Annabel Dover

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University of the Arts, London

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Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

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Abstract

The botanical cyanotype albums of Anna Atkins have remained in The Royal Society, The Linnean Society, The British Library and the V&A since she donated them in 1852. Daughter of famous scientist J.G. Children, president of the Royal Society, Atkins made over 100, uncredited, illustrations for Children's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells* (1823). She donated her cyanotype albums after her father's death, where they were received as a tribute to him and in the Royal Society they continue to be filed under his, not her name. There is no biography of Atkins beyond that of a dutiful daughter to her father.

Florilegia is my practice-led response to the botanical cyanotype albums of Anna Atkins. It consists of my own cyanotype album and three chapters of creative writing in a subversive narrative that explores a retelling of Atkins' hidden biography. Each chapter is accompanied by an explicatory clef that seeks to anchor the fiction in current and historical debates.

Following Atkins' lead and creating my own cyanotype album led to the discovery that Atkins used the techniques of the nineteenth century album maker to fake her cyanotypes; cutting and suturing her specimens to create chimeras. In *Florilegia*, I use these same techniques to create a collaged fiction. Employing the methodology of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) I give visibility to the voiceless female using the objects that surround her. This, in turn brings to light a subversive role for the dutiful daughter Atkins; the *Handmaid*.

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Introduction

By chance, on a visit to the V&A shop, I saw a postcard of a poppy that attracted my attention. The image looked fresh and alive and yet was made in the 1850s. My desire to see the original was the starting point for my research on Anna Atkins. I arranged to talk to the curator of photography, Martin Barnes, and to look at Atkins' work. The V&A held four of her cyanotype prints that had become untethered from other collections. One was of a dandelion leaf, *Taraxacum Officinale* (1854); another was of a small sheaf of common grass, *Festuca Ovina* (1854); the third was the title page to *British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns*; and fourth was the poppy, *Papaver Orientale* (1852-4), which had also become one of the museum's most popular postcards. Barnes could tell me very little about Atkins, other than that she was the daughter of a well-known scientist, J.G. Children, and had learnt the technique of cyanotype photography from John Herschel. He suggested that I visit the Linnean Society and the Royal Society where I would find her cyanotype prints collated in the form of albums.

Festuca Ovina, Atkins (1854)

Taraxacum Officinale, Atkins(1854)

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Papaver Orientale, Atkins (1852-4)

Title page of *British and Foreign Flowering Plants & Ferns,* Atkins (1854)

On my visit to the Royal Society, I found the prints had been bound beautifully in red leather covers and filed alongside the work of her father, J.G. Children. I asked the curator about Atkins, but he knew nothing about her. He did, however, have a great deal of information about her father, whose illustrious scientific career was in evidence in the society. There was a portrait of J.G. Children in their archive as well as extensive written research on his work and scientific findings. Children had been made a fellow of the Royal Society in 1807, and was the Society's secretary in 1826 and 1830-37. He also became the founding president of the Royal Entomological Society of London in 1833. He had several species of animals, insects and birds named after him, and he had been appointed by Sir Humphry Davy as assistant keeper of the Natural History department at the British Museum.

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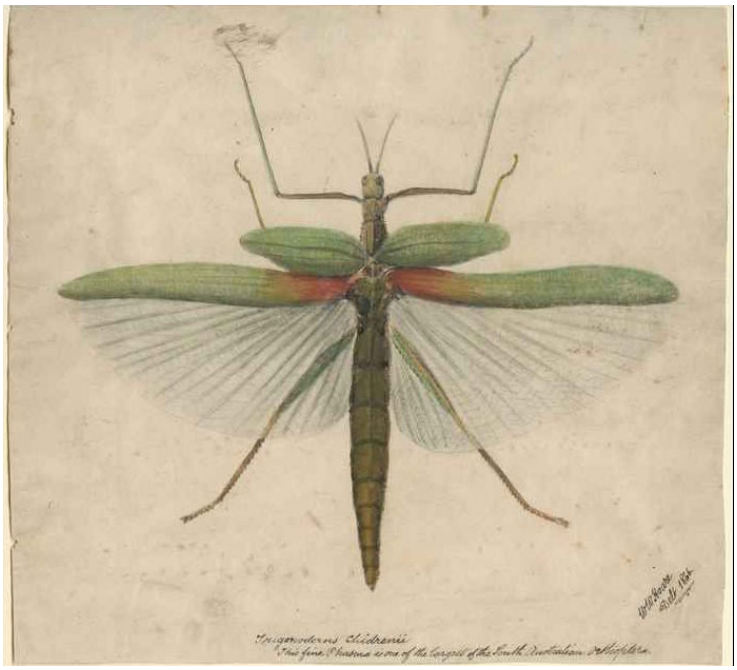

Tropidoderus childrenii H.R. Dent, 1853

Keith Moore, the curator of the Royal Society Libraries collection, informed me that Atkins had made work for her father in the form of the illustrations to his translation of *Lamark's Genera of Shells* (1823), and that after Children's death, Atkins had written his biography and had donated botanical cyanotype prints to the Royal Society. They had been filed as a posthumous addendum to Children's work and as a follow-up to the shell illustrations.

On my visit to the Linnean Society, I met with Liz McGow, the society's archivist, and Isabelle Charmantier, the society's collections manager. There, Atkins' cyanotype prints were arranged into albums with some of the pages bent over to accommodate their extra-large size. The binding of these albums was less expensive than those of the Royal Society and did not have gold tooling or embossed titles. McGow and Charmantier both expressed their sadness that so little was known about Atkins. They noted that anything that was known about Atkins had been gleaned from the plentiful information about her father and that it was through the prism of J.G. Children that Atkins was discussed. They also felt that Atkins' cyanotypes were part of her father's work, just as her illustrations to *Lamark's Genera of Shells* had been.

In all three institutions, the V&A, the Royal Society and the Linnean Society, there was an assumption that J.G. Children was the author of Atkins' work and that the cyanotype prints were presented as the work of the dutiful daughter/handmaid. No other narrative was offered. Further research revealed that Atkins' subjugated narrative was not limited to the Royal Society and the other institutions that house her work. In a recent exhibition, *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing* at Turner Contemporary (2013), Atkins was still presented as a curious adjunct to the male scientist:

> Her father, John George Children, was a prominent scientist who in 1839 chaired the meeting of the Royal Society where William Henry Fox Talbot described his process for making photogenic drawings. Sir John Herschel, the natural philosopher, son of astronomer Sir William Herschel, and friend of Atkins and her father, developed the cyanotype soon after.
>
> (Dillon, 2013: 182)

In this text from the catalogue, Atkins is again defined by her proximity to her father and as an inert vessel through which J.G. Children and Sir William Herschel could extend their scientific work. Even more recently, in 2016, *A Weed is a Plant out of Place* at Lismore Castle also featured Atkins' cyanotype prints. The description that accompanied her cyanotypes was prefaced as being the by-product of creating illustrations she had made for her father's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells*. An image of