish priest, who takes him under his protection and teaches him Latin, among other things that he could not have learned in school (“because I was the son of my father”)4. This education, combined with his inclination for reading important literary works such as: Clarissa Harlowe, El hombre feliz and El Quijote, made Pedro a special teenager, superior to those of his own age in

4 From now on, I will only include the page number for all the quotes from Pedro Sánchez.
his context. His literary knowledge and artistic disposition propelled his early poetic production, which can be linked to his later role as album contributor: “para entonces ya escribía mis correspondientes versos a la luna y al borrascoso mar […] y hasta me ponía triste y llegaba a tomar mis pesadumbres por lo serio” (“by then I would already write verses to the moon and to the tempestuous sea […] and would even get sad and take my sorrows seriously”; 1430). In addition, Pedro is racially privileged and very handsome: “era yo por naturaleza, blanco de color, pulido de facciones y bien contorneado de miembros” (“I was white by nature, of delicate features and well-rounded body members”; 1428). Between his writing ability and physical attributes, Pedro has all the qualities necessary to become a successful participant of the album exchange.

Considering the outstanding education that both Dinah and Pedro obtained, it is understandable that they would have high aspirations that evidence a superiority that goes beyond their provincial reality. For Dinah, precisely this intellectual drive puts her at odds with society in Sancerre at her arrival in 1825, after her marriage to Polydore de la Baudraye. Her clothing and style reveal a good taste that, instead of making her feel welcome in the new space, provoke an inexplicable anxiety among her new neighbors. Men in general are more positively impressed with Dinah, some of them becoming her confessed admirers. This is certainly convenient for Dinah’s album collection, since it means that she will have several male acquaintances willing to be contributors in her album. Dinah’s presence has a very different impact on women, among whom she produces “une espèce de terreur” that isolates her and hinders her ability to establish any
type of solidarity with them ("a sort of terror"; Balzac, *La Muse* 42; Waring and Rudd 15). Chris Moore de Ville analyzes this rejection of Dinah and her difficulty of communicating with other women as a result of, precisely, her superior communicative skills and linguistic talents (218). Comparing her with Corrine, from Madame de Staël’s *Corrine ou l’Italie* (1807) and Elléonore from Benjamin Constant’s *Adolphe* (1816), Moore de Ville demonstrates that these heroines’ interaction with other women is rare, and it usually does not foster any understanding (219).

The envy of other women originates from Dinah’s ability to prove her multiple talents constantly. From playing the piano to being current with the latest fashion trends in the city, which she knew about through Anna Grossetête, her friend from the Chamarolles boarding school, Dinah has everything that the *sancerroises* covet and to which they do not have access. Dinah does not tolerate the typical emptiness of provincial exchanges and does not participate in the gossip that entertains her neighbors: “Aimant à parler des découvertes dans la science ou dans les arts, des œuvres fraîchement écloses au théâtre, en poésie, elle parut remuer des pensées en remuant les mots à la mode” ("She loved to hear about discoveries in science or art, or the latest plays at the theaters, the newest poems, and by airing the cant words of the day she made a show of uttering thoughts"; 43; Waring and Rudd 15). This knowledge about art, combined with

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5 From now on, I will only include the page number for all the quotes from *La Muse*. For the quotes in English I will be using James Waring and JNO. Rudd’s translation. I will make slight modifications to there translations when they are problematic.
her interest in Parisian fashion, determines Dinah’s preparation and disposition to participate in the album phenomenon. The sancerroises designate Dinah as the “Sapho de Saint-Satur” and see her as monstrous and dangerous. This identification of Dinah’s intelligence as the origin of a masculine and daunting constitution is representative of the generalized conception of knowledge as an exclusively male attribute. The limited support that Dinah obtains in Sancerre for her personal enterprise of intellectual development serves only to nourish her desire to find a metaphorical escape from her provincial reality. Her participation in the album fashion will be one of her multiple attempts to find that escape.

Contrary to what we would have imagined, Pedro’s excellent education, social status, and intellectual disposition did not determine his career aspirations. He never wanted to be minister, member of the parliament, journalist, dramatic poet or civil servant (“funcionario”). The only position that Pedro ever really desired to obtain was that of “secretario del ayuntamiento” (“administrator of the town council”; 1430). Meanwhile, Pedro’s father has his own plans for his son, and those projects are emblematic of Pereda’s own idealization of the montaña. Pedro declares that his father wanted to “hacerme un hombre’ sin salir de las fronteras de mi tierra nativa” (“‘make a man of me’ without going beyond the frontiers of my native land”; 1430). Thus, the process of masculinization that Pedro’s father has envisioned for him is limited to a geographical space that represented their ethical beliefs and cultural particularities. Ironically, in order for the teenager to become the man his father wanted, Pedro will need to move to the
Spanish capital, where he will be in contact with new practices, diverse people, and a reality that is far from the provincial one where he begins his life.

The arrival of an imposing and enigmatic “personaje de Madrid” (“character from Madrid”) will inadvertently change Pedro’s life plans and determine his relocation to the urban space, a movement that will allow for his participation in the album fashion. The “excelentísimo señor don Augusto Valenzuela” had visited the region just once before, with “su Majestad”, and he had fallen in love with it (“excellency Sir Mr. Augusto Valenzuela” “your majesty”). This time, Valenzuela comes back back to buy the “casona solitaria” (“big abandoned house”) in the town, because he has a daughter who is sick and in need of a change of scenery and the healing pureness that only the countryside can offer. As a convalescent, Clara is skinny and appears sickly, which makes Pedro declare immediately that he is not attracted to her. Ironically, later in the novel, in Madrid, Pedro will marry Clara.

In the montaña, a particular type of relationship develops between them, one in which Pedro guides Clara and her father by showing them all the beautiful spectacles of the surrounding nature. In one of his walks with Clara, she asks him an important question regarding his literary talents: “¿Hace usted versos?” (“Do you do verses?”; 1143). Revealing his shame in the redness that invades his face, and remembering that the verses he wrote were mediocre, Pedro denies his gesture of writing: “Jamás” (“Never”; 1443). While he symbolically annuls his poetry by negating it, Clara directly condemns this literary genre in general and, without knowing it, Pedro’s creation in particular: “Me
Y alegro [...] eso prueba que es usted hombre de gusto. [...] Ya no se hacen versos más que en España...y en Turquía” (“I am glad [...] that proves that you are a man of good taste. [...] Nowadays they only write verses in Spain and Turkey”; 1443). By rejecting poetry as a bad taste practice Clara, the Madrilenian woman and model of sophistication and good taste, ridicules Pedro and invalidates any literary aspiration he may have had. This critique could have had an impact in Pedro’s future role as album contributor. However, it does not, as we shall see. The status of writer in general, and of poet in particular, was preferred in the selection of album contributors, as evidenced in many of the literary texts that depict the practice and in archival albums, in which I identified the names of Campoamor, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbubusch, José Zorrilla, Victor Hugo, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, among others.

The presence of the señor Valenzuela in the montaña alters Pedro’s father’s plan for his son, forcing a movement to Madrid, where new experiences await him. The señor Valenzuela makes Pedro and his father an offer they could not reject: “el buscarle un destinillo en Madrid con que pueda ir viviendo mientras la suerte y sus merecimientos le pongan más arriba” (“to look for a small destiny for him in Madrid with which he can live while luck and his merits put him in a good place”; 1445). Thus, Pedro will leave the montaña and start a new phase of his life in the unknown and feared city, a different way of living that will offer him access to social customs and practices that he did not know in the mountain. Among those new experiences will be the album.
2. Between the Province and the City: Dinah’s Efforts to Escape Provincialism and Pedro’s Bohemian Adventures in Madrid

Dinah and Pedro undertake several projects that I interpret as a preamble of their participation in the album phenomenon. For Dinah, the goal of these ventures is to promote the development her intellectual and artistic drive, while enjoying a temporary and fleeting escape from the limitations of her life in Sancerre. Meanwhile, Pedro’s intention is related to his new life in the Madrilenian milieu, where he needs to establish networks and learn about social customs that were unknown for him in the montaña.

The first one of Dinah’s enterprises is her role as an art collector. Analyzing this phase in her evolution is essential for examining her participation in the album craze, because it serves as a starting point for her gesture of collection, as well as for her ability to evaluate the art both in the construction of the book itself and in the contributions included in it. Dinah develops a sharpened appreciation of outstanding art creations that characterizes her new role of collector: “elle s’associa vivement aux idées de l’école romantique en comprenant dans l’Art la poésie et la peinture, la page et la statue, le meuble et l’opéra”. (“She threw herself into the propaganda of the romantic school, including, under art, poetry and painting, literature and sculpture, furniture and the opera”; 48; Waring and Rudd 20). The people in the town classify Dinah’s accumulation of artifacts as strange, in much the same way as Dinah herself is classified as different, dangerous, and inapprehensible. William Paulson identifies Dinah’s first gesture of collection as an evocation of the artistic creation that implies the work of collection of the
character of Pons, the protagonist of Balzac’s 1847 novel *Le Cousin Pons* (37). Using Michael Thompson’s theory about the use of object in his book *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*, Paulson affirms that collectors make objects go from the category of garbage to that of lasting ("durable") (39). This is precisely what both Dinah and Pons do, by acquiring objects that do not have any significant value and are considered junk by others.

Notwithstanding the impact of her collection upon the people of Sancerre, and the success it means for the image she hopes to cultivate, Dinah still feels a certain emptiness regarding her intellectual development. Only a new project that reignites her desire for constant learning saves her from this period of ennui. This time it will not be an individual project but a collective one. Madame de La Baudraye proposes to create a “Société dite Littéraire” (“so-called literary circle”; 49; Waring and Rudd 21). It is particularly interesting how Balzac’s narrator determines the fate of this new venture upon introducing it. He mocks Dinah’s impulse and condemns it to failure, insinuating that the literary character of the society was nonexistent. Balzac’s predictions come to pass. Already in the second year of the pseudo literary society, the meetings serve a different purpose than that for which they had originally been convened: “on y jouait aux dominos, au billard, à la bouillotte, en buvant du vin chaud sucré, du punch et des liqueurs” (“the members were playing dominoes, billiards, and cards, and drinking mulled-wine, punch, and liqueurs”; 50; Waring and Rudd 22). The only texts that they actually read and discuss as a group are newspapers, which nourish their knowledge.
about politics and business. Thus, Dinah’s second artistic project, her first literature-related one, fails brutally, once again leaving her frustrated in her provincial milieu.

Dinah’s third intellectual mission is closely linked to her frustration about the limitations of her provincial life, which are worsened by the precariousness of her marital situation, and the impossibility of finding a worthy lover in Sancerre. After six years of living in Sancerre and being married to Monsieur de La Baudraye, Dinah had inevitably become a “femme de province.” Balzac’s identification of Dinah as a provincial woman is particularly important for my analysis of her role as album owner.6 Following the visit of her friend Anna, Dinah is able to identify all the differences between a provincial woman like herself and an elite Parisian woman. Among those differences, Dinah might have identified the album, as Anna could have mentioned it as one of the fashions popular within her circle of women in the French capital. After her friend’s departure, Dinah’s realization of all the limitations of her life provokes extreme frustration and

6 Balzac takes advantage of this instance both to describe Dinah and her situation in Sancerre and to establish some stereotypes about women in France based on geographical distinctions: “À Paris, il existe plusieurs espèces de femmes; il y a la duchesse et la femme du financier, l’ambassadrice et la femme du consul, la femme du ministre qui est ministre et la femme de celui qui ne l’est plus ; il y a la femme comme il faut de la rive droite et celle de la rive gauche de la Seine ; mais en province il n’y a qu’une femme, et cette pauvre femme est la femme de province” (“In Paris there are several kinds of women: the duchess and the financier’s wife, the ambassadress, and the consul’s wife, the wife of the minister who is a minister, and the wife of him who is no longer a minister; then there is the lady–quite the lady–of the right bank of the Seine and of the left”; 56; Waring and Rudd 28). In the countryside there is no possibility of having different titles or positions within the feminine realm: all women were simply that, provincial women. Dinah could have possibly defied this categorization because she was already an atypical provincial woman: educated, fashionable, talented, and artistic. However, just the fact that she lives in Sancerre automatically makes her a countryside woman, a condition from which she cannot escape despite her arrogance and aspirations, which go beyond her geographical reality and material possibilities.
anger in her. This resentment is at the origin of her next artistic enterprise: her own writing.

For Pedro, his initial transformation into a city man depends on the young men whom he meets at the “posada” (“inn”) where he is staying in Madrid, and who happen to be his “paisanos” (“countryfolks”) from the region of Santander. These students introduce him to Madrilenian life through the fashion and activities they practice. These students also offer Pedro access to one of his favorite pastimes: reading literature. They invite the montañés to enjoy their copious collection of novels, which evidently captivates him: “No podían ofrecerme comidilla más de mi agrado: la novela era mi tentación… ¡y cuánta había en aquella casa, donde apenas existía un libro de texto!” (“They could not offer me a more enjoyable hobby: the genre of the novel was my temptation… and how many there were in that house, where there were no textbooks at all!”; 1455). Thus, Pedro’s new life gives him the opportunity to enjoy literature in a more consistent and rich way, beyond the limits of what was acceptable with his family in the countryside. The new relationship with literature that Pedro starts cultivating in the city will be essential for his participation in the album fashion and will provide models for his own behavior.

Pedro’s continued exploration of all the literary works available to him through his new friends at the posada nourishes his own writing, a gesture that will be extremely useful as he develops his role as album contributor. Pedro focuses on works of French literature that are a novelty for him, reading Paul de Kock, Pigault-Lebrun, Alexandre
Dumas, and Frédéric Soulié, among others. Besides literature, Pedro also develops a particular interest for the theater, another activity that was not a possibility for him in the countryside. The theater becomes for Pedro his “pasión dominante” (“dominant passion”), because it gives him access to a different realm of art, one which does not require his imagination: “allí estaba todo hecho, vivo, real y tangible: el hombre en un cuerpo y alma con sus vicios y virtudes; un cómodo rinconcito del mundo donde se exponían a la contemplación de los curiosos las batallas de la vida humana, sus grandezas, sus caídas, lo noble y lo bajo, lo serio y lo cómico” (“everything was there alive, real, tangible: man was fused in body and soul with his vices and virtues; it was a comfortable corner of the world where there were exposed, to the admiration of curious people, the battles of human life, its grandeur, its decadence, the noble and the low, the serious and the comic”; 1467). The influence of French culture and art that will be evident through the diffusion of the phenomenon of the album in Madrid is also present in the theatrical preferences of the producers and public in the city, as Pedro points out: “Lo que más abundaba eran las traducciones y arreglos del francés” (“The translations and adaptations from French were the most abundant”; 1471). This interest in producing and presenting French plays responds to a tendency to use the neighboring country as reference for the literary and artistic production in Spain. I have analyzed this gesture in Larra’s case and his appropriation of Jouy’s essays on the album for his own analysis of this practice in his country.
Another activity that proves to be an essential part of Pedro’s integration in the Madrilenian style of life is dancing. In a dynamic that was similar to the one established in the album fashion, dancing promotes a gender exchange in a public scenario and implies an inherent competition among men to be selected by women for the different musical pieces played in each “baile” (“dance”), including their names on the women’s dancing cards. To be successful at dance it is necessary for a man to have certain talent and charm that make him stand out as a potential dancing partner. Inexperienced in this practice as in all the others he was unfamiliar with before his arrival in Madrid, Pedro does not have a positive first experience at Capellanes, the most popular dance gathering in Madrid, when his friend Matica takes him there: “Sucedió lo que yo esperaba: cogí un hartazgo de retregones y zancadas, y una ronquera al salir a la calle con la camisa pegada al cuerpo, los huesos macerados y las narices atascadas de polvo y de pelusa, y en ocho días no quise ni que me hablan de semejante barbaridad” (“What I expected happened: people rubbed me, stepped on me, and I became hoarse upon walking into the street with my shirt stuck to my body, my bones macerated and my nose full of dust and fuzz, and for eight days I did not want anyone to talk to me about such barbarity”; 1470). Contrary to the theater, where Pedro becomes involved in the artistic creation in a way that does not require skills beyond his intellectual understanding of the mise-en-scène and the story, the dance does not offer Pedro the same possibility of passive participation, a circumstance that inhibits his full enjoyment of it. Although Pedro’s first experience dancing in Madrid could be considered a failure, because he does not put on an
outstanding performance or even enjoy it as social activity, this event prepares him for his participation in the album custom, since it is precisely during a dancing evening that he is the object of a request for a contribution.

Remembering the real purpose of his presence in Madrid, Pedro starts what will become a number of attempts to meet with the señor Valenzuela in order to discuss the details about the job that the important political figure offered him. After three weeks in Madrid and continuous efforts to meet with the man who had promised to help him, Pedro finally succeeds in making Valenzuela receive him. He tells Pedro with disdain that he is too busy to fulfill the promise made back in the montaña: “¡No puedo! Veremos si un poco más adelante…Vuélvase por ahí a menudo para recordármelo…,” and then, almost as if he is chasing a dog away: “¡Vuélvase, vuélvase!” (“I cannot! Let’s see if later on…Come back frequently to remind me.” “Go, go!”; 1469). The disappointment and frustration of this rejection reminds Pedro of his provincial status and has a reverse effect on him. Instead of trying harder to obtain the promised job, Pedro submerges himself into the abyss of city pleasures, enjoying all the artistic and cultural possibilities that this new space offers him. Among these practices will be the album, which will give Pedro an opportunity to combine his literary and artistic inclinations with the social networks he is starting to develop in Madrid.

Dinah’s and Pedro’s artistic interests and abilities coincide in the writing project, which is strongly linked to their participation in the album fashion. In La Muse, Dinah’s literary venture is central for the totality of the narration, as it contributes to the depiction
of her frustration because of the provincial reality to which she was condemned. Having confessed to the _abbé_ Duret her suffering and unhappiness with her life, Dinah receives some advice from him that becomes the basis of the literary venture she is about to undertake. He tells the provincial woman to “convertir ses mauvaises pensées en poésie” (“exhale her evil thoughts in verse”; 63; Waring and Rudd 35). According to him, poetic creation is the best way to deal with anguish since: “la douleur se calme au cœur à mesure que les alexandrins bouillonnent dans la tête” (“pain is soothed in the heart as lines surge up in the brain”; 63; Waring and Rudd 35). Thus, Dinah decides to write, not under her own name, but under a male Spanish pseudonym: “Jan Diaz.”

Dinah’s first poem as Jan Diaz, “Paquita la Sévillaine,” becomes extremely popular in the _départements_ of Allier, Nièvre, and Cher. Published in _L’Écho du Morvan_, the six-hundred verse poem narrates the love tribulations of a stereotypically exotic Spanish woman. In a meta-literary gesture, Balzac’s narrator includes in _La Muse_ specific stanzas and verses of Dinah’s poem that allow for the reconstruction of the afflicted Spanish woman’s story and of her trajectory from Spain to France. The novel’s structure is momentarily altered, becoming a type of critical text that includes direct

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7 Although it is not accentuated in the novel, this last name in Spanish should be accentuated on the “i.” By not accentuating it, Balzac keeps the French pronunciation in the spelling of “Diaz.”

8 Balzac describes _L’Écho du Morvan_ in the novel as an “espèce de revue qui lutta pendant dix-huit mois contre l’indifférence provincial” (“a type of magazine which fought during eighteen months against provincial indifference”; 63; Waring and Rudd 35). As Janis Glasgow points out in her article: “George Sand’s Multiple Appearances in Balzac’s _La Muse du département_,” this newspaper has never been located by critics. Glasgow wonders if Balzac created the name to contrast it with _L’Echo de la Jeune France_, where an article on George Sand had appeared on July 15, 1835 (220).
quotes and passages of textual analysis of the poem. The story portrayed in the poem conveys all of Dinah’s anxieties about relationships and love, through the story of Paquita and “un soldat normand qui la fit amoureuse / Et l’entraîna dans ses foyers” (“a Norman soldier who won her love and carried her away to his hearth and home”; 65; Waring and Rudd 37). The “sombre énergie” (“somber energy”) that determines the poem, allows for an interpretation of Paquita as a premonition of the dangerous corruption that will dominate Dinah later on, when she follows her instincts in her relationship with Lousteau, which starts with his album contribution.

After the undeniable success of her first poem, the abbé Duret, who had originally encouraged Dinah’s poetic project, tells her to stop writing, announcing to her the perils of continuing: “Ne faites plus rien, […] vous ne seriez plus une femme, vous seriez un poète” (“Write no more, […] you will cease to be a woman; you will be a poet”; 67; Waring and Rudd 38). If she continues to write, Dinah would stop being a woman and would become, not a man, but “un poète” and thus male. There is no possibility of assigning the category of “poet” to a female subject because it is inconceivable that a woman could occupy this social role, which so blatantly flies in the face of gender norms.9

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9 Similarly to the term écrivaine, the notion of poétesse has become accepted and widely used in certain French and Francophone contexts. While the first one does not appear in the Trésor de la langue française, poétesse does appear in two different entries. The first entry is an article about the suffix “esse” in which it is specified that this name has a tendency to be used with a pejorative connotation. They recommend to say: “cette femme est un grand poète” (“that woman is a great poet”). Interestingly, in the second entry the term is written in capital letters and is defined as “femme poète” (“Poétesse”).

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Defying the abbot’s advice, Dinah writes a second poem, and her continued literary success makes inevitable the comparison of her trajectory with that of George Sand, who, like Dinah, used a male pseudonym to publish. Earlier in the novel, in the first presentation of the protagonist, the narrator had already evoked Sand, when trying to explain Dinah’s superiority over other provincial women. The reference to the Sandisme at that earlier section of the novel announces Dinah’s subsequent literary attempt. In a harsh critique of what he classifies as a “lèpre sentimentale,” Balzac’s narrator affirms that, as a result of their ambitions to acquire knowledge, many women have harmed their feminine essence and have become “le bas-bleu du cœur” (“blue-stockling of sentiment”; 32; Waring and Rudd 5). The indirect identification of Dinah as a bas-bleu could be opposed to her role as album owner. While the bas-bleuisme represented the desire of women to develop their intellect, the album was frequently identified as a gendered practice that evoked a superficial constitution of the female subject and did not necessarily promote her ability to identify or enjoy superior artwork. When describing

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10 The derogatory notion of bas-bleu emerged in nineteenth-century France to classify women with intellectual or literary aspirations. As critic Christine Planté explains, this term was a French adaptation of the English “blue-stockling,” coined by Benjamin Stillingfleet (member of Lady Montague’s entourage) (28). The metaphor contained in the idea of bas-bleu implied that the women accused of it had given up their femininity in exchange for the possibility of obtaining knowledge and being able to produce literature. Barbey d’Aurevilly dedicated to this phenomenon a section in the fifth volume of his collection Les Œuvres et les hommes (1877). In his examination of this tendency, d’Aurevilly severely criticizes the intentions of women writers, questions their aptitude for literary creation, and denounces the effects that their defiance of typical gender roles was having on the constitution of nineteenth-century French society. “Les femmes qui écrivent ne sont plus de femmes,” affirms d’Aurevilly, “[c]e sont des hommes, –moins de prétention, –et manqués ! Ce sont des Bas-bleus. Bas-bleu est masculin” (“Women who write are not women anymore, they are men, –at least that is what they pretend, and failed! They are Bas-bleus. Bas-bleu is masculine”; 29, italics in the original).
Dinah’s success in her literary gesture, Balzac’s narrator returns to the inescapable reference of Sand. According to him, Sand’s success in the historical literary scene had awakened the interest of people all over France in recognizing and honoring female talent. This is the origin of Dinah’s own recognition as an important writer in Sancerre and adjacent towns. These new female aspiring writers are identified in the novel as “Dixièmes Muses,” young women who had been “détournées d’une vie paisible par un semblant de gloire” (“tempted from a silent life by a bait of glory”; 68; Waring and Rudd 39). The reference to the “Dixièmes Muses” is central for my analysis of the presentation of the album in the novel, since this notion becomes the main insult that Lousteau uses against Dinah, which symbolically invalidates the relationship that started with an album contribution.

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11 Balzac’s use of “muse” to identify provincial aspiring writers (and the location of this figure specifically in a “département”) could have its origin in a declaration than Sand made before the publication of La Muse. In the dedicatory letter sent to her convent friend Jane Bazouin with the novel La Marraine in 1829, Sand declared: “Aussi Dieu me garde de jamais me lancer dans le domaine de la poésie, dussent tous les lauriers du Pindar couronner mon front, dusse-je être appelée la muse de mon département, titre si envié par toute femme de province qui sait lire passablement dans le Heures de son diocèse et qui peut écrire un billet d’invitation sans faire plus de trois fautes d’ortographe.” (“Thus let God preserve me from ever entering the domain of poetry, even if all of Pindar’s laurels should cover my brow, even if I were to be called the muse of my département, a title envied by any woman of the provinces who can read passably the Hours of her diocese and who can write an invitation without making more than three spelling mistakes”; Crecelius 49-50). Linking it exclusively to poetry (and, certainly, to the romanticism that the genre implies), Sand uses the notion of “muse” in a contemptuous way, making fun of those provincial women who can only perform activities that require a minimum of grammatical or literary knowledge. Even though Sand wanted to escape from this categorization, Balzac imposes it on her through the connection he establishes between her and Dinah. If Dinah’s literary career and success is comparable to that of Sand, and Dinah was the “muse of the department,” then Sand would inevitably be one too, even though she was aware of the implications of this term and had rejected it directly. Various critics, among which Annette Smith and Thierry Bodin, coincide in identifying Caroline Marbouy, French writer who used the pseudonym of Calire Brune, as another potential model for the character of Dinah de la Baudruye.
The popularity of Jan Diaz inevitably leads to the discovery of the real identity of the writer hidden behind that pseudonym. The habitants of Sancerre celebrate the news that Madame de la Baudraye is the real Jan Diaz as a sign of progress and artistic development for their town. One person, contrary to the people of Sancerre, does not celebrate Dinah’s success as a writer. Her husband, Polydore de La Baudraye, is extremely offended after the revelation of the real identity of Jan Diaz and he “recevait un coup mortel de cette gloire” (“felt her glory a mortal blow”; 71; Waring and Rudd 42). Monsieur de La Baudraye realizes that Paquita’s misfortune has its basis in his wife’s own unhappiness in their marriage, and he cannot hide his rancor. Feeling judged and devalued, Dinah makes a radical decision regarding her writing: “Dinah comprit qu’elle avait eu tort d’écrire: elle se promit de ne jamais faire un vers et se tint parole” (“Dinah saw that she had done wrong in writing, she vowed never to write another line, and she kept her vow”; 71; Waring and Rudd 43). Dinah regrets having had the courage to put her thoughts into words, creating the poetry that so deeply perturbed her husband. She decides never to write again, in an effort to silence the desperate voice that denounces the misery of her provincial life. Thus, Polydore de La Baudraye succeeds in his indirect request, annulling Dinah’s gesture of writing and her constitution as an artist. The abbé Duret, another male figure, had initially promoted Dinah’s appropriation of the written word and her expression through the poetic art. However, the abbé’s change of heart, combined with her husband’s wounded pride cancels this initiative. This outcome
reiterates male power, especially that of Dinah’s husband, as the man who truly has the authority over the gifted woman.

From now on, Dinah will need a substitute for this failed project, a new venture that would allow her to materialize her intellectual impulse, an activity that would combine her fascination for art, collection, and literature. This new practice will be the album.

For Pedro, it is his active lifestyle and his constant movement between the theater, the public dances, and the “tertulia” (“conversation”) at coffee shops that nourish his perspectives and prepare him to dedicate himself to his own literary production. In his constant study of Spanish and French classics, Pedro inadvertently memorizes the content of many of his favorites, eventually reproducing them in his own literary works. While he is amazed by his own work thinking it superior and original, his friend Matica helps him realize that his best writing attempts are simply copies of important Spanish writers such as Manuel Bretón de los Herreros and José Zorrilla. Because of his inability to innovate in his literature, Matica recommends that Pedro waits to publish his “engendros poéticos” (“poetic offspring”) until he has developed his own ideas and properly processed the subjects that belong to other writers: “pues si entre los ignorantes ganaría algún lauro de alquimia, los entendidos le molerían a palos” (“because if it could gain any praise of

12 Pedro’s enjoyment of coffee shops and of having conversations in them evokes Larra’s character in his article “El café,” who likes going to “cafés” mainly to listen to other people’s conversations. For more details, see note 19 in the first chapter of this study.
alchemy among ignorant people, the knowledgeable people would destroy it”; 1473). Thus, Pedro decides to keep his literary attempts private, in a gesture that reveals his consciousness of their potential for the future. Contrary to his denial of his poetic production when Clara asked him about this back in the mountain, Pedro is now sharing his writings, and even following advice that will help him to successfully publish them in the future. Dinah had to annul her writing because, as a woman, she was not supposed to show any type of intellectual or artistic skill. Pedro’s writing, is not censored, but only temporarily suspended. This strategy will reassure the future quality of his work, in order to make it ready for its future publication.

3. On Dinah’s “Manie de Autographes” and Pedro’s Praising of a Neck

For Pedro, it would not be so difficult to materialize the album exchange, as he is in the city, where this practice was extremely popular. Dinah, on the contrary, will need to use her cleverness and create some strategies that will allow her to advance her album project. This is the origin of yet another project, one that will bring two potential album contributors to Sancerre. Dinah has heard about Lousteau’s successful life in Paris, particularly about his numerous affairs with actresses, and has become infatuated with him. A journalist, Lousteau “signait le feuilleton d’un journal à huit mille abonnés” (“signed his name to contributions to a paper that had eight thousand subscribers; 32; Waring and Rudd 4). It is possible to establish a link between the profession of the male protagonist of Balzac’s novel and that of the two main observers of the album fashion from a social perspective. Jouy and Larra were also journalists, and their essays on the
album appeared initially in newspapers. In those essays, Jouy and Larra portray this practice from a mainly contemptuous point of view, stressing the bother that it meant for male contributors and how it emblematized the superficiality of female owners. As we will see in the album exchange that takes place in La Muse, Lousteau certainly shares Jouy’s and Larra’s perspective of the album, as he implicitly ridicules Dinah through his contribution. Interestingly, Berthier establishes a comparison between the fictional character of Lousteau and Balzac himself. Berthier points out that they are both the same age and that Lousteau’s remarks about his job correspond to Balzac’s ideas about money, as revealed in his correspondence and in his writing (121).

With a very different profile, Bianchon, the second guest that Dinah invites to Sancerre, is “déjà premier médecin d’un hôpital, officier de la Légion d’honneur et membre de l’Académie des sciences,” and “venait d’obtenir sa chaire” (“Bianchon, already chief physician to a hospital, officer of the Légion of Honor, and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just been made a professor”; 32; Waring and Rudd 4). In order to convince Bianchon and Lousteau, now transformed into busy pseudo Parisians, to return to their hometown, Dinah proposes that in the next election, the people of Sancerre vote for one of the two celebrities to be the representative of the pays. Only the “femme supérieure de l’arrondissement” could have suggested this project that had only a minimal chance of success, but that would certainly achieve her goal of bringing the two men to the province. Convinced of the importance of the potential position, Bianchon and Lousteau (who are not rivals, but allies in this provincial adventure) arrive in Sancerre in
September 1836, completing a movement from the city to the province that is opposite to the one typically portrayed in nineteenth-century novels, including Pedro Sánchez.

The opposition between Paris and the province, present throughout the whole novel, is one of the main conversation topics between Dinah, Bianchon, and Lousteau. Dinah reveals to them her disdain for provincial life and the tedium it implies for her. The restricted selection of activities to enjoy and of people with whom to establish relationships provokes an exasperating monotony that she has found inescapable: “On joue aux cartes le soir, on danse pendant douze années avec les mêmes personnes, dans les mêmes salons, aux mêmes époques” (“They play cards in the evening, dance with the same partners for twelve years running, in the same rooms, at the same dates”; 78; Waring and Rudd 48). Bianchon and Lousteau certainly understand and sympathize with Dinah’s complaints, since they have themselves left the province to go live and be successful in the city. It is understandable that Dinah feels the need to find new social practices, in order to escape from her dull, repetitive daily life in Sancerre. The album serves her then as a fleeting escape from her circumstances, offering her access to more consistent social exchanges (due to the gesture of asking for contributions) and to a whole different level of intellectual and artistic production (through the entries collected in the book).

The chapter of La Muse in which the album appears for the first time is entitled “Le diable emporte les albums” (“Albums be Damned”). Clearly, Balzac would use this instance to convey, through the fictional construction of the novel, his own opinion about
the album. Many nineteenth-century writers felt pestered by the album fashion because women would frequently ask them for contributions. Balzac was one of the writers who publicly expressed his annoyance with this object and practice, once declaring: “Au diable tous les albums” (“To hell with all albums”; Pakenham 113). Among the multiple writers who denounced the abuses committed by women through the album trend there was also José Zorrilla, who stated that he had been solicited for album contributions a total of 188,000 times in his life (Gahete Jurado 60). Through the mask of the fictional narrator, the title Balzac gives this chapter echoes his own feelings about this practice, transmitting the contempt he displayed for the album in real life into the literary world of La Comédie humaine. Balzac’s description of Dinah’s use of the album also responds to the stereotypical view of it in which the female owners were interested in this fashion only for the delight of receiving constant reminders of their beauty and moral values through the written contributions of admirers.

After his first encounter with the polemical and intense Madame de La Baudraye, Lousteau is not impressed by the superiority that everyone praises in Dinah. When Gatien Boirouge, one of Dinah’s provincial admirers, asks the journalist what he thinks of the

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13 In his article about the album Michael Pakenham affirms: “Il y avait une lutte acharnée entre les Albumphiles et les Albumphobes. Guère étonnant que Balzac se soit écrié: «Au diable tous les albums” (“There was a bitter struggle between Albumphiles and Albumphobes. Hardly surprising that Balzac declared: ‘To hell with all albums’” Pakenham 113). However, Pakenham does not include a bibliographical reference to such an important declaration. In my meeting with him in Paris in May 13, 2012, I pointed out to Pakenham that this quote from Balzac did not have the proper citation information in his article. He was very surprised to realize he had forgotten to include it, and told me that he did not remember where he had found the quote (Pakenham Personal interview).
idealized woman he responds with disdain: “Je pense que la femme la plus spirituelle de Sancerre en est tout bonnement la plus bavarde” (“I think that the most elevated woman of Sancerre is simply the greatest chatterbox”; 81-82; Waring and Rudd 52). Extremely offended, Boirouge reveals Lousteau’s insult to Dinah during dinner. Right after learning the journalist’s impression of her, Dinah is hurt and treats him with certain coldness. However, Madame de La Baudraye changes her attitude and “dégringo la soudain de cette hauteur en pensant à son album” (“suddenly stepped off it as she recollected her album”; 82 Waring and Rudd 53). She cannot bear any rancor against Lousteau because she knows that she will need his contribution to advance her album project.

The first mention of the album determines the sarcastic tone that the whole presentation of this object will have in the novel. Balzac reveals: “Madame de la Baudraye avait donné dans la manie des autographes: elle possédait un volume oblong qui méritait d’autant mieux son nom, que les deux tiers des feuilles étaient blanches” (“Madame de La Baudraye had caught the mania for autographs; she possessed an oblong volume which deserved the name of album better than most, as two-thirds of the pages were still blank”; 82; Waring and Rudd 53). Balzac identifies Dinah’s new intellectual and personal project as a “manie,” an obsession for autographs. In the case of Dinah’s participation in the album exchange, it is clear that the term “manie” refers to the imposition of the album as a fashion that women all over France wanted to adopt. However, considering the humorous tone that Balzac uses to depict the album, it is possible to read also an insinuation about Madame de La Baudraye’s mental state. Her
life in Sancerre, shaped by a failed marriage and frustrated intellectual projects, could have easily promoted the development of a fixation with the collection of autographs. She is certainly now the ideal subject for any fixation that might provide her with a mental escape from her provincial condition.

Referring to the Latin etymology of the term “album,” Balzac points out that Dinah’s had two thirds of its pages completely white. This reminds us of Larra’s remarks about the positive connotation for women to have most of the pages of their albums still white. This would be understandable considering the limited quantity of social connections that she has in her provincial context. Who could write in Dinah’s album other than her few male admirers and the occasional extra guest in her salon? Ironically, right after this sarcastic remark about the scarcity of entries in her album, Balzac gives a list of all the renowned writers, musicians and sculptors who have contributed to her album. Dinah had given her album to her friend Anna for three months and, because she lived in Paris, she had been able to collect multiple entries:

- une ligne de Rossini, six mesures de Meyerbeer, les quatre vers que Victor Hugo met sur tous les albums,\(^{14}\) une strophe de Lamartine, un mot de Béranger, Calypso ne pouvait se consoler du départ d’Ulysse écrit par George Sand, les fameux vers sur le parapluie par Scribe, une phrase de Charles Nodier, une ligne d’horizon de Jules Dupré, la signature de David d’Angers, trois notes d’Hector Berlioz (83).

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\(^{14}\) I was able to find a contribution by Victor Hugo in the album that belonged to Maria de Marches, kept at the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal. Hugo’s entry in this album was not one specific line, but the last four verses of his poem “Ce siècle avait deux ans,” included in his collection Les Feuilles d’automne: “Ô l’amour d’une mère, amour que nul n’oublie! / Pain merveilleux qu’un dieu partage et multiplie! / Table toujours servie au paternel foyer! / Chacun en a sa part et tous l’en ont entier!” (“Oh the love of a mother, love that no one forgets! / Marvelous bread that a god shares and multiplies! / table always ready in the paternal household / Each one has his own part and they all have it all!” Album de Maria de Marches).
a line from Rossini, six bars written by Meyerbeer, the four lines that Victor Hugo writes in every album, a verse form Lamartine, a few words from Béranger: Calypso ne pouvait se consoler du départ d’Ulysse (“the first words of “Télémaque”) written by George Sand, Scribe’s famous lines on the Umbrella, a sentence from Charles Nodier, an outline of distance by Jules Dupré, the signature of David d’Angers, and three notes written by Hector Berlioz. (Waring and Rudd 53)

Messieurs de Clagny and Gravier, two of Dinah’s more fervent provincial followers, helped her in the search for contributions, taking her album on their trips to the French capital to obtain entries for it at the social events they attended. To the list of contributors that Anna had already gotten for Dinah’s album, de Clagny and Gravier add: Lacenaire, Fieschi, Mlles (sic) Mars, George, Taglioni, Grisi, Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Ribini, Lablache, Nourrit, Arnal, and even “une lettre excessivement courte de Napoléon” (“an extremely short note by Napoleon”; 83; Waring and Rudd 53).

Several aspects of this description of Dinah’s album deserve close analysis. When Balzac claims the majority of the pages in Dinah’s album were still white, it is evident he wants to ridicule the most recent project of the superior woman of Sancerre. The long list of writers, artists, and even political figures who have added entries to the album proves that its pages must have been full of signatures, poetry, and music that, as Larra declared regarding the function of album contributions, have progressively taken away “hoja a hoja la calidad de blanco” (“page by page its whiteness”; 332). With this description, Balzac establishes his vision of this practice and also his particular approach to Dinah’s album as another one of her failed provincial projects.

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Balzac’s description of Dinah’s album also makes it essential to point out the transformation of the established dynamic regarding the contact required between the album owner and their acquaintances for the materialization of the album exchange. The album owner was supposed to ask potential contributors directly, and preferably in person, if they would add something to the album and personally give them the book.\textsuperscript{15} In the case of Dinah’s album, three external agents interrupt this transaction. Madame de La Baudraye does not request the contributions for her book herself, but through three friends who transmit her verbal message and physical gesture of giving the album to the artists who would add something in it. This circumstance is due to Dinah’s geographical limitations and the impossibility of going to Paris to ask for the contributions directly. Although, as Larra suggests and other literary texts portray, many of the contributions in albums could represent the owner’s sentimental relationships, in Dinah’s case this is improbable, since she is not obtaining these contributions in person. Even if she were able to move around freely and had access to the French capital, she probably would not have been able to obtain all these entries because she lacks the social connections necessary to meet the artists whose entries Anna, de Clagny, and Gravier had been able to obtain. It is particularly notable that the three mediators are individuals who possess

\textsuperscript{15} I make this exception because, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Larra says that the album could be sent with the footman to the person who was going to make the contribution: “el album se envía además con el lacayo de una parte a otra” (“the album is also sent with the footman from one place to another”; 329). This implies that, if the footman is taking the album, the request for the contribution was not necessarily made in person, but probably in a letter sent by mail or in a carte de visite left at the potential contributor’s house. This seems to be the case in de Ariza’s short story “Historia de un album.”

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different advantages over Dinah. Anna is already a true Parisian, married to a businessman, and more stylish and fashionable than the provincial woman. Messieurs de Clagny and Gravier, notwithstanding the fact that they are in love with Dinah, have some advantage over her at the moment when they are in the French capital, having left her back in Sancerre. Thus, the three characters appropriate Dinah’s album, defying the purpose of this practice and minimizing her efforts to obtain contributions. We never know if Dinah is responsible for other contributions in the book (besides those she requested to Bianchon and Lousteau), because the ones gathered by her friends overshadow in the narration the ones she might have obtained in Sancerre.

Besides the names of the artists who contributed to Dinah’s album, the readers do not get much information about the contributions themselves, their content, their length, or other details about their structure. It is clear, however, that there is a diversity of entries. There are lines (“lignes”), signatures, verses, stanzas, songs, autographs, music scores, and even letters. This corresponds with what I discovered in actual nineteenth-century albums. There were poems, and, thus, verses and stanzas, in practically all of the albums I consulted. In addition to the poetic production prevalent in albums, I also examined letters, like the one written by Victor Hugo for José-Maria de Heredia and included by Madame de Heredia in her album. Some of the albums I studied had also complete sections of signatures that sometimes covered several pages and featured the names of important political figures. I found this specifically in the albums of Ramón Pérez Costales and Dolores Saravia. The music scores were certainly one of the most
common contributions in albums, and I was able to find multiple examples of this type of entry in the albums I analyzed.

With only two specific exceptions, the majority of the entries in Dinah’s album are not included in the novel. Unlike the poem about Paquita, of which a great part was quoted (directly or indirectly) in the novel, the entries in Dinah’s album are not shared with the readers. Including Jan Diaz’s poem was essential for Balzac’s narration because that text was of Dinah’s authorship and examining in detail her gesture of writing is indispensable for understanding her story. The contributions, however, are created by others, which means that the story they narrate is not necessarily faithful to Dinah’s life. The first album contribution that appears in the novel is the note by Béranger. This entry presents a very interesting circumstance because, even though Béranger is classified as its author (because it specifies: “un mot de Béranger”), George Sand wrote it in the album.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, the male figure is responsible for the text, but a woman serves as secretary. Interestingly, this contribution reproduces the circumstances of the entry Béranger included in Emma Bain-Boudonville’s album. As I mentioned in the second chapter of this study, Béranger does not himself write in Emma’s album the verses he had created for her father, but dictates them to her. Almost as if he had consulted Emma’s book, Balzac reproduces this dynamic in \textit{La Muse}, making the same author responsible for the

\textsuperscript{16} Béranger is not the author of the quote that became the contribution, but of the contribution itself (since he signed it). The phrase: “Calypso ne pouvait pas se consoler du départ d’Ulysse” is the first sentence of \textit{Les Aventures de Téléméaque} by Fénelon (1699).
alteration of the typical structure of the album exchange. Larra affirms that in the album “es indispensable que lo que se estampe vaya de puño y letra del autor” (“it is indispensable that the entry be handwritten by its author”; 330). Thus, Béranger defies the conditions of the album practice, both in real life and in fiction, in both cases using a secretary to transcribe the contribution he dictated.

In addition to Sand, three other women defy in Emma’s book the established gender norms of the album exchange. In the list of contributors, Balzac includes “Mlles (sic) Mars,” and “Taglioni et Grisi.” Mademoiselle “Mars” refers to Anne Françoise Hyppolyte Boutet Salvetat, actress of the Comédie Française. The two other names designate nineteenth-century ballet dancers Carlotta Grisi and Marie Taglioni. Of Italian and Italian/Swedish origin respectively, Taglioni and Grisi were stellar dancers of the Romantic Ballet in Paris, which started to develop at the end of the 1820s. These two names are linked in the list of contributors by an “et,” which signifies the connection between them and probably even the fact that they added a single, collaborative entry. The last names of Taglioni, Grisi, and Mars appear without any particular warning and without any comment about the fact that women were contributing to an album, a gesture that challenges the most common use of the book. Unfortunately, Balzac’s narrator does

I disagree with Berthier when, in his explanatory note to this passage, he affirms that the last name “Grisi” refers to Giulia Grisi, Italian soprano. It makes more sense to assume that Balzac was referring to Carlotta Grisi because she was closer to Marie Taglioni as a result of their ballet endeavors together.
not share the content of the entries with readers of *La Muse*, and thus we do not what type of contribution these actresses and dancers could have created for Dinah’s album.

The contributions in Madame de La Baudraye’s album are certainly worthy of the superior woman of Sancerre, not only because of the quantity, but also because of the status of the contributors. Nevertheless, Balzac still undervalues that album, calling it a “commencement de collection” (“start of a collection”; 83). Dinah’s album has clearly surpassed the beginning phase, getting to a point of being a substantial collection of artistic works. Also, this album exceeded the expectations for a provincial woman’s album (and probably even of one owned by a Parisian woman). Madame de La Baudraye is the only woman in “dix lieues à la ronde” (“for ten leagues round”; 83; Waring and Rudd 53) to have an album. Considering how important this new fashion is for her, it is understandable that she would want to ask the two Parisian guests she is hosting in the Baudraye mansion to add something to her book. Dinah has to do this as soon as possible because she is not sure if they would be willing to stay in tedious Sancerre for more than a couple of days.

Loustau is clearly the guest who Dinah wants the most to contribute to her album, because of his status as a journalist, which has caused her infatuation with him. However, she starts by asking Bianchon if he could “enricher son trésor par quelques lignes” (“enrich the volume she handed to him with a few lines of his writing”; 83; Waring and Rudd 54). The distinguished doctor agrees, and then he reads the previous entries of the book, which was one of the main gestures of contributors when they
initially opened an album. This action is essential to understand another aspect of the practice of the album: identifying contributors by their entry and the signature that accompanies it. Not only were album contributors classified as admirers of the book’s owner, but they were also judged by the quality of their artistic creation. The evaluation of previous entries by future contributors and album owners provoked anxiety among men regarding the quality of their production for albums. As Larra and Jouy had pointed out, men felt stressed when they were asked for a contribution because of the pressure to prove their talent and abilities in an entry they had to improvise, frequently in a demanding social context. In many of the archival albums I consulted there were specific references to the previous entries, which contributors consult to verify who were their predecessors and how high was the quality of their contributions. José Alcalá Galiano, for example, is so intimidated upon seeing the names of the writers who had already signed Mariana Paniagua’s album, that he has to refer to this in his own contribution: “Y que gente! Campoamor, Zorrilla, Hartzenbusch, Ayala!/ Cuanto sublime cantor!.../ Yo no paso, no señor/ Yo me quedo en la antesala” (“And these people!.../ Campoamor, Zorrilla, Hartzenbusch, Ayala!/ So many sublime poets!.../ I will not go on, no sir/ I will stay in the antechamber”; Album de Mariana Paniagua).

Bianchon examines Dinah’s album from its very first page, where he finds M. de Clagny’s entry. He shows this contribution to Lousteau in order to mock Dinah’s suitor (which they had been doing since they arrived in Sancerre). This is the second entry that is quoted in the novel. “Ce qui rend le peuple si dangereux,” had written de Clagny,
“c’est qu’il a pour tous ses crimes une absolution dans ses poches. J.-B. DE CLAGNY”

(“What makes the populace dangerous is that is has in its pocket an absolution for every crime”; 83; Waring and Rudd 54). Bianchon whispers in Lousteau’s ear that they should support this courageous man in his plea for the monarchy and adds his own contribution below: “Ce qui distingue Napoléon d’un porteur d’eau n’est sensible que pour la Société, cela ne fait rien à la Nature. Aussi la démocratie, qui se refuse à l’inégalité des conditions, en appelle-t-elle sans cesse à la Nature. H. BIANCHON” (“The distinction between Napoleon and a water-carrier is evident only to Society; Nature takes no account of it. Thus Democracy, which resists inequality, constantly appeals to Nature”; 84; Waring and Rudd 54). It is significant that M. de Clagny’s and Bianchon’s entries do not refer to Madame de La Baudraye, owner of the album, as they were supposed to do according to the description by Jouy and Larra of this object. Like many of the contributions in the albums I studied, these entries introduce a different topic, in this case political. In the case of de Clagny in particular, it is surprising that he did not take advantage of this opportunity to praise Dinah, since he is infatuated with her. Not having any particular interest in cultivating a deeper relationship with Madame de La Baudraye, Bianchon simply responds to de Clagny, mocking his monarchism by taking Napoleon as its subject.

After getting Bianchon’s contribution, Dinah asks Lousteau for his, using a noticeably more ceremonious and submissive tone than the one she used when addressing the doctor for the same purpose: “Je ne sais […] si ce ne sera pas abuser de l’hospitalité
que de vous demander quelques stances…” (“I do not know whether is taking an unfair advantage of a guest to hope for a few lines…”; 84; Waring and Rudd 54). She is intimidated by the journalist because of her attraction to him, giving the album exchange in their case a romantic connotation that it did not have previously. Lousteau’s response to Dinah’s request evokes once again the preoccupation of men regarding the quality of their contributions. First, he affirms that he is too obscure to write in her album, and then he admits that he could not create at the moment the stances that Dinah requests from him: “D’ailleurs il me faudrait au moins vingt-quatre heures pour improviser quelque méditation bien amère; car je ne sais peindre que ce que je ressens…” (“And I should want at least twenty-four hours to improvise some sufficiently bitter reflections, for I could only describe what I feel”; 84; Waring and Rudd 54). She is, of course, pleased to give him more time to work on his entry because doing so means he will have to stay longer in her mansion. Lousteau takes Dinah’s album with him that night, and the next day, over dinner, he returns it to her, having included in it his illustrious contribution.

The poem that Lousteau adds in Dinah’s album is titled “Spleen,” a nineteenth-century emblematic reference that establishes the depressive tone of the literary creation. Just as he had previously done with the poem about Paquita, Balzac introduces here another meta-literary instance, quoting in this case the whole poem written by Lousteau, 18Lousteau nervousness about having to improvise an album contribution is similar to the one expressed by the character of Chastenay in Henri Melhac’s L’Autographe. The main difference between the reactions of the two contributors is that in the case of Lousteau this apprehension is feigned, while in Chastenay’s it is real.

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which consisted of five stanzas of six verses each. The suffering of the poet is evident
from the first stanza when he declares: “De ce monde égoïste où tristement je roule, / Sans m’attacher à rien” ("Of this self-seeking world, a waif and stray / With none to
whom to cling"); 88; Waring and Rudd 58). Meanwhile, the reference to the album is
already in the second stanza: “Cet album, feuilleté par les doigts d’une femme, / Ne doit
pas s’assombrir au reflet de mon âme. / Chaque chose en son lieu: / Pour une femme il
faut parler d’amour, de joie, / De bals resplendissants, de vêtements de soie, / Et même un
peu de Dieu” ("This page, the pastime of a dame so fair, / May not reflect the shadow of
my care, / For all things have their place. / Of love, to ladies bright, the poet sings, / Of
joy, and balls, and dress, and dainty things- / Nay, or of God and Grace"; 88; Waring and
Rudd 58). Although a poem for an album, which should be dedicated to its owner, was
supposed to include cheerful topics and praise the book’s owner, Lousteau is not able to
offer this this type of contribution because he is “fatigué de la vie” ("so worn out with
life"); 89; Waring and Rudd 58). Conscious of the destiny of a man who, like him, is not
loved, the poet declares: “Bientôt je dois mourir” ("And I soon must die"; 89; Waring and
Rudd 58). He finishes the poem by confessing that frequently he blasphemes against
God, accusing the Creator of not having done anything for him, and of making him poor
and ugly, instead of handsome and wealthy. Like many of the poems I saw in archival
albums, and de Clagny’s and Bianchon’s contributions, Lousteau’s does not refer to the
album’s owner, which was one of the main expectations in this practice.
These verses have a great impact on all the guests at the Baudraye castle that
night. The reading of the poem is apparently collective because everyone has an
immediate opinion about it. Monsieur de Clagny is the first to react, questioning, in a
clearly jealous gesture, Lousteau’s authorship: “Et vous avez composé ces vers depuis hier?” (“And you have written those verses since yesterday?”; 89; Waring and Rudd 59).
Lousteau defends himself acknowledging that he wrote them in a hurry: “J’aurais voulu
défier mieux pour madame” (“I would gladly have done something better for Madame”; 89; Waring and Rudd 59). Dinah, on the contrary, is fascinated by the contribution and
praises it saying that the verses “sont ravissants” (“are exquisite”; 89; Waring and Rudd 59). Captivated by the journalist’s charms and now by his literary abilities, Dinah cannot
criticize the subject and images of this poem, even less imagine that it was not been
created for her album. Balzac’s narrator reveals the true origin of the verses in order,
once again, to mock Dinah’s naiveté and provincial approach to the album: “le journaliste
gardait ces vers dans sa mémoire depuis au moins dix ans, car ils lui furent inspirees sous
la Restauration par la difficulté de parvenir” (“the journalist had stored these lines in his
memory for ten years at least, for he had written them at the time of the Restoration in
disgust at being unable to get on”; 89; Waring and Rudd 59). Thus, the poem that
Lousteau adds in Dinah’s album was not original or inspired by her beauty, as album
entries were supposed to be. Perhaps he had even added it to other albums, which would
prove Jouy’s and Larra’s observation about contributor’s tendency to repeat the same entry in several albums changing only specific details about the addressee.\footnote{Jouy and Larra address the problem of the repetition of contributions in their essays on the album. Jouy mentions that he knows “someone” who responds with a banal contribution to a banal request: “Il inscrit mot pour mot le même compliment sur chaque Album, quels que soient l’âge et la figure de la propriétaire” (“He inscribes word by word the same compliment on each Album, disregarding of the age and the appearance of the owner”; 150). Larra also insinuates that many men used to reproduce basically the same type of compliment in all the albums to which they contributed, affirming that: “todas las dueñas de album son hermosas, graciosas, de gran virtud y talento y amabilísimas: así consta a lo menos de todos estos libros en blanco, conforme van tomando color” (“all album owners are beautiful, graceful, have great virtue and talent and are extremely kind: thus is stated in all those white books, as they start acquiring color”; 330).}

The scene of the album exchange in *La Muse* leaves the reader with many questions regarding the presence of this phenomenon in the context of Dinah de La Baudraye. We have in this novel a provincial bourgeois woman character who, after several attempts of intellectual projects that involved collection, art, and literature, is the only person in ten leagues to have an album. Two essential circumstances were necessary for this to happen: first, Dinah knows about the spread of this fashion in Paris and, second, she has the economic means to acquire an album. How did Dinah know about the album if she had not been able to go to Paris? Her friend Anna, who kept her updated about Parisian crazes, must have told her about this practice. Later on it was also Anna who helped Dinah collect entries. Also, Balzac does not reveal where Dinah got her album, a crucial aspect of the practice according to Larra. I showed how the albums belonging to Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros and Mariana Paniagua still have the seal of the papeteries where they were acquired. Did Anna buy Dinah’s album for her in Paris and give it to her when she visited Sancerre (visit that that instigated Dinah’s literary
project)? Finally, there is the issue about the request for entries in Dinah’s album and the intervention of Anna, de Clagny, and Gravier in this process. Did Dinah ever collect contributions herself, besides those of Bianchon and Lousteau? She did have her salon in Sancerre, where she could have obtained some contributions of her local admirers. If she did, the product of this effort was not important enough to portray it in the novel.

After adding his contribution to Dinah’s album, Lousteau materializes one of the main purposes of the album exchange: courting. Despite her initial resistance and awareness of her inferiority toward the pseudo Parisian journalist, Dinah eventually surrenders to his promises of eternal love. This materialization of the love relationship between Dinah and Lousteau implies a circumstance that is not present in other literary texts that portray the album phenomenon: the infidelity that originates with a contribution. Dinah starts an adulterous relationship with the journalist, threatening her marriage and making of the album a real escape from her mediocre marital life. As Tony Tanner proposes, adultery is an “obvious and legible phenomenon” in many “great” nineteenth-century novels. Tanner links the “bourgeois marriage” as the origin of adultery with the “bourgeois novel” as the space where it is depicted, pointing out that in the same way the “bourgeois marriage loses its absoluteness, its unquestioned finality, its ‘essentiality,’ so does the bourgeois novel” (15). Marriage is meant to be a “mediation procedure” that harmonizes the different levels of the natural, the familial, and the social. However, Tanner affirms that the action of adultery “portends the possible breakdown of all the mediations on which society itself depends” (17). In none of the novels that
Tanner analyzes does divorce materialize as an alternative to the damage provoked by adultery. This will also be the case in *La Muse*, and one of the reasons why Dinah’s personal, artistic, and city projects fail brutally.

Although Lousteau convinces Dinah, now his lover, that he will stay in Sancerre with her because he is tired of his life in Paris, he soon returns to the capital. There, he makes fun of Dinah and of her vanished project of becoming a writer, telling his friend Bixiou that she was: “une des cent et une dixièmes muses qui ornent les départements” ("one of the hundred ‘Tenth Muses’ who adorn the department”; 160; Waring and Rudd 126). While previously in the novel Balzac had identified aspirant female writers in general as “Dixième Muses,” here the insult is specifically directed at Madame de La Baudraye. In an even more material example of his derision toward the provincial woman, Lousteau throws into a fire love letters that she has sent to him without reading them first. In the same way that Dinah’s husband had annulled her literary impulse when she published her poems under the pseudonym of Jan Diaz, now her lover invalidates her gesture of writing by burning her letters. But Lousteau could not imagine the confession that Dinah had shared with him in those letters: she was pregnant with his child and was coming to Paris to live with him. It is important to remember that the lack of children in Dinah’s marriage is another aspect through which Polydore de la Baudraye limited her life, clearly symbolic of the nature of their passionless relationship. In a movement

20 Jean-Jacques Bixiou is a character of *La Rabouilleuse*. 
similar to Pedro’s, Madame de La Baudraye finally gets to the French capital, not as a writer or album collector, but as the lover and mother of the children of a man who ridicules her “superiority” and her attempts to achieve intellectual and artistic projects. In Paris, Dinah dedicates her life to Lousteau, loses her individuality, and lives in constant distress because of the bohemian man’s lies. In this sense, the album exchange was successful for Lousteau, who was able to seduce a woman willing to dedicate her life to him, but not for Dinah. “La comédie est devenue tragédie,” remarks Lucienne Frappier-Mazur about Dinah’s life with Lousteau in Paris.\footnote{21} After her second child with the journalist was born, Dinah’s husband threatens her with taking the children away from her if she does not return to Sancerre. Desperate to the point of even considering suicide, Dinah decides to go back to her provincial life. Thus, “la Muse du Sancerre revenait tout bonnement à la Famille et au Mariage” (“the Muse of Sancerre had simply come back to family and married life”; 227; Waring and Rudd 194). I would add that Dinah was also going back to her album (which she did not take with her to Paris), the only material evidence of the origin of her adulterous Parisian adventure and of her final intellectual and literary project.

The comparative analysis of the album scenes in \textit{La muse} and \textit{Pedro Sánchez} allows for an understanding of the different outcome that this practice could have for men.

\footnote{21} In her article “La métaphore théâtrale dans \textit{La Comédie humaine},” Frappier-Mazur analyzes \textit{La Muse} as a romantic comedy that evokes the theater metaphor that she affirms is constantly present in Balzac’s œuvre.
and women. Dinah used the album fashion as an escape from her provincial circumstances, once her own writing had been annulled by her husband. For Pedro, on the contrary, contributing in an album functions precisely as a transition for his insertion in the Madrilenian literary world and his eventual publication of his own work. This opportunity results from an invitation that Pedro obtains from one of his friends from the posada where he is living in Madrid. This friend has a girlfriend with whose family he enjoys weekly music nights in which they sing or dance to the laste rhythm of the piano that the guests play. An invitation to visit this house is an excellent opportunity for Pedro to keep discovering the particularities of social relations and customs in Madrid, besides expanding his possibilities of networking in the city. Like Bianchon and Lousteau, Pedro is a guest who is originally from a different space (in this case, the montaña), which makes him special enough as to be the object of a request for a contribution.

At don Magín de los Trucos’ house, Pedro feels overwhelmed by the excessive friendliness of his friend’s in-laws. They greet him, take his hat, tell him where to sit, and seem to be genuinely excited about the visit of the young man from Santander, an exotic montañés who honors them with his presence. Being aware of the need to marry their daughters, it is understandable that don Magín de los Trucos and his wife Ángeles could see in Pedro a potential husband for their second daughter, Luz, who is unmarried. After the introductory small talk and the display of clichés about the montaña, don Magín and his wife leave their daughters with the two young men, clearly giving them space for a more intimate exchange. Since his friend is too busy with his girlfriend, Trinis, Pedro
finds himself alone with Luz. The pressure of having to improvise an interesting conversation with the young lady makes Pedro’s provincial nature reappear. Luz looks at him imploring him with her gaze: “A ti te toca empezar”, but Pedro is unable to initiate the conversation (“You have to start”; 1476). Thus, it is Luz, the Madrilenian woman, who starts talking. This gesture constitutes a challenge to the imposed gender roles according to which the woman was not supposed to show interest in a man by starting a conversation with him. Luz proves to be courageous enough to go beyond the social ideas about passive female behavior. The agency that she shows in this exchange will be essential in her role as collector of entries for her album.

The climax of the conversation between Luz and Pedro coincides with the arrival of the guests invited for the evening. Don Magín de los Trucos introduces Pedro with all the pomp and ceremony that a “caballero principal de las Montañas de Santander, soltero, que viajaba por recreo” deserved (“important gentleman from the Santander mountains, unmarried, who traveled for pleasure”; 1476). Pedro and Luz are the first ones on the dance floor, along with Pedro’s friend and Trinis. At 11:00PM, after hours of dancing and singing (Luz had sung, according to Pedro, “bastante mal” (“pretty badly”)), Pedro is ready to leave. The promise of coming back “a menudo” (“often”) is inevitable. At the moment of the farewell Luz tells him: “Sé que es usted poeta y me va a hacer usted un favor” (“I know you are a poet and you are going to do me a favor”; (1477). As proven in the contributions in historical albums and in the album scenes in fictional texts, the status of poet or writer was always preferred among potential contributors. Pedro inquires Luz
who has given her that information and she says that his friend told her about Pedro’s literary abilities. Before denying or confirming the status of poet that Luz awards him, Pedro asks her what favor she needs from him. The young Madrilenian woman responds: “Honrar mi álbum escribiendo algo en él” (“To honor my album by writing something in it”; 1477). With this request, Luz ends an evening of social and artistic interactions and starts officially an album exchange, playing the role of collector that corresponded to her in this practice. Once again, Luz is proactive and acts to bring about her projects. Clearly, this agency ended once she gave the album to the contributors for them to add their entries, which implied losing her control over the book. However, as I showed in my analysis of the portrayal of the mutilation of albums in literary texts, this circumstance could be reversed by the elimination of entries that the owner considered inconvenient for her public image.

Evidently, after such a successful night in terms of the gender exchange that had been established between them, Luz could not let Pedro go without asking him for a contribution to her album. It is important to remember that the woman’s position as album owner was also a difficult one, because she had a great responsibility regarding the selection of the contributors to their book. Before asking Pedro for his contribution, Luz makes sure to confirm the information that his friend had given her, telling the montañés that “she knows” he is a poet. This detail is essential for Luz, because she would not want to have entries in her album that were below the accepted standard of artistic quality. As Larra wrote, besides representing the female owner, the album could become the dowry
of a woman or a source of income for a family: “una pincelada de Goya, un capricho de David, o de Vernet, un trozo de Chateaubriand, o de lord Byron, la firma de Napoleón, todo esto puede llegar a hacer de un álbum un mayorazgo para una familia” (“a brush-stroke from Goya, a caprice by David, or Vernet, a fragment by Chateaubriand, or lord Byron, Napoleon’s signature, all this can make of an album the estate of a family”; 331). For this reason, album owners had to be careful when selecting their contributors, since that could determine the success or failure of this personal project that was so representative of their social constitution.

Being asked for an album contribution also puts Pedro in a privileged position. When Luz affirms knowing that Pedro is a poet and that, because of that circumstance, he is going to do her a favor, she is stating something that Pedro denied in the past. In his exchanges with Clara (another Madrilenian woman, very different from Luz) in the countryside, Pedro denied being a poet, afraid that she would reject him for his excess of romanticism. In the city, Luz affirms knowing that he is a poet (“sé”), in a verbal enunciation that inevitably confirms Pedro’s status as an artist. After the intense training in theater, dance, reading, and writing that he has been receiving since his arrival in Madrid, Pedro must be ready to assume the position of poet and create an album contribution. He is definitely aware of the importance of Luz’s declaration and of her request for a contribution, which reveals the centrality of the album phenomenon in the social context presented in the novel: “declaro que en aquella ocasión me infló un poco la vanidad la oferta del álbum de Luz a título de poeta” (“I declare that in that occasion the
offer of Luz’s album inflated my ego as a poet”; 1477). The attribution of a status as a poet implies a real responsibility, since the expectations would be higher for someone who was certified as having poetic talent. It is important to point out that in Dinah and Lousteau’s album exchange there is no affirmation from her about his status and no reflection from him about being flattered with the request. As a city dweller, Lousteau probably had been album contributor already, and, therefore, is not as surprised and enthusiastic as Pedro with Luz’s request.

Notwithstanding his provincial roots, Pedro is not afraid of the consequences of this request or worried that he would not be able to satisfy Luz’s expectations; on the contrary, he is proud that she thinks of him as an artist and trusts him with her book. “Acepté, pues (no sin remilgos y protestas de fingida modestia),” affirms Pedro, “y Luz me entregó el libro, o, mejor, el estuche que le encerraba” (“I accepted, thus [not without complaints and protests of false modesty], and Luz gave me the book, or, more specifically, the case where it was kept”; 1477). The symbolic gesture of taking the album that Luz offers him signifies Pedro’s assumption of the title of “poet” and a promise to create an entry representative of the literary ability that she attributed to him.

The narrative frame in which Pedro shares his story allows for a reflection on the significance of the album phenomenon in the Madrilenian context during his time in the

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22 The album that belonged to Mariana Paniagua, which I consulted at the Museo Romántico in Madrid, is also in a case, a black box of 7.5 inches (horizontally) by 10 inches (vertically). This album is significantly deteriorated (its pages were even in plastic covers), so the case helps to protect it.
city. When evoking the episode about Luz’s album, old Pedro, our narrator, inevitably has to explain the impact of this practice in those years. “¡Su álbum!,” writes Pedro, recalling his excitement after Luz’s request, “[e]n aquel tiempo estaba el álbum en todo su auge y en la fuerza de su esplendor. Todo el mundo tenía álbum, y al hombre más inofensivo se le enviaban a su casa para que «pusiera algo» en él, cuando no se lo metían por los ojos, de sopetón, para que en el acto escribiese «alguna cosa bonita»” (“Her album! In that time the album was at its peak and in all its glory. Everyone had an album, and they would send it even to the most harmless man so he would ‘put something’ in it, when he was not forced, abruptly, to improvise ‘something pretty’ at the moment”; 1477). Pedro’s memory of the album reveals the centrality of this practice in its moment and reiterates two essential aspects of its development: the established gender roles and the stressful dynamic created between album owners and contributors due to the originality required in the production of entries.

It is important to point out the use of the phrase “en aquel tiempo” to refer to the moment when this request happened, which coincided with the spread of the album fashion in Madrid. The vagueness of the temporal expression makes it challenging to link this episode to a specific historical moment. However, after the album scene, Pereda enriches the fictional framework through Pedro’s narration of the novel with references to specific dates and historical events that allow us to locate the album phenomenon in nineteenth-century Madrid. The novel’s plot from this point forward is strictly related to those incidents and the characters become important participants in them, blurring the
lines between the literary fiction and the historical reality. The first reference to the political events that contextualize the novel and, therefore, the album practice, is the mention of the fall of the government of the “tirano [Juan] Bravo Murillo” (“tyrant [Juan] Bravo Murillo”) which happened in 1852 under the reign of Isabel II. Pedro says that after this event “buenos liberales” (“good liberals”) like himself were outraged and authorities committed constant abuses against them. Then, Pedro mentions a popular revolution that was taking place on a “lunes 17 por la mañana” (Monday 17, in the morning”), in which his friend don Serafín Balduque was participating. Analyzing the events described afterward in the novel makes it clear that the revolution to which Pereda refers is the one that happened on July 17, 1854, which preceded the beginning of the Bienio Progresista, a period from 1854 to 1856 when the Partido Progresista was in control of Spanish government. The rest of the novel develops during the Bienio Progresista. Pereda mentions the moment when the general Baldomero Espartero, after being called by the queen, arrives in Madrid to start a new government of which the general Leopoldo O’Donnell would be War Minister. Later in the novel, Pereda refers to the “revolución de Julio” (“July Revolution”) and the “zancadilla que derribó a Espartero de la noche a la mañana” (“the hindrance that took Espartero down from one day to the next”; 1558). Since the beginning of 1856 continuous social uprisings and riots occurred in Spain, which O’Donnell eventually denounced as the product of the progressive government of Espartero. Although he was warned that O’Donnell was conspiring against him, Espartero did not do anything to stop his political enemy. Eventually, Queen
Isabel II supported O’Donnell, forcing Espartero to resign and abandon the political scene, which determined the end of the Bienio Progresista in 1856. This is the political context of the events included in the novel after Pedro’s album contribution. Pedro mentions the fall of Bravo Murillo’s government not long after his episode with Luz, so we know the album exchange happened shortly before that, probably between 1850 and 1852. In his analysis of Pedro Sánchez, John Akers proposes that the revolution of 1854 is the historical focus upon which the novel depends, and that it is as close as any of Pereda’s works to being a “Galdosian-style episodio nacional” (24).

Linking Pedro’s description of his album exchange to an approximate date is important in my effort to understand the extent of this practice in nineteenth century Spain. It is essential at this point to recall Larra’s essay on the album, in which the social customs writer insisted on presenting this phenomenon as being at the peak of its popularity in 1835. Pedro presents this practice in his narration as still being in the same popular position twenty years after Larra’s description. Among the albums I consulted in Spain I could identify some in which the collection started as early as 1838 (María de los Dolores Perinat de Pacheco) and others in which contributions are from as late as 1899 (Vizcondesa de Solís). Through the memories that Pedro evokes, Pereda reiterates what

23 There was probably a space of a year between the moment when Pedro finishes his relationship with Luz and his reference to the fall of Bravo Murillo. He mentions the arrival of the summer and, soon after that, the autumn, when “despolvoréabanse los aristocráticos salones” (“when they cleaned the dust out of aristocratic salons”; 1500).
Larra had already affirmed: the album phenomenon was so ingrained in that society that “everyone” had one.

While in Luz’s affirmation of Pedro’s poet status we could identify the desire of album owners to fill up their book with entries from real artists, Pedro’s description of the dynamic of this practice suggests that any men could have been asked for a contribution, regardless of their level of talent. Even a man who was “inofensivo” (“harmless”) could add an entry to an album. What exactly does Pedro mean by this? Were these “harmless” men those who would not try to seduce the album owner or those who were not real artists and, therefore, not as smart and sophisticated? Clearly, Lousteau was not one of these harmless men, as he is able to seduce Dinah through his album contribution. This classification would be more appropriate for characters such as Chastenay, the contributor in Meilhac’s play, whose process of creation of an album entry is part of a scheme to mock him. Notwithstanding their intellectual status, according to Pedro’s experience as narrator in the novel, all men could be asked for contributions, forcing them all to create original artwork for albums. In his essay about the album Jouy also makes an observation about the low standards that frequently determined the selection of contributors, affirming that “on salue aujourd’hui tout home soupçonné de savoir lire et écrire” with a request for an album contribution (“one greet nowadays all men suspected to know how to read and write”; 149). From Jouy’s perspective, women’s desperation for getting contributions was so extreme that there would be no filter in the gesture of asking for them. It is interesting how Jouy’s and Larra’s views are contradictory in this specific
matter because Larra believed the contributor had to be distinguished, a poet, and a man of merit.

Pereda’s remark about the ways in which potential contributors received the album is another key aspect for my analysis of the constitution of this practice in the nineteenth century. Larra had mentioned that the album could be sent with the footman, which can be confirmed with what Pereda says about the album being sent to the contributor’s home (“se le enviaban a su casa para que pusiera algo en él”). I discussed this possibility in my analysis of de Ariza’s short story. The other option for collecting entries was to do it in person, as did Dinah, Luz, and the Comtesse in Meilhac’s comedy. Pereda views this technique as much more aggressive because the contributor needed to improvise something “en el acto” (“in the moment”), under the scrutiny of the owner and album readers who witnessed his creative process. The notion of “de sopetón,” which translates as “suddenly” or “unexpectedly,” evokes the image of a punch, which was the physical equivalent of the album request for potential contributors.

On the way back to their posada, Pedro’s friend urges him to keep coming to that house with him, not only because it would be convenient to use him to distract Trinis’ father and spend more time with her, but also because Pedro could start courting Luz. Pedro’s friend emphasizes that the parents of the two young ladies had left the two couples alone as soon as they saw they were getting into a more intimate conversation. Perturbed by the observation, Pedro interrogates his friend about the morals of this family, aware that parents should not behave that way. His friend replies that they are a
very respectable and even religious family, but that they have “la manía de los novios para «las chicas»; “y llega uno de éstos, y se va, y no vuelve; y no escarmientan; y reciben otro, o le buscan, y se larga también” (“the mania of boyfriends for ‘the girls;’ and one comes, and leaves, and does not come back; and they do not learn their lesson; and they receive another one, or they look for him, and that one leaves too”; 1478). Evidently, this revelation disappoints Pedro, who had probably thought that his connection with Luz that night was real and unique and, therefore, that the request for a contribution to her album was also somewhat exclusive. Larra had explained how the album could be interpreted as a metonymy of its owner, and the contributions in it as a representation of her moral stains (or previous sentimental partners). Pedro seems to have established the same association when he realizes the significance of Luz’s request: “El demonio me lleve si no me entraron ganas de estrellar el álbum que conservaba bajo el brazo contra los adoquines de la calle, al oír al pícaro estudiante” (“The devil take me if I did not want to smash the album against the cobblestone when the rogue student told me that”; 1478). Pedro’s frustration after his friend’s revelation is linked to the responsibility that accepting Luz’s album implied: he is now forced to create verses for a “mujer así” (“a woman like that”; 1478), who did not deserve his artistic creativity because she was not offering him a privileged position among her suitors. Pedro’s friend encourages him to see this contribution with the same banality with which Luz had probably seen her request: “¿qué te importa si no te has de casar con ella?” (“why do you care, if you are not going to marry her?”; 1478).
Pereda’s detailed description of Luz’s album and of Pedro’s contribution in it is one of the richest in all the literary texts that depict this object. While in Balzac’s novel we had access to some of the contributions in Dinah’s album and to the names of many contributors, in Pereda’s novel we do not obtain that information but, instead, a very rich physical portrayal of the album. Once they arrived in their posada, Pedro goes into his bedroom to see in private, and for the first time, Luz’s album. He takes it out of the case and discovers a beautiful book, with “tapas forradas de terciopelo azul, con esquineros y el rótulo del centro dorados” (“covers lined with blue velvet, with golden corners and center label”; 1478). The details that Pedro notices in Luz’s album are material characteristics that I saw in some of the albums that I consulted in archives. The album that belonged to Josefa González, kept at the Museo Romántico in Madrid, was precisely lined with velvet (in this case purple) and also had golden metal corners. (See Figures 33 and 34)
Figure 33: Cover of the album of Josefa González. (Album de Josefa González)
Pereda conveys a particular nineteenth-century mystique in the scene that shows Pedro opening Luz’s album for the first time. The montañés gets closer to the candle in order to see all the contributions included in the book ("arrimándome al velón comencé a hojearle"). He is amazed by what he discovers:

Estaba lleno de todos los imaginables artificios poéticos. Había acrósticos hacia arriba, hacia abajo, de través, en diagonal, a la derecha y a la izquierda; estrofas en forma de cáliz, de guitarra, de cruz, de pirámide y de reloj de arena; sonetos encerrados en orlas de pichones con guirnaldas en el pico; seguidillas encestadas..., ¡qué sé yo!, y el nombre de Luz en cada copla; y Luz cantada por todas partes: por los dientes, por lo ojos, por el pelo, por el talle, por la voz y por cuanto a la vista estaba y mucho más. Las firmas eran de Eduardo López, Arturo Díáz, Santos Perales, Alfredo Grazones, y así por el estilo. (1478)
It was filled up with all the imaginable poetic artifices. There were acrostics going up, down, across, diagonally, to the right, and to the left; stanzas in the shape of chalice, of guitar, of cross, of pyramid, and of hourglass; sonnets enclosed in frames of birds with garlands in their beaks; seguidillas in baskets…, I do not know!, and the name of Luz in each stanza; and Luz praised for everything: for her teeth, for her eyes, for her hair, for her waist, for her voice and for everything that could be seen and a lot more. The signatures were from Eduardo López, Arturo Díaz, Santos Perales, Alfredo Grazones, and such.

The description of the literary and visual variety in Luz’s album is fascinating. In the case of Pedro’s experience as contributor, the entries remain within the same literary genre and there are no references to drawings or music scores. The multiplicity among the entries in Luz’s album responds to the kind of verse structure and the visual image they conveyed. The three main types of poetic construction in Luz’s album are the acrostic, the sonnet, and the seguidilla. The most interesting aspect of the poetic ensemble in Luz’s album are the figures that the authors created with the words they imprinted in the book. It is particularly interesting that the shapes of the poems in Luz’s album evoke either religious images (like the chalice and the cross) or images that are not strictly related to the nineteenth-century context (like the pyramids or the hourglass). These figures do not correspond to the particular content of each poem because Pedro notes that each creation was dedicated to the album’s owner and her attributes. We can imagine that the motivation to give their poems those distinct shapes was the

24 The seguidilla is a metric composition that has from four to seven verses from which, in both cases, the first one and the third one are free rhyme with seven syllables, and the other two have five syllables and are assonant. When the seguidilla has seven verses, the fifth and the seventh verses have five syllables and are also assonant, and the sixth, like the first one and the third one, has seven syllables and a free rhyme (“Seguidilla”).

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contributors’ desire to stand out and create a poetic composition that would be remembered by the album owner as well as by future contributors who would consult previous contributions (just as Pedro does).

Pedro confirms the function of the album as a collection of compliments and praises that feeds the owner’s ego when he notices the superficial nature of the contributions in Luz’s book. In his attempt to catalogue the subjects treated in this book Pedro does not mention entries about Luz’s beauty, intelligence or moral superiority. Apparently, all the contributions created for Luz by her acquaintances were dedicated to specific parts of her body. The contributor’s thematic choice was probably emblematic of Luz’s shallowness, which hindered their ability to grasp and depict her ethical or emotional constitution. There is also the possibility that those contributors, since they were the temporary boyfriends of Luz, had met her only briefly and could not really write about her spiritual or intellectual constitution. Thus, after glancing over Luz’s album, Pedro finally decides to participate in it, selecting her neck as the object of his praise. Pedro justifies his choice explaining that Luz’s neck was almost not mentioned in the album, which means that his entry would be considered unique and memorable in the monotony of the contributions.

Before going to sleep, Pedro composes in his mind the “décimas” (“stanzas”) that he would add to Luz’s album. He makes sure to review every adjective he wants to use to describe the young lady’s neck: “tornátil, ebúrneo, alabastrino, mórbido, [y] níveo” (“revolving, ivory-like, alabaster-like, delicate [and] snowy”; 1478). The next morning he
contributes to Luz’s album the poem he had kept in his mind all night long. He titles the poem: “Al cuello de Luz” (“To Luz’s neck”) “Al día siguiente escribí, a pulso y pareadas, las dos décimas; las separé con una flecha punta arriba, y firmé con mi nombre y apellido completos; que bien podían estar tranquilamente allí donde había tantos que no valían más que ellos ni sonaban mucho mejor” (“Next day I wrote, with a firm hand and in pairs, the two stanzas; I separated them with an arrow pointing up, and I signed with my first name and last name; which could easily be there with those which were not more worthy than them and did not sound better”; 1478).

Following the model of the previous contributors, Pedro signs his entry in Luz’s album, identifying himself as the proud author of that poem. The gesture of signing his contribution without Luz being present can be approached applying Jacques Derrida’s interpretation of the act of writing and the signature as requiring the addressee’s absence. According to Derrida, a written signature “implique la non-présence actuelle ou empirique du signataire” and “elle marque aussi et retient son avoir-été présent dans un maintenant passé, qui restera un maintenant futur, donc dans un maintenant en général, dans la forme transcendantale de la maintenance” (“implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer” and “also marks and retains his having-been present in a past now, which will remain a future now, and therefore in a now in general, in the transcendental form of nowness [maintenance]”; Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context” “Signature, événement, context”). While the writing is originally created in the absence of the addressee, the signature also implies the eventual “nonpresence” of the signer,
which means that his mark will continue to “act” transcending his approval or consent and also his own existence. In the case of the album, this absence of the author allowed the owner and the readers of the book to identify the “writing” in it with a name, a presence that remained during the physical absence of the signer. Once the contributor writes his declaration in the album he cannot deny or cancel it, so it keeps “communicating” a specific meaning that goes beyond the original intention of writing. Considering that many of the album contributions were made by suitors and consisted of praises that had the intention to seduce the female album owner, this notion of the permanence of the written sign as a mark that remains, “qui ne s’épuise pas dans le présent de son inscription”, is critical to my analysis (“which is not exhausted in the present of its inscription”; “Signature, Event, Context”). Once a male contributor included his creation in an album, that written expression stayed as a symbol of the feelings (real or simulated) that he had for that woman at the specific moment of the contribution. Even if eventually those feelings changed, his writing would remain in the album pages, validated by the signature that accompanied his entry. This is precisely what happens with Pedro’s signature in Luz’s album. This dynamic also explains the result of the album exchange between Dinah and Lousteau. Even though it does not refer directly to her, the contribution that the journalist includes in Dinah’s album has an intention of seduction that maintains its validity even after he mocks her literary impulse and makes it clear that he is not really in love with her.
After adding his poem to Luz’s album, Pedro continues to frequent don Magín de los Truco’s house and eventually declares his love to Luz. As in the case of Dinah and Lousteau, this album exchange leads to a courtship and to the establishment of a relationship between the collector and the contributor, which was one of the potential outcomes of this practice. One day, when leaving from their habitual visit, his friend tells him (spontaneously and unexpectedly) that he is not going to return to that house. Pedro declares that he is not either. In this way, Pedro becomes one of “los novios” who had been welcomed in Luz’s house. Although significantly sooner than in Dinah and Lousteau’s case, the outcome of this album request is the same. Notwithstanding his physical absence, his written album contribution will remain as a symbol of his fleeting presence in Luz’s life. Like Pedro did before, Luz’s future suitors will read his contribution and probably will be aware, as Larra claimed, the material ink stain represented a moral stain in her public constitution as album owner.

For Dinah, the album exchange meant believing in a false love declaration and moving unsuccessfully to the city, ultimately to return to the province. The aftermath of Pedro’s participation in the album craze evidences, however, how this event transformed his life in the city, opening up his possibilities of networking and of continuing the development of his literary inclination. Pedro himself acknowledges that the whole “adventure” with Luz, which included the album exchange and the relationship he had with her, left him feeling “como niño con zapatos nuevos; y tan englosinado a la sociedad” (“as a child with new shoes and so fond of society”; 1479). After this, Pedro
starts going to salons and becomes a journalist responsible for the “revistas literarias” ("literary newspapers") at the newspaper *El Clarín de la patria*. Eventually, Pedro even writes his own literary text, *Cuento oriental*, which was a metaphor for the political situation in Spain narrated from a Muslim point of view. After the publication of this text, Pedro is seen as a threat by authorities, and readers of the newspaper, who see in him an emblem of freedom of speech and political struggle, use his treatment as a call to arms. In a meta-fictional reference, at the end of the novel Pedro mentions the process of writing this very story. It is understandable that Pedro includes his album experience in this narration, since his gesture of writing would have probably never materialized if it was not for his role as an album contributor, which allowed him to acknowledge the value and potential of his literary production.

II. The Reaffirmation and Transgression of Gender Roles in the Album Fashion in *El poeta y la beneficiada* and “Album-abanico”

The different links that Bretón de los Herreros and Clarín had with the album fashion may be related to the chronological moment of their social and literary activity. As I mentioned previously, Bretón de los Herreros was an active participant in the album trend, who wrote plays about it and even assumed the role of contributor.²⁵ By contrast, Clarín, born in 1852, started his literary career after the period that Larra and Pereda identify as the peak of the album, in the 1830s to the 1850s. There is no biographical

²⁵ I include Bretón de los Herreros’ biography in the third chapter of this study, with my analysis of the play *El cuarto de hora*. 
information that allows us to classify Clarín as a contributor, and “Album-abanico” is the only one of his texts in which I have found a reference to the album practice. Clarín is identified, along with Benito Pérez Galdós, as one of the most important nineteenth-century Spanish novelists. Besides novels, Clarín stood out with his writing of short stories and literary criticism, as well as by his work as a journalist, a profession that, as I have shown, was very common among both real and fictional album observers and participants. Clarín’s education was significantly influenced by Krausism, a philosophy pioneered by German thinker Karl Christian Frederich Krause that proposed a reconciliation of theism and pantheism. For Clarín, this contact with Krausism meant the development of an idealism that directed his intellectual life toward the search of the spiritual and metaphysical meaning of existence (“Leopoldo Alas Clarín. El autor. Biografía”). Clarín combined the perspective that Krausism offered him with the realism and naturalism of the positivist trend that was also influential in his milieu. Leonardo Romero Tobar identifies the very nature of Clarín’s criticism and literary creation as a representation of the dualism between romanticism and realism (“Clarín’: Romanticismo, realismo”). Through his literature, Clarín attempted to elevate the tone of the national discourse, pointing out aspects that affected Spain and Spaniards, and always promoting the possibility of change through Krausism and an aspiration to perfection (“Leopoldo Alas Clarín. El autor. Biografía”). This perspective inevitably required the use of a moralistic tone in many of Clarín’s literary texts, as is the case with “Album-abanico.” Clarín died in 1901 in Oviedo, the city that had become the fictional
background for the novel *La Regenta* (1884-1885), unquestionably his realist masterpiece.

Although significantly different in terms of plot, *El poeta y la beneficiada* and “Album-abanico” share an aspect that is essential for the portrayal of the album in each text. In both Bretón de los Herreros’ play and in Clarín’s short story, the album owners envision their collection as a way to demonstrate the extensiveness of their social networks and to satisfy their constant need for validation. Interestingly, there is also a fundamental difference between these texts, which determines the depiction of the album: the gender of the album owner. In Bretón de los Herreros play, the album owner is a somewhat irritating man, don Próspero Pantoja, who is extremely proud of his collection and, as part of his constant mission to expand it, requests an entry for it from the poet in the play. Troubled by the demand, the poet creates a contribution that is meant to mock don Próspero’s intellectual and artistic knowledge, and a punishment for the album owner’s arrogance, as it does not praise him or exalt his attributes, which was supposed to be the main goal of album entries.

Clarín’s story also portrays an album owner using a very strong character, in this case a woman who had become addicted to the album fashion when she was young, and, incapable of giving up her compulsion, now essentially manages her daughter’s collection. Through the character of the album-obsessed mother, Julita Frondoso, we once again witness the establishment of a link between the quantity of contributions in an album and the number of romantic relationships its owner has had. One of the most
important aspects of Clarín’s short story is its portrayal of the use of fans as albums, which reveals important information about the evolution of this practice toward the end of the century, since the story dates from 1898.

Bretón de los Herreros’ insertion of a male album owner completely challenges the traditional depiction of this practice, as presented in the essays on social customs about the practice and in other literary texts, including Herrero’s own play *El cuarto de hora*. However, as I demonstrated in my analysis of archival nineteenth-century albums, the gender expectations of album ownership were not as strict as Jouy and Larra claim. Among the albums I consulted in libraries and archives, I found several that belonged to men, specifically to Alfonso de Quesada, the General Enrique Solano, Modesto Lloréns y Torres, and Ramón Pérez Costales. Bretón de los Herreros acknowledges this alternative approach to the album trend and portrays it in one of his plays, arguably making male-ownership of albums more acceptable. While there is one instance in the play when a female character is surprised when don Próspero reveals that he has an album, there is no general questioning of this gesture of appropriation of a traditionally “feminine” practice.

One particularity of the character of don Próspero is his approach to the album phenomenon and the intention and mission behind his participation. When he approaches the poet to ask him for a contribution, don Próspero states that: “siguiendo la moda/ me he mandado a hacer un álbum” (“following the fashion/ I have sent for an album to be made”; 77). This proves that don Próspero is aware of the material cultural tendencies in his milieu and that he decides to participate in the album precisely because it was a
dominant trend. Don Próspero’s aims in this collection project go beyond his current reality and imply a permanence after his death: “Yo me he propuesto/ inmortalizarme á costa/ de los demás” (“I have resolved to immortalize myself at the expense of others”; 77). For don Próspero, the album as an object, and the entries included in it as an homage to his virtues, will constitute his “fama póstuma” (“posthumous fame”; 77). According to him, he is already renowned in literary societies, at libraries, and among comic actresses.

The album, then, would be a way for him to create a record of this time of glory, a memory that would be available for others and for his own pleasure.

Don Próspero’s conception of his album as an altar of self-memorialization and as a testament to his popularity exceeds the value attributed to the books of any of the other fictional characters or historical figures that I have studied. The main problem with don Próspero’s self-introduction is his pompous and presumptuous attitude, which clearly annoys the poet to the point that it influences the entry that he creates for the album. Don Próspero insists upon the literary status of the contributors who have agreed to write in his book, affirming that “todo escritor que goza/ de algun nombre contribuye/ con algo para mi gloria” (“any writer who enjoys/ some reputation contributes/ with something for my glory”; 77). Due to the success that, according to him, his album has obtained, don Próspero even has plans for future projects involving the album. He confesses to the poet that, with his album, he is becoming so famous that one day, if he felt like it, he could print reproductions and entitle it: “‘Curiosa y auténtica miscelánea de retales y rapsodias literarias que cien plumas coetáneas españolas escribieron en elogio de don Próspero

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Pantoja, con sus firmas en facsímil por apéndice á la obra, y el retrato del autor”
(“Curious and authentic miscellany of remnants and rhapsodies that one-hundred contemporary Spanish quills wrote to praise Mr. Próspero Pantoja, with their signatures in facsimile as appendix to the work, and picture of the author”; 77). Don Próspero’s proposal to make his album into a printed book introduces an approach to the album dynamic that is not present in other literary texts that I study. However, the transformation of personal albums into published reproductions for mainstream circulation is a practice that did in fact happen in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Later in this study, I analyze the two published albums that I encountered in my research. In the case of don Próspero’s proposal to publish his album, his identification of himself as the “author” of the anthology would be very problematic, especially because he acknowledges that “a hundred quills” are actually responsible for the content of the book.

Don Próspero complements his excessive praise of his album with a physical description of the object itself. In the stage directions of the play, the album is introduced at an extra-fictional level. While showing the album to the poet, don Próspero simultaneously describes it orally for the members of the audience: “Vea usted: qué bella forma! Soberbia encuadernación! Qué dibujos! Eh? Qué orlas! Alegría ha echado el resto. Oh! Bien vale las dos onzas que me ha costado” (“Look: what a beautiful form! Superb binding! The drawings! Huh? The borders! Alegría has done its best. Oh! It is worth the two ounces that I paid for it”; 77). In his essay on the album, Larra points out
that in Spain only the well-known and skilled bookbinder Alegría could make an album that rivaled foreign models. By adding the reference to Alegría in El poeta y la beneficiada, Bretón de los Herreros proves that he is aware of the most skilled album-makers in Spain. The mention of Alegría also allows don Próspero to reiterate that he takes his participation in this fashion very seriously, and that he made sure to get an album of the highest quality in order to correspond with to the collection he kept in it.

Like don Próspero’s, Julita’s album evidences her success in her social circles. The narrative technique of retrospective offers the readers a depiction of how admired Julita used to be when she gathered her collection as a young lady, and the album fashion was all the rage. Clarín’s narrator begins by pointing out that the story he will narrate, which is a “fiel historia de sucesos reales,” develops when “el álbum de versos era ya cosa bastante desacreditada, y el abanico convertido en álbum, el colmo de lo cursi” (“truthful story of real events” “the album of poetry was very discredited, and the fan transformed into album, the extreme of tackiness”; 988). In her study about “cursilería,” Noël Valis links the notion of tackiness to romanticism in Spanish literature and culture. Valis explains that Romantic literature had a belated arrival in Spain, and that this sense of obsolescence was often translated into images of “cursilería,” “whether embodied as affectation, imitation, or triteness” (4). “Cursilería” represents an inadequacy that is related to middle-class aspirations and cultural belatedness, which, for Valis, is symbolic of an emergent modernity in Spain (4). Through the character of Julita Frondoso and her
story, Clarín portrays a stereotypical manifestation of “lo cursi,” one that reveals information about the position of the album fashion toward the end of the century.

Published in 1898, it is understandable that at the moment of the narration of “Album-abanico” both the regular book album and the fan transformed into album were outmoded. The traditional album had its peak from around 1830 to 1850, but was still very popular in the 1870s, as the albums that belonged to Julia de Asensi, Mariana Paniagua, and Tomasa Bretón de los Herreros prove. The “album-abanico” may have started to be fashionable before the decade of the 70s, but it was perhaps obsolete in the post-album-craze moment at the end of the century. The techniques employed for gathering contributions for the album-fan reproduced the gender dynamics of the regular album exchange, as Julita’s declaration: “Fulanito, tiene usted que hacerme algo para el abanico” proves (“John Doe, you have to do something for my fan”; 988). With the album-fan, the issue of the literary status of the contributors was as central as with the conventional album. For this reason, Julita makes sure to have contributions by many “poetas de verdad,” including Campoamor, Adelardo López de Ayala, Manuel de Palacio and Gaspar Núñez de Arce (“true poets”; 988). But the selection of contributors for Julita’s several fans is not limited exclusively to writers. Rather, she also includes entries

26 This formulation of the request for an album contribution is somewhat different from Jouy’s description of the exchange, which, even though insistent, was still basically a question: “Ne ferez-vous rien pour mon Album, vous qui avez mis de si jolies choses sur l’Album de toutes ces dames? (“Would not you do something for my Album, you who have put such pretty things in all those women’s Albums?”; 149). Julita’s request, on the contrary, is an affirmation that implies an order. She declares to her potential contributors that they have to (“tiene”) create an entry for her fan, putting a pressure on them that corresponds to their obligation and responsibility to fulfill their role in the album exchange.
by politicians, journalists, and actors, in order to try to prove her social success via the album-fan trend.

As in the case of don Próspero, for Julita the album-fan signifies a material manifestation of her social connections and a proof of her worth in the eyes of others. However, unlike with the male album owner in Bretón de los Herrero’s play, Julita does not boast about the content of her fans. The protagonist of Clarín’s story has a different means to celebrate her success in this practice: she establishes romantic links with some of her contributors. Considering Julita’s status as a married woman, this circumstance evokes the use that Dinah de la Baudraye makes of her album, although with the basic difference that in Balzac’s novel the infidelity involves only one contributor. As in the case of Dinah, the narrator of Julita’s story identifies her participation in the album practice as a “mania:” “los amantes variaban; la manía siempre era la misma” (“the lovers changed; the mania was always the same”; 990). Valis affirms that Julita’s lovers are representative of the serialized novels she is addicted to: the names vary, but the formula remains the same, and so too does the ending (105).

One of the lovers who seems to have truly impacted Julita’s life is Angel Trabanco, a lyrical poet who sincerely wanted to conquer her heart. But for Trabanco to be able to seduce Julita, he has to prove his talent and admiration in the only way that she would truly be able to appreciate: with a contribution to her “álbum-abanico.” Using a very small handwriting, Trabanco adds a twenty-verse poem entitled “El molino viejo” (“The Old Mill”) to an empty corner of Julita’s fan. This contribution, combined with
Trabanco’s strong and dominant character, seduces Julita and allows for the poet to start a relationship with her. Trabanco’s influence on Julita is enough as to convince her that she is poorly versed in literature and to compel her to include the Goncourt brothers and Balzac among her readings. However, there is an aspect of Julita’s personality that Trabanco was never able to change, a habit that certainly bothered him more than her literary preferences: “al álbum-abanico no pudo hacerla renunciar” (“he was never able to make her give up her album-fan”; 990). Thus, Julita establishes an adulterous love relationship with Trabanco, while she continues to expand her album collection, which implies that she continues to be exposed to, and thus (possibly) tempted by, the seduction games of other contributors.

Don Próspero and Julita both have an addictive attachment to their albums that manifests itself through the excessive admiration of their collections and their constant need to gather new contributions. Aware that some people in her milieu might identify her fans as a catalogue of her lovers, Julita clarifies to Trabanco that this potential link is not real in every case: “Te juro que nunca tuve nada con Zorrilla, ni con Campoamor, no [sic] con Pepe Luis” (“I swear I never had anything with Zorrilla, Campoamor, or Pepe Luis”; 990). The attempt to clarify and list of those specific contributors could have been more harmful than beneficial for Julita, since it implies that other unmentioned contributors may well have been her lovers. But Julita is not worried about the judgment of Trabanco or of society in general. Clearly, the whiteness of the pages of the album that Larra insisted upon is not a priority for Clarín’s album-fan owner.
In the same way that Julita continues her collection, don Próspero takes advantage of his encounter with the poet to request a new contribution for his album. The poet’s initial refusal to create something for don Próspero’s album is based upon the quantity of entries the book already contained, which implies that the poet’s was far from indispensable to the album’s completion. But don Próspero insists, using the typical technique of flattering the contributor’s talent and arguably even vanity: “Por una muestra de usted/ daría diez de las otras” (“for a sample of your writing/ I would give ten of the others”; 77). Besides the excuse of lack of time, which is a recurrent refrain among fictional album contributors, as it surely was among actual historical album contributors as well, the poet also warns don Próspero about his inability to say anything substantial about him, since he does not really know him. But don Próspero will not give up on his album mission, and annoyingly insists that the poet contributes “[c]ualquier cosa” (“something”; 77) to his book. Not giving the poet enough time to continue to decline his request, don Próspero simply leaves him the album saying that he will come back in an hour. In the absence of the album owner, the poet is responsible for the creation of a contribution, which should continue the pattern of praise established by the book’s previous entries.

After don Próspero’s departure, the spectators and readers of the play witness the process of creating the album contribution. Before he starts writing, the poet wonders: “¿Habrá hombre más ridículo?,” and during the process of writing of his contribution he declares: “Quiero que escarmiente” (“Is there a more ridiculous man?”); “I want him to
learn his lesson”; 78). These statements reveal the contempt the poet feels for don Próspero and announce the tone of his album entry. He writes a hurried contribution that lacks the reverential tone of the others, and then goes back to work on his own poetic production. In the very last scene of the play, don Próspero returns to recover his album. In addition to the poet, this scene also features doña Isabel, who is in love with the poet, don Ambrosio, who visits the poet to ask him for advice about a play he is writing, and an actress, who comes to request a song for her next play from the poet. It is particularly interesting that at first don Próspero does not refer directly to his book, asking mysteriously: “Se hizo aquello?” (“Was that done?”; 89). Why did don Próspero not inquire about his album openly, with the same vain tone that he had used previously with the poet when requesting his contribution? It is impossible to imagine that he would want to hide his identity as album owner from anyone, considering that he treated the book as a tribute to himself and evidence of the appreciation he supposedly enjoyed from writers in his milieu. Interestingly, when the actress asks him: “¿También tiene usted álbum?,” don Próspero responds in a somewhat defensive tone: “Por qué no?” (“Do you also have an album?” “Why not?”; 89). With this response, don Próspero makes it appear that he feels there is nothing wrong with men owning albums, and that this is a perfectly acceptable tendency within the development of this phenomenon.

Don Próspero reads the new entry in his album, entitled: “Á don Próspero Pantoja, epigrama,” out loud so all of the characters in the scene, as well as the public in the theater, can enjoy it. The epigram reads: “Si cada escritor severo/ viene á pedirle una
hoja,/ y en el forro se le antoja/ poner su nombre al librero./ ¿qué le queda al buen Pantója?/ Fuera de los nueves, cero” (“If every serious writer/ comes to ask him for a sheet/ and he feels like/ putting his name on the bookcase/ what is left for the good Pantója?/ Besides the nines, zero”; 89). 27 The necessary rhyme in the verses detracts from the logic of the stanzas. The only thing that is clear is the poet’s intention to deride this album owner, pointing out his supposed links with stern authors and his conceited attitude regarding his collection. The male to male album exchange in *El poeta y la beneficiada* is completely different from those portrayed in other literary texts, not only because there is no gender difference between the album owner and the contributor, but also because of the intentional sarcasm in the entry. Even in cases like Lousteau’s and Pedro’s, in which the contributions are not sincere, the entries do not contain a direct taunt created to prove the intellectual inferiority of the owner.

Evidencing his inability to evaluate literature, don Próspero is not offended by this contribution. On the contrary, he describes it as “masterful” and states that he is greatly honored. “Sólo se hacen epigramas/ á los grandes hombres,” affirms don Próspero, which implies that now he is one of those whose greatness is acknowledged with this type of literary construction (“Epigrams are only done/ for great men”; 90). He even refers to “Boileau” (in italics in the original), pointing out that if it had not been

27 The term “librero” in Spanish could either mean “librarian” or “bookcase.” It is hard to determine the exact meaning the poet wanted to use in this case because of the illogical content of the poem. Another potential translation of the verse could be: “and he feels like/ giving his name to the librarian.”
because of his epigrams, many illustrious men would have passed unnoticed in France.\textsuperscript{28} Although don Próspero insists that he has contributions by the most important writers that he had encountered, he is clearly unversed in the qualities of good literature. Don Próspero is so self-absorbed that he interprets the satirical epigram as a valuable and flattering intellectual creation, which in the end justifies the poet’s scorn.

While in \textit{El poeta y la beneficiada} the poet mocks don Próspero’s naïveté and limited literary knowledge, in “Album-abanico” there is also an indirect criticism of the album owner. In this case, Julita is condemned for her approach to the album practice. Far from being intimidated by the possible association of the content of the album with its owners’ romantic life, Julita continues her collection, demonstrating an agency that goes beyond the simple gesture of asking for a contribution. In de Ariza’s short story and in Bretón de los Herrero’s play \textit{El cuarto de hora}, I analyze the circumstances in which albums were mutilated because of the owner’s desire to hide certain aspects of their personal relationships, which might otherwise have been revealed by the contributions. “Album-abanico” defies this idea of the album and presents a protagonist who takes pride in her collection, even if in instances it implied judgment and questioning about her honor. In this sense, Clarín’s short story depicts a completely different manifestation of the album phenomenon, as there are no other fictional characters who so proudly accept the possible implications of their involvement in the album fashion.

\textsuperscript{28} Don Próspero refers to French poet Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711), who wrote \textit{L’Art poétique}, in which he treated extensively the genre of the epigram.
Unable to deal with Julita’s refusal to give up her album and collection practice, Trabanco decides to marry a woman who does not have an album and whose honor is, presumably, indisputable. Fourteen years later, Trabanco unexpectedly meets with Julita when she is fulfilling the role of mediator for her daughter Luz’s album-fan. The album exchange is so fulfilling for Julita that she could not completely eradicate it from her life, and now that she does not have the necessary youth to keep a fan of her own, she manages her daughter’s. Trabanco witnesses Julita requesting a contribution for Luz’s fan, and inevitably remembers the function that this object had for her mother, thus he: “temió que el álbum de la hija, sugestión de la madre, fuera un registro simbólico, como aquel otro abanico en que él había escrito: ‘El molino viejo’” (“he feared that the daughter’s album, managed by her mother, was a symbolic register, like that other fan on which he had written: ‘The Old Mill’”; 993). Once again, Trabanco judges Julita, this time suggesting that her addiction to the album may have corrupted her daughter’s virtue.

In Clarín’s narration, there is a constant tone of gossip that, as Valis points out, is even present through the narrator’s intonations and stylistic tics (111). At the end of the story, this narrator insists, in a malicious tone, that Julita is a respectable woman nowadays, because everyone has forgotten her “vida alegre” (“merry life”) and, thus, they have forgiven her youthful transgressions.29 Now she is simply seen as the mother of one of the most elegant and beautiful young women in Madrid. Describing how people

29 The expression “mujer de vida alegre” is a euphemism to point out that a woman is a prostitute.
interpret Julita’s album-fan fixation, the narrator concludes that “era una manía inocente, que todos seguían respetando” (“it was an innocent mania, that everyone continued to respect”; 994). The narrator’s pseudo apology for Julita is interrupted by Trabanco’s last remark about his former lover. Trabanco concludes that Julita may have abandoned her vices, but not her mania, and then tells himself: “¡Qué diferencia entre Julita Frondoso… y la Magdalena!” (“What a difference between Julita and the Magdalene!”; 994). What is the difference that Trabanco identifies between Julita and the figure who, in Catholicism, represents the sin of prostitution? While Mary Magdalene repented from her sins, to the point of becoming a saint, Julita has not completely done so, and instead still maintains, later in life, a mania that represents her past vices, namely her multiple romantic relationships with men. Clarín’s tendency to include moral lessons in his literature is evoked through the character of Julita, who, in a very anti-religious gesture, does not regret her album fixation, and continues to fulfil this impulse, regardless of her age.

III. The Album as Market Object. Or the Economic Determination of the Practice in Antonio Flores’ and Juan López Valdemoro’s Stories

The access to the album phenomenon was determined by various aspects related to economic considerations. As suggested about this practice in the essays on social customs, it was necessary for potential owners to have the economic means to purchase the books, which, due to their physical construction, were expensive. I verified this in my analysis of actual nineteenth-century albums. In all the cases in which I could corroborate
the identity of the album owners, I can confirm that they were women or men of higher social classes. Of course, the rarest and most beautiful albums belonging to the most illustrious historical figures would be more likely to be preserved, but it is clear that these books represented a considerable investment of capital. It is understandable that, as a central aspect of the album practice, Antonio Flores and Juan López Valdemoro wanted to depict the economic angle of the album fashion. The short stories “Cuadro cincuenta y uno. Placeres de sobremesa” and “El álbum” each develops in a different context, determined by the circumstances of its author. As two minor writers, Flores and Valdemoro are the least well-known of the authors who portray the album in their literature and whom I include in this study.

Flores (1852-1908) has been identified as a costumbrista, particularly influenced by Larra and Ramón Mesonero Romanos. He edited the newspaper El laberinto and collaborated with Los españoles pintados por sí mismos (1843-44), an anthology of articles on social customs that described specific prototypes of persons and characters in the Spanish context. Ayer, hoy y mañana, the collection in which the cuadro or story that depicts the album appears, has been identified as his masterpiece and as an authentic mosaic of Spanish society that helps us to understand the complex moral behavior of people in Flores’ historical context (Rubio, “El costumbrismo de Antonio Flores”).

Unlike Flores, López Valdemoro (1855-1935), also known by his title “conde de las Navas” because of his family lineage, is not identified with Spanish costumbrismo. However, López Valdemoro developed a journalistic career, and, as I have previously
pointed out, many observers of the album practice were involved in journalism. Living in Madrid in his twenties, López Valdemoro was able to establish links with important literary figures in his milieu, including some who were linked to the album trend, such as Emilia Pardo Bazán and José Zorrilla (Murciano). *La docena del fraile* (1886), the collection in which “El álbum” is included, is interpreted as the inaugural work that launches López Valdemoro’s literary career. Elected in 1922 as member of the Real Academia Española, López Valdemoro is almost completely absent from Spanish history and literary criticism (Murciano).

Flores and Valdemoro portray different situations characterizing the social classes that participated most frequently in the album practice. In his “cuadro costumbrista” (“narration on social customs”), Flores portrays an almost autobiographical figure of a writer who, continuing the account he had started in previous cuadros, narrates his experience as a guest at a dinner hosted by the very elegant and aristocratic doña Eduvigis Guzman de Luna. This narrator has already contextualized the events that will take place in this story, ridiculing doña Eduvigis and her family as victims of the “afrancesamiento” (“Frenchisization”) taking place in Spanish society, and which impacted education, fashion, and the arts. At the dinner, this circumstance is stressed through the characterization of the guests and the insertion of the album fashion, as the narrator is asked to create an album contribution for one of the members of doña Eduvigis’ family. In “El álbum,” López Valdemoro portrays a market transaction for the acquisition of an album, focusing on the monetary implications of this economic
exchange for the two potential purchasers. The protagonist of the story, Jesús Vicente y Valle, is a twenty-year old man from a province near Oviedo who goes to Madrid to study pharmacology. In his town, Jesús leaves Jacinta, a beautiful young lady for whom he often wrote seguidillas praising her attributes, and for whom he wants to acquire an album. Due to his social class, the acquisition of the album will be a complicated process for Jesús, as he will have to confront a wealthy man who wants to purchase the very same album that the young man had envisioned for Jacinta.

The fact that Flores focuses on the afrancesamiento of Spanish society in the cuadros that precede the one about the album prepares the reader to interpret this practice as another influence of French culture. In his essay about the album, Larra acknowledges the initial development of this phenomenon in France, pointing out that an “autor francés” had written an essay on social customs about it in 1811 (“French author”; 331). In Flores’ story, the narrator refers to several daily practices that Spanish women have adopted in order to imitate their French counterparts. In addition to clothing style, the narrator is particularly perturbed by the specific tendency among darker-skinned women, to whiten their skin with makeup, in order to “perfectamente traducidas al francés” (“perfectly translated into French”; 50). Doña Eduvigis is one of the victims of this new practice, almost obligatory in her social circle. Her daughter and granddaughter have also

30 The narrator explains the reasoning of Spanish women behind their decision of whitening their skin: “¿De qué nos sirve vestir con trajes de París, y hablar en francés si mientras conservemos esta tez morena han de conocer que somos españolas?” (“What is the point of wearing dresses from Paris, and speaking in French, if as long as we still have this dark skin everyone knows we are Spanish?”; 50).
succumbed to the skin-whitening trend, which she explains has completely altered Spanish women’s lives, because of the torture it implied in terms of controlling facial expressions (especially laughing and crying) so as not ruin their makeup.

Aspirations for social success required conformity with the emerging trends of urban elites in fashionable European capitals. In both La Muse du département and Pedro Sánchez, the album is associated with the city, and the participation of the protagonists of both novels in this phenomenon is either related to their fixation with city fashion, as in Dinah’s case, or to the prospect of moving to the city, as in Pedro’s. Those characters from the countryside had to look and act Parisian or Madrilenian in order to participate in the album practice and not be seen as provincial. Similarly, the desire of women in doña Eduvigis’ family to resemble French women facilitates their access to this trend. In the specific cuadro that introduces the album, we witness the economic and social potential of doña Eduvigis’ family, through the description of a dinner attended by the narrator. The close analysis of this scene and of all the social and historical circumstances it evokes is essential to interpreting Flores’ portrayal of the album phenomenon.

Since every artículo or cuadro de costumbres critiques a given social foible, it is understandable that, along with his portrayal of the album phenomenon, Flores aimed to point out an aspect of society that he wanted to censure and which was, directly or indirectly, linked to the album practice. The scene at doña Eduvigis’ house offers the narrator the opportunity to explore the family’s economic situation in depth. Interestingly, the narrator attends this gathering on one of the twice-weekly nights when
it is organized by doña Eduvigis’ son-in-law. This allows the narrator to obtain information about the origin of this family’s wealth and their business, as it is doña Eduvigis’s son-in-law who controls it. The first thing the narrator notices is that the guests of honor at this dinner are a duke who speaks only French and a “Mr. Saint Philemon.” There is a specific reason for the presence of these visitors that night: doña Eduvigis’ son-in-law invites them to discuss with them the possibility of doing business together. As doña Eduvigis reveals to the narrator, her son-in-law is going to try to convince these guests to invest the capital for the new industrial society he created recently. This is precisely how doña Eduvigis’ son-in-law has become rich: he creates businesses with clauses that give him free shares in the stock. It is understandable that he wants his new partners to be French, since they represent the family’s fascination with France, which is evidenced by their interest in the album fashion.31

The narrator has known doña Eduvigis’ since their youth, and thus is aware that neither her skin color nor the opulence that she enjoys now, correspond to her origins. After his death, doña Eduvigis’ husband did not leave her an inheritance because, as she points out, he “murió sin una peseta” (“died without a penny”; 291). Thus, the wealth that the narrator discovers at doña Eduvigis’ house has a more recent source: the marriage of Ruperta, doña Eduvigis’ daughter. The narrator realizes the root of this new capital displayed at that house and implicitly points out to his hostess its dubious origin: “me

31 Flores’ narrator does not specify if these guests are actually French, but their names and the language they speak allow for this interpretation.
estaba llamando la atención la rapidez con que su yerno de vd. y el señor Palastro, hacen
crecer el capital” (“it was calling my attention the speed with which your son-in-law and
Mr. Palastro make the capital grow”; 288). Thanks to the business that her son-in-law is
developing, doña Eduvigis’ and her family are now part of the nouveaux riches and are
fully enjoying this recent status, as the luxury of their house reveals. Besides suggesting
that the speed with which doña Eduvigis’ son-in-law is creating his fortune is suspicious,
the narrator asks her directly about his investments, eager to learn more about the exact
extension of that family’s fortune: “¿Y quién paga esas acciones?” (“And who invests in
that stock?”; 290).

In her conversation with the narrator, doña Eduvigis stresses the fact that her son-
in-law did not have any prior capital to invest in his business, and that he has been
successful because of his “genio emprendedor” and “pensamiento” (“innovative genius”
thought”; 292, 293). For doña Eduvigis, according to the example set by her son-in-law,
the possibility of economic evolution is a matter of intelligence and strategy. That is
probably why she is so surprised when she asks the narrator if he had made his own
“caudal” (“fortune”) and he replies that he had not. “[E]stoy tan pobre como siempre,” he
affirms, meaning that his economic situation has not changed since they knew each other
in their youth (“I am as poor as always”; 290). Doña Eduvigis asks the narrator if he at
least bought a convent or some national land during these years. This question refers to
the historical context of the process of “desamortización” (“ecclesiastical confiscations”)
that took place in Spain in 1837, through which the state expropriated and sold church
properties. In addition to insisting that he did not buy anything, the narrator also clarifies to doña Eduvigis that he has not been to America, which she proposes as the only other route to wealth, aside from land purchases or shares of stocks. After the narrator declares that he is “aburrido de ver tanta gente rica y no ser yo uno de ellos,” doña Eduvigis invites him to start building his fortune that same night, participating in the card games that will take place at the gathering (“bored with seeing so many rich people and not being one of them”; 295). Perturbed by the narrator’s confession that he cannot even take the cards in this hands (because he does not know how to play), doña Eduvigis asks him about his abilities and talents. “¿Pues qué sabe vd. hacer?” asks confused the rich woman (“Well, what do you know how to do?”; 295). “Haga vd. cuenta que nada,” he replies, “Escribo mal, muy mal, novelas y versos” (“Pretend that I cannot do anything. I write bad, very bad, novels and verses”; 295). This revelation is the origin of the album exchange in this cuadro de costumbres.

The preamble to the album request in Flores’ story consists of a conversation about finances and business, in which both the narrator and doña Eduvigis insistently attempt to obtain more information about one another’s economic status. This conversation and the album interaction both take place during the “sobremesa” (“after-

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32 Flores does not add a direct reference to the “desamortización” in the story, but it is possible to conclude that doña Eduvigis’ question refers to this phenomenon because of her direct reference to the convents that were available for sale. The “desamortización” law passed in 1837, and the process of state sell of confiscated church land occurred afterwards. In his article about the “desamortización” in Spain, Francisco Tomás y Valiente suggests that the “desamortización” had a precedent during the reign of Charles IV in 1798, and a subsequent phase instituted with the Madoz law in 1855, which allowed for the selling of municipal properties, as well as the ecclesiastical land (13).
dinner conversation”), a moment of the night which promoted the intimacy that these exchanges required.\textsuperscript{33} The narrator’s disclosure of his writing ability interrupts doña Eduvigis’ original interest in his financial situation and instead drives her to initiate the album request. Doña Eduvigis is determined to get something out of her interaction with the narrator. When she realizes that he is not wealthy and will not invest money in her son-in-law’s business, she solicits the next best thing. In this case, and because of the narrator’s literary talent, an album contribution satiates doña Eduvigis’ greed, since it offers her family symbolic and artistic capital. As evidenced in Pedro Sánchez, in other literary texts that depict the album, and in meta-fictional references to the practice in the entries of archival albums, the revelation that one was in the company of a writer or artist meant in the nineteenth century an almost immediate request for an album contribution. This instance is reproduced in in Flores’ story when doña Eduvigis essentially forgives the narrator’s lack of monetary capital in order to collect cultural capital through an album contribution. At this moment, the importance of the album collection is prioritized over the narrator’s social status and economic class, becoming the self-proclaimed “pobre” the object of an album request.

Interestingly, doña Eduvigis’ gesture of collection is not for an album of her own, but rather for that of her granddaughter, Georgia, a lady who still has the youth and

\textsuperscript{33} The subtitle of the cuadro is precisely “Placeres de sobremesa” (“Pleasures of the after-dinner conversation”). The irony in this subtitle is clear, as there is nothing pleasurable in the conversation about business between the narrator and doña Eduvigis or in the album exchange, the two main interactions that take place during the sobremesa.
beauty to establish networks and gather a valuable album collection. Similar to Julita’s role regarding her daughters’ album-fan, doña Eduvigis intervenes in her granddaughter’s process of collecting contributions. But doña Eduvigis does not request the entry directly from the narrator, she simply orders her granddaughter: “[q]ue saques el *album*, que el señor es poeta” (“take out the album, the gentleman is a poet”; 295). By ignoring the formality of asking for the album entry, doña Eduvigis makes it clear that the narrator has no right to deny Georgia his contribution, an exercise of power that clearly reflects her social position.

Confused by the transition from the conversation about economic transactions to the album request, the narrator responds with the overrated excuse of an inability to create album entries: “Perdone vd., señorita […] ¡pero yo hago unos versos tan malos!” (“Excuse me, young lady […] but I make such bad verses!”; 295). No album owner would have wanted bad quality verses in her collection, so Flores’ narrator imagines that the pretext of his supposedly inferior ability as writer will free him from the responsibility of having to create an entry for Georgia. But his apology for the mediocrity of his literary talent is not enough for the narrator to evade this request, and doña Eduvigis informs him they will send him the album the following day.

Several details in this scene reveal information about the movement of the album during the process of collecting the contributions. First, doña Eduvigis tells her granddaughter to take out the album, which means the book was not in the salon or in an area of easy access for the guests, but away in some other part of the house. Then, it is
interesting that she tells the potential contributor that they will send him the album. Why would not they give it to him personally at the end of the night, since he was already in their house? Larra points out that albums were sometimes sent with footmen, and I suggest that this is what happens in de Ariza’s short story. However, it is strange that this would be considered as a possibility when the request takes place in person. Given that Flores’ short story is from 1863, around a decade after the peak of the album practice, according to the texts written about it, it is possible to imagine that this cuadro presents an instance of change in its development. Perhaps it became common later in the century to send the album even if the initial request took place in person. It would be hard to determine whether the instance portrayed in Flores’ story corresponds to a typical historical situation, or if it is simply an aspect of the fictional construction of his story.

After her grandmother urges her to get her album, Georgia, without interrupting the conversation that she has been having with one of their French guests all along, warns her grandmother about her high expectations for this entry: “Y sobre todo que no me ponga tonterías” (“And above all that he not put trivialities in it”; 295). This is an ideal instance for the narrator to insist on his inadequacy in fulfilling this request. But doña Eduvigis intervenes once again to clarify what Georgia really means with her prohibition: “que no repita vd. en su album lo que haya puesto en otros, […] como lo hacen todos los poetas, sino que saque usted de su cabeza algunos versos nuevos hablando de ella” (“that you do not repeat in her album what you have put in others, […] as all poets do, but that you take from your head some new verses speaking of her”; 296). Even though Georgia
seems somewhat indifferent to the process of the request for the contribution, she is aware of the importance of the quality of the entries in her book and of the greater implications for her book’s artistic value.

But how could the narrator write a contribution for Georgia, if he actually did not know her? He could even have negative things to say about her because of how disconcerted he is by the skin-whitening practice of women in this family and by their suspicious monetary affairs. Flores’ narrator receives the album the next day, and the types of contributions he discovers in it correspond with my observations about archival albums: poems, pictorial entries, music, and thoughts in prose. Even more interesting than the existing content of the book is what this new contributor does with it: “le di número para despacharle cuando llegara su turno, entre los quince ó diez y seis que habían llegado antes que él con igual petición” (“I gave it a number to deal with it when its turn came, after the fifteen or sixteen that had arrived before it with the same request”; 296). In my analysis of surviving historical albums, I propose the possibility that adding names to the cover of the albums might have reflected the desire of the owners to make theirs stand out from the many a given contributor might have accumulated. The abundance of albums for which this narrator’s contribution has been requested proves that he must be popular for his literary talent, and that his claims of mediocrity are only excuses to free himself from the obligation to create an entry.

In order to interpret the album exchange in this story, it is essential to understand the implications of the economic situation of doña Eduvigis’ family. The fact that both
the conversation about finances and the album exchange itself take place at the sobremesa establishes a parallel between the two occurrences. The punch at the end of the story allows for a confirmation of the narrator’s previous suggestion about the illegality of the business in which doña Eduvigis’ son-in-law is involved. The narrator leaves from doña Eduvigis’ house with another guest, the “General Spech,” who is as curious about the origin of this family’s wealth as the narrator, and so asks him directly if he knows anything about it. Then, the general reveals to the narrator that people from their social circle are questioning and censuring this family: “Nada, habladurías, sobre si gastan demasiado en la casa y no se sabe de donde sale” (“Nothing, gossip about the fact that they spend too much money and people do not know where it comes from”; 298). This declaration of the general represents a broader questioning of the new rich of Queen Isabella II’s reign, and of their dubious economic business.

The interest of doña Eduvigis’ family in the album phenomenon constitutes another of their efforts to become part of a social class to which they did not originally belong. In choosing to represent a family whose corrupt economic dealings converge with their fascination with the album, part of Flores’ intention in the story was surely to critique both this fashion and those involved in it. As members of the nouveaux riches, doña Eduvigis’ family is questioned within the fictional frame of the story for their potentially-fraudulent business, and this implicit accusation takes place simultaneously with the request of entries to advance their album collection. Flores’ representation of the album does not only address the issue of morality, but also questions the potential lack of
sophistication of those interested in this practice, given that many of them were just recently developing their literary taste.

Flores’ *cuadro social* depicts an album driven by complicated questions of appearance versus reality. A wealthy grandmother actualizes an album request for her somewhat disinterested granddaughter, using their false white skin and illegally acquired capital to authorize themselves to appropriate a French fashion. Just as they illicitly obtain their money, the contributions in Georgia’s album are not from contributors who necessarily know her well and can sincerely exalt her attributes, but rather from those which artistic status can contribute to the value of the book. Similarly, in the question of appearance versus reality, the recipient of the request in the story is a writer who denies his literary ability to contribute something to the collection, but who at the end is forced to agree because of the family’s influence and the intense social pressure they apply. But ultimately, it is the economic status of doña Eduvigis’ family that allows it to succeed in the album phenomenon, even if the nature of their wealth was corrupt.

While the narrator in Flores’ story does not really want to be involved in the album practice and is basically forced to create the contribution for Georgia, the character of Jesús in Valdemoro’s story, by contrast, wants to fulfill two different roles in this phenomenon. Jesús wants to purchase an album for Jacinta and then fill it with poetic compositions for her, so she can admire the beauty of the ensemble. Thus, Jesús wishes to participate in both the market aspect and the creative aspect of the album practice. With this project in mind, Jesús stops in front of the Mendoza stationery shop after school,
every day for three weeks, to admire the “soberbio álbum, de piel de Rusia negra” through the window, where it sits on display next to four bronze lamps, surrounded by card holders, boxes of high quality paper, and pencils of all sizes (“the superb album, of black Russian leather”; 43). Hanging from the album is a green silk rope bearing a card with its price: “¡¡260 pesetas!!” (43). In today’s currency, the album would be the equivalent of only 1,5 euros, but this was obviously a substantial sum for Jesús in his time, especially considering the fact that he is a student who came to Madrid from the countryside. However, these frequent visits to admire the album create in Jesús a fascination with the idea of purchasing it: “Tú serás mío, y te llenaré de hermosísimos versos, propios y ajenos” (“You will be mine, and I will fill you with very beautiful verses, mine and other people’s”; 44). The ownership in the case of this album is dual, since it will initially belong to Jesús, but eventually it will become Jacinta’s. The process of gathering the contributions will also alter the typical dynamic of the album as described in essays on social customs and fictional texts that depict this practice: Jesús will be responsible for collecting the entries dedicated to Jacinta.

It is possible to interpret Jesús’ attraction to the album as being similar to the corruption that Pedro Sánchez suffers in the city. Both characters are young men from the countryside whose movement to the city originates their involvement in the album fashion. After his multiple visits to observe the album from a distance, one day Jesús musters the courage to enter the Mendoza stationery shop and tell its owner that he wants to purchase the album and has structured a payment plan that will allow him to do so. He
proposes to pay for the album in four equal monthly installments of sixty pesetas, and even offers the owner of the shop an extra twenty pesetas for saving the album for him. The shopkeeper agrees, and Jesús has him sign a contract in which he certifies that he will not sell the album during these months. “¡Ahora me perteneces!” affirms Jesús of the album after both parties have signed the document, in an expression that reveals his fixation with the object (“Now you are mine!”; 47). It is almost as if by owning the album Jesús believes that he can eventually possess Jacinta. As Larra suggested, the album could become a metonymy of its female owner, which guarantees that Jacinta will also soon belong to Jesús.

In addition to overcoming his financial limitations and being able to make his monthly payment, there is another obstacle that stands between Jesús and the acquisition of the album for Jacinta. Right after Jesús signs the contract, wealthy don Romualdo and his young daughter, Elisa, enter the paper shop. Don Romualdo plans to buy the elegant album for Elisa, but the owner of the stationery shop explains to him that Jesús just bought it. Looking at Jesús with disdain, don Romualdo offers him the price of the album, plus twenty pesetas more, convinced that the humble young man cannot resist his offer. Aware of the power game that don Romualdo is playing, Jesus rejects the offer, so wealthy don Romualdo proceeds to bid sixty, eighty, and, finally, one-hundred pesetas on top of the price: “aunque pobre, también soy caprichoso, y me he propuesto hacer del álbum una verdadera ontología para regalarlo á mi novia este verano” (“even though I am poor, I am also willful, and I have decided to make of the album a real ontology to give it
to my girlfriend this summer”; 48). Incapable of understanding the emotional value that Jesús has placed upon the album, don Romualdo continues to offer him more money, until he reaches one-thousand pesetas. Jesús continues to refuse, until he sees the look of devastation on Elisa’s face.

The suffering of little Elisa, who so intensely desires the luxurious album, finally causes Jesús to surrender the album. Jesús makes it clear that he is giving up the album only for her, and he does not accept don Romualdo’s money, although this would have been a princely sum for a poor young student from the countryside. In exchange for his sacrifice, Jesús asks Elisa for the rose she wears on her chest, which she gives him with pleasure. Following the negotiations, don Romualdo purchases the album, and Jesús gets back the four pesetas he had already paid in advance. With this money, he buys a one peseta notebook: “en el que coleccionaré ahora los versos para Jacinta, hasta que encuentre otro álbum que me guste” (“in which I will now collect the verses for Jacinta, until I find another album that I like”; 49). Even given the humbleness of his circumstances, Jesús is extremely strategic. He does not abandon his project of buying Jacinta an album as a gift, he simply postpones it, giving himself time to find another equally sophisticated one.

Valdemoro’s account of Jesús’ struggle to obtain an album allows us to wonder about the conditions of the album market and the possibility that confrontations such as the one that the fictional protagonist faces might actually have taken place in nineteenth-century France and Spain. According to the essays on social customs about this
phenomenon and writers’ complaints about the constant request for contributions, there was a significant number of albums circulating in this milieu. However, there is not enough information to prove how extensive the production of albums actually was, and whether this phenomenon was truly as massive as some literary and historical sources suggest. In some of the archival albums I consulted, I identified the stamps revealing the *papeteries* where they were purchased. Considering that the albums were expensive objects, it is possible to imagine that there were relatively few albums available for sale at each *papeterie* at any given time. Thus, a situation such as the one portrayed in “El album” could possibly have happened. The only difference between the romanticized depiction of this market transaction depicted in the story and the historical reality is perhaps the social class of the participants. The majority of the albums I analyzed belonged to elite women, who had the economic means to pay for these luxurious books. The battle for a particularly special album probably would not have involved a young “Jesús” who was struggling financially just to survive in Madrid, but more likely two wealthy men, who could afford the book for their wives or daughters.

The narrative structure of the short story allows for a twist at the end, when readers are transported to a scene six years after the confrontation between Jesús and don Romualdo, in which Elisa obtains the coveted album. In a beautiful hotel of La Castellana, an exclusive area of Madrid, a baby cries because he wants to destroy a big book of his mother, but is prevented from doing so by a servant. Reprimanding the servant for upsetting the baby, the mother and book-owner, who happens to be Elisa,
replies that the child can break the album if he wants to, putting her son’s whim over the value of the object. In a separate scene, at the house of the mayor of a province near Oviedo, another servant asks her master if she should throw away a flower that she finds among some papers. “No la toques siquiera,” responds the young mayor, who we realize is Jesús, “rompe primero mi vara de alcalde” (“Do not even touch it, break my mayoral baton first”; 50). Stressing the centrality of objects, given their importance throughout the story, the ending of Valdemoro’s story includes an unexpected punch line that portrays the issue of social class that is ever-present in the album exchange. Valdemoro attempts to provide a lesson to his readers interested in the album practice: purchasing power and wealth are sometimes at odds with ethics and sentimentality. As we see, Elisa permits her son to rip apart the expensive book that Jesús had allowed her father to purchase for her, while Jesús, in turn, reverently protects the simple rose he obtained in exchange. Perhaps Elisa’s indifference toward her album results from the fact that she is married and has a son, which means she has probably stopped her collection and has kept her album only as a memory of the time when she was single and receiving flattering contributions from potential suitors. Since this short story was published 1886, it is also possible that the album fashion was already fading by the moment of the latter events, and this is the reason why Elisa does not care about the condition of her book. Or perhaps, due to her privileged economic position she is used to getting whatever her heart desires, so Elisa holds Jesús’ sacrifice in low regard, failing to properly appreciate its significance, not to mention the time and energy of the contributors. In any case, it is evident that the
valorization of objects relates to the effort each individual has made to obtain them, and that for the poor young man, an emotion-laden transaction carries more weight than a predominantly economic transaction on the part of the wealthy young woman.

V. Conclusion

The novels, plays, and short stories analyzed above present a diversity of characters and perspectives that enrich a scholarly reconstruction of the album phenomenon’s establishment in nineteenth-century France and Spain. There are multiple variants to the approach to the album in these texts, and all reveal different aspects of the gender and economic transactions so crucial to this practice. The information that these fictional depictions of the album offer allows us to conclude that the ways in which this social custom was practiced were not monolithic or absolute, as Jouy and Larra suggested. Instead, the album phenomenon was taken up in myriad ways, many of which defied narrow, conventional understandings of the nature of this fashion and its participants. The texts discussed in this chapter feature a variety of scenarios and characters that remind us of the different approaches taken by the participants in the album exchange. Given that these texts cover the period of time from 1837 until 1898, the particularities of the stories’ presentation of albums evidences an evolution in the ways in which the album phenomenon manifested throughout the century.

In terms of gender, the dynamics depicted in these texts present an array of possibilities that range from the typical courting practice materialized in the album
exchange to the transgressive male appropriation of the role of owner. The album encounters in the novels by Balzac and Pereda have similar outcomes in terms of the failed relationships established through album requests and contributions. However, there is a fundamental difference between the ways in which the two plots unfold. Lousteau mocks Dinah since the beginning of their exchange, contributing a poem that he did not create for her to her album and lying about his intentions in their affair. Pedro, by contrast, creates an original poem for Luz, and does not plan in advance to deceive her. In Clarín’s short story, Trabanco represents the jealous contributor, who could not tolerate the idea of his lover potentially flirting with other men while requesting contributions. Julita is very different from Luz and Dinah, as she takes pleasure on her role as album owner, and refuses to bow to social dominant forms of feminine propriety. Don Próspero, from Bretón de los Herrero’s play, is probably the character who most challenges notions about the function of each gender in the album dynamic. Don Próspero’s album exchange lacks the possibility of courting often available between female owners and male contributors. Therefore, his approach to the album focuses only on the excessive need to obtain the validation that nourishes his ego, without the additional courtship function that sometimes accompanied flattering entries.

In Valdemoro’s story, gender and economic transactions are combined, as Jesús’ involvement in the album practice suggests the possibility that some album contributors bought the albums themselves to give to their lovers or wives. This could even have been the case for the writers whose contributions I discovered in the albums of their wives.
While the majority of these French and Spanish literary texts contain either direct or indirect references to the social class of participants in the album fashion, Flores is the only one who links the issue of class to the Spanish fixation with French culture. In addition to the themes of gender and class, these literary texts also include references to the importance of the city in the materialization of these exchanges, as well as the implications of urban spaces as fertile breeding grounds for creativity and artistic talent.

Precisely because of these particularities in how the album is represented, literature is an important source for understanding the manifestation of this phenomenon in nineteenth-century France and Spain. As fictional creations that include a historical element, these texts allow for a presentation of the practice that inevitably lies at the frontier between the real and the imaginary. While my study of archival albums allowed me to propose different interpretations of how the exchanges that led to their contributions might have unfolded, the analysis of album scenes in literary texts offers us information about the many specific situations that could historically have surrounded the request and creation of entries. Thus, the literature that portrays the album merges the historical existence of this object with the fictional construction of characters, motivations, links, and consequences related to the practice. The outcomes of the album exchanges narrated in these literary texts ranges from humorous to tragic, and from romantic to ridiculous. The collective impact of this plethora of portrayals reminds us of the artistic, social, economic, and gender dimensions of this trend so popular in nineteenth century.
Encore: “From the Private Collection to the Public Book: Exploring the Published Albums”

In collecting autographs, as in other pursuits, small beginnings sometimes bring about large results.
Edward W. Bok, “How I Made my Autograph Album” (1889)

As I showed in my analysis of archival nineteenth-century albums and of literary texts that depict the practice, albums were personal objects that consisted of a private collection. Only the owner of the book and her (or his) acquaintances, who were either potential contributors or admirers of its content, had access to this gathering of entries. However, there are also specific circumstances in which the album was transformed from a private document into a public one: the cases of published albums. In my research, I discovered two albums that, due to their evolution from personal possessions into printed anthologies, became market objects. Through the process of being printed-out and circulated, published albums lose their value as original nineteenth-century artifacts and end up being reproductions of the actual historical document. Thus, these albums transgress the frontier of the historic, but are also not entirely fiction. In their new form, these books remain in an ambiguous position in which contributions that were meant to stay within the realm of the album exchange are now available to a general public. The intervention of the editors of these compilations adds another narrative level to the presentation of the albums as books. The introductions in which the published albums’ editors present the participants and the circumstances of the contributions included in the
books, create a filter of the nineteenth-century document that inevitably lies between the historical and the literary. Transitioning from the historical object into the published book, these albums are no longer exclusively for the researcher who consults them at the archive, but are also available for a regular reader who has the economic means to acquire it.

The *Album poético dedicado al Excelentísimo Señor Conde de San Luis* was published in 1852, just a year after the gathering of its contributions took place. Already, before it was transformed into a book, this collection constituted an interesting variation of the typical structure of the album fashion. In 1849, the General Narváez designated Luis José Sartorius minister of the government of his cabinet. That same year, Queen Isabella II of Spain granted Sartorius the title of count, and thus he came to be recognized during his administration as the “Conde de San Luis.” Among the reforms established by the Conde de San Luis in his position as minister were many that aimed to protect and sponsor writers and artists all over Spain. The most significant project he carried out was the reconstruction of the Teatro del Príncipe in Madrid, transforming it into the Teatro Español, which today remains as an important theater venue in Madrid (Entrambasaguas 475). As a gesture of appreciation and gratitude for his work in defense and promotion of the arts, playwrights, poets, and art lovers in general decided to create an album for the Conde de San Luis, to which they would add contributions dedicated to him. As specified in the title of the published version of the book, this collection was “dedicated” to the
count, which evidences a process of creation that inevitably altered the typical dynamic of the album practice.¹

Acknowledging that the publication of this text could be confusing for some readers, the anonymous editor of the collection created for the Conde de San Luis adds an explanatory footnote immediately after his initial identification of the book as an “album.” The editor justifies the use of the term, pointing out that: “Se ha conservado este nombre á la presente edicion, porque las poesías de que se compone, se han escrito para un Album y en él las han estampado sus autores” (“We have conserved this name in the present edition, because the poems it consists of, have been written for an Album and it was in this that their authors wrote them”; III). Even though the published book is no longer an album, according to the meaning of the term, the editor still decided to use this term to refer to it because the book was begun in this spirit and the contributions were gathered for this purpose. Then, the editor goes on to narrate the story of the album, while simultaneously constructing a specific image of the Conde de San Luis. He praises the Conde as a forward-thinking man, who saw in literature and theater an “elemento civilizador de altísima trascendencia” and who liberated artists from the oppression of “empresarios egoistas” (“civilizing element of the highest transcendence” “selfish businessmen”; V). Due to the circumstances of its creation, this album required an

¹ I already presented the possibility of offering an album as a gift in my analysis of J. López-Valdemoro’s short story “El álbum,” in which the character of Jesús wants to buy an album for his girlfriend Jacinta and fill it with his own and other people’s poetry.
introduction so its readers would understand why the Conde de San Luis deserved such homage.

Besides commending the Conde de San Luis’ intervention as patron of the arts, the editor of this published album also exalts the quality of its contributions, which is understandable, considering that he is trying to justify the book’s market value. According to the information given in the introduction, noble intentions were combined with superior good taste in the poetry entries in the album, which were a testament to an important phase in the history of the development of the arts in Spain. Among the contributors in the Conde de San Luis’ album there are many of the figures who I previously identified as participants in the album fashion in Spain, including: Manuel Bretón de los Herreros, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, Juan de Ariza, Campoamor, and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. The majority of the contributions by these important nineteenth-century Spanish writers to this album have not been included among its authors’ published works, which means that they only exist in the collection created for the Conde de San Luis. This album’s transformation into book led, then, to the preservation and diffusion of literature that would otherwise have been available only in an archive, if at all. The decision to reproduce and distribute this album has allowed contemporary readers to have access to this poetic compositions, not only through the
printed book, but also through its electronic version, as the 1852 text is available through several digital libraries in PDF form.²

In the case of “L’Album Juliette.” Bohème artistique et politique au début de la Troisième République, published in 2011, the intervention of the editor is evident beginning with the title of book. This “album” has ceased to be such in its edited form, and has instead become a historical catalogue of political and artistic networks in the Third Republic milieu of the late nineteenth century. Potential readers of the book will not initially turn to it to learn about Juliette, her links with artists, and her contributors’ conception of her, although this could be the main goal in the analysis of an album. As a historian, Paul Basquiat, the editor of the Album Juliette, had a very specific intention of presenting this album as a historical document in its published form. Basquiat is the great-grandnephew of journalist, deputy, minister, Freemason, poet, and major figure of the Third Republic, Charles Camille Pelletan, and inherited all of his personal documents, including Juliette’s album.

In the introduction to Juliette’s album, Basquiat initially focuses on Pelletan and his presence in this collection. Although Basquiat acknowledges that after discovering this historical document “nous avons entpris de [l’appeler l’Album Juliette,” it seems like the title of the document does not necessarily imply that Juliette will have a leading

² The printed copies of the book were still circulating at the end of the twentieth-century, as proven by Joaquín de Entrambasaguas in his article about this album, in which he affirms that he is quoting his personal copy of it (476).
role in his approach it (“we decided to call it l’*Album Juliette*”; 9). Basquiat insists that this album is the most lively testimony to the political and literary bohemia in the last years of the Second Empire and the first years of the Third Republic. After establishing the importance of this album for understanding social and artistic networks in their historical moment, Basquiat mentions Juliette for the first time, indicating that she was Pelletan’s lover and that they lived together for approximately thirty years, until she died. Pelletan seems to have kept all of Juliette’s personal possessions, including her album, which eventually Basquiat obtained along with the rest of Pelletan’s documents. Basquiat refers briefly to Juliette’s weakness for verses and to her desire that all their guests, who happened to be Pelletan’s artist friends, covered the pages of her album with poetic creations. For Basquiat, this album allows its readers to imagine the meetings in which all these personalities of nineteenth-century artistic circles converge. Trying to convey the powerful images that the album offers, Basquiat evokes two paintings that represent precisely these gatherings among literary and political figures in this milieu: “il semble que l’on voie prendre vie, s’agiter et se meler les poetes du *Coin de table*, de Fantin-Latour, et les journalistes et hommes politiques, disciples de Clemenceau, de *La Réunion publique au cirque Fernando* de Raffaëlli” (“it is like we see come to life, arouse and mix

3 Interestingly, the majority of the contributions in Juliette’s album are drawings, not poetry entries.
the poets of Fantin-Latour’s *Coin du table*, and the journalists and men of politics, disciples of Clemenceau, of Raffaëlli’s *La Réunion publique au cirque Fernando*”; 11).4

Later in the introduction, Basquiat finally changes his approach, focusing more on the album owner herself and declaring that this album also allows readers to get to know “Juliette Philippe” better (12). The mention of her last name gives Juliette a certain historical legitimacy that she lacked before, when Basquiat presented her simply as Pelletan’s lover. Among Basquiat’s remarks about Juliette’s gesture of collection, one confirmation of the use of the album for sentimental purposes stands out. Basquiat quotes writer Geoeges Maurevert, who denounced that Juliette, in a gesture of gratitude to her contributors, did to Pelletan “ce qu’on appelle, en un français pittoresque, des *paillons*” (“that which we call, in picturesque French, cheating”; 12). The revelation that Juliette may have had adulterous amorous relationships with her album contributors allows Basquiat to construct a fiction of her, based on the contents of her album. Linking the entries in her album to the personal relationships that she could have established, Basquiat affirms that: “Les succès amoureux de Juliette laissent supposer une très belle femme” (“Juliette’s amorous success allows us to imagine she was a very beautiful woman”; 13). When quoting some of Pelletan’s friends’ criticism of Juliette’s strong and domineering character, Basquiat refers again to her album, affirming that the

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4 In *Coin de table*, presented originally at the 1872 Salon, Fantin-Latour portrays some of the editors and poets that collaborated with the newspaper *La Renaissance*, who were all actually linked to the Parnasse movement. Besides Pelletan, the painting, kept at the Musée d’Orsay, portrays Verlaine, Rimbaud, Emile Blémont, Pierre Elzéar, Jean Aicard, Léon Valde, and Ernest d’Hervilly (“Fantin-Latour”). Raffaëlli’s *La Réunion publique au cirque Fernando*, from 1885, is kept at the Musée du Château de Versailles.
contributions in it reveal that she was “accueillante, généreuse, tournée vers les autres, drôle et joyeuse” (“hospitable, generous, interested in other people’s well-being, funny and joyful”; 14). Thus, Basquiat imposes upon readers of the published version of this album a very specific view of Juliette, which will inevitably influence their interpretation of the contributions in it.

At the end of his introduction to the *Album Juliette*, Basquiat affirms that Juliette was a unique figure in her milieu, a modern woman in terms of the type of relationship she maintained with Pelletan and the challenge it implied to the bourgeois lifestyle. He identifies Juliette as a “muse oubliée” (“forgotten muse”; 13), through whose album we can have access to the artistic and political bohemian life of the Third Republic. It is understandable that Basquiat wanted to give this publication a broad appeal and prove its historical value, in order to convince potential readers to purchase the book. For Basquiat, then, the importance of the publication of this document lies in how it informs the understanding of social transactions in the late nineteenth century in France, and not

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5 Paul Basquiat and Michael Pakenham are good friends. In the “Acknowledgements” of the book, Basquiat mentions Pakenham, and points out how important his support has been for him throughout his career. Interestingly, in my meeting with Pakenham in Paris in 2012, he shared with me an email message that Basquiat sent to him on June 16, 2011, in which the historian asked him to write a review for the *Album Juliette*: “L’album Juliette peine à trouver son public, faute de comptes-rendus. J’ai scrupule à vous solliciter, mais pensez-vous qu’il vous serait possible d’en rédiger et en faire publier un?” (“The album Juliette is not selling well, due to the lack of reviews about it. I have qualms about asking you, but do you think it would be possible for you to write and publish one?”; Pakenham Personal interview). Was it really because of the absence of criticism about it that the *Album Juliette* was not selling well? It is possible that the presentation of this book as a historical document, when it was really a personal collection, made it inaccessible for its potential public? Pakenham replied to Basquiat with a long email message explaining to him that, due to his commitment of editing the second volume of Verlaine’s correspondence, he unfortunately did not have the time to write a review for the *Album Juliette*. 

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in its reconstruction of the story of a woman from this historical context who owned an album.
Conclusion: “Narrating the story of the Album”

In looking back upon my experience as an autograph collector, I have, contrary to the expressed opinions of friends at the outset, nothing to regret. [...] Not only do I believe that my collection has been to me a source of intellectual benefit, but it has secured for me the friendship of interesting persons which I could not have obtained in any other way, and which has been of great assistance for me since.

Edward W. Bok, “How I Made My Autograph Album” (1889)

As I have shown in this dissertation, the importance of the study of the album lies in its constitution as a signifier of social customs and personal connections in nineteenth-century France and Spain. The album practice is complex, and yields a spectrum of possibilities of interpretation. This phenomenon is a fascinating source of historical, social, and literary information about the milieus in which it developed, and thus merits scholarly attention.

In my approach to the album, I go beyond the mere exploration of the object itself and consider the circumstances that shaped the practice, and upon which I base my subsequent analysis. One of the most significant contributions of this project lies in its transnational perspective and in its comparative study of different types of texts: essays on social customs, fictional texts, and personal collections that survive in archival albums. The historical albums in particular offer important information regarding the social networks both exploited by and established through the album exchange. Moreover, the study of the actual albums tackles on the practice and politics of archiving and preservation, including the question of which historical artifacts are deemed worthy
of being kept for posterity. Complementing this approach, the fictional texts that depict the album allow us to explore the motivations and intentions of the characters involved in this social custom. These fictional circumstances are useful to develop a better understanding of the historical conditions of the album in its milieu.

My project represents a comprehensive examination of albums and their place in nineteenth-century French and Spanish literature, and a meaningful contribution to the fields of French and Spanish literature and history, European studies, and class and gender studies. Inevitably, like all projects, it has been subject to limitations of time and space. In terms of the material I could not include in this study of the album, I have twelve folders with approximately six-hundred photos that I took while conducting archival research in France and Spain. I used a great number of these photos in my study of contributions in the second chapter, to complement my notes about the content of literary entries in albums. And while I was unable to include this vast quantity of material in this dissertation, in my future projects about the album I would like to strengthen the visual aspect, including more images of literary, pictorial, and musical album contributions in my analysis.

In future research projects, I also plan to build upon the analysis of literary texts that I develop in the third and fourth chapters in greater depth. The richness of the portrayal of the album in each one of those texts, as well as the multiple historical and cultural references each includes, would allow for the creation of distinct essays devoted to each. I also plan to more exhaustively examine the social networks established through
the album practice, and to analyze the specific contributions that reveal particular links between important nineteenth-century writers, painters, or musicians and album owners.

Furthermore, in my future projects I would like to explore the outcome of the album practice. What happened with the album? How did a craze that was depicted in French and Spanish literary texts for almost a century transform or disappear? According to the essays on social customs and the fictional texts that depict the album, this fashion was widespread in both countries, to the extent that artists were perturbed by the hassle represented by constant requests for contributions. Consulting the appropriate historical and cultural sources, I will attempt to understand whether it was precisely because of this excessive presence that the album practice declined. In the latter stages of its manifestation in nineteenth century, this trend became ubiquitous and popularized. Given that this phenomenon was originally a mark of social distinction for aristocratic women, might its massification ultimately have caused its decline? Once the album ceased to be the sole domain of social elites, might it have lost its cachet through its newfound mainstream accessibility, and become passé? It is also possible that men’s becoming album owners affected the dominant dynamic of this fashion. Perhaps, feeling that it was no longer an exclusively female practice, women may have decided that they did not need to follow it anymore. In any event, regardless of the reasons for the decrease in the popularity of this practice, the fact that albums are kept in libraries and archives in France and Spain to this day proves that, even after it stopped being the ultimate trend, the album was valued as a historical object that should be protected and preserved. In this sense, the
conditions of the album are echoed in this ongoing gesture of collection, which evokes the one that was materialized in the practice itself through the process of requesting contributions.

My main objective in this project has been to study the album, not simply as an aesthetic artifact, but also as a practice that fosters a historical understanding of the milieu in which it was practiced. As a fashion that eventually became a literary topic, the album is available for us, curious twentieth-first century readers, in different forms. In the album, there is an inevitable fluctuation between fiction and reality, in which the luxurious books move from the space of the archive to that of the literary text. Having access to these multiple manifestations of the album reality, I have created my own narration about it, filtering this social phenomenon through the lens of my critical analysis, research focus, and even personal interest. Through this approach, I have offered an exhaustive analysis that demonstrates the centrality of the album in its historical context, and positions it as a practice that allows us to reconstruct important gender, social, economic, and artistic dynamics of nineteenth-century French and Spanish societies.
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Biography

Jeannette was born on August 2, 1981 in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, and grew up in Moca, a small and humble town on the West of the island. In 2003, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts from the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus. Along with that degree, she earned an award to the most promising graduating student. Jeannette finished her Masters of Arts in Comparative Literature in 2007, also at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Her master’s thesis, entitled: *La imposible asunción de lo femenino y el fracaso del cuerpo de la escritura: La mujer (im)potente en la novela Lélia de George Sand (The Impossible Acceptance of the Feminine and the Failure of the Body of Writing: The (Im)potent Woman in the Novel Lélia by George Sand)*, received an award for the best master’s thesis in the Department of Comparative Literature that year. As a graduate student at Duke, Jeannette had the opportunity to live in Paris, France, during the 2009-2010 academic year, working as an assistant for the EDUCO exchange program for undergraduate students. She received a Summer Research Fellowship from the Duke University Graduate School to conduct research for her dissertation in France and Spain in summer 2012. She also received several Conference Travel Fellowships during her time at Duke, which allowed her to present different aspects of her research at national and international conferences, including those of the American Comparative Literature Association and the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes.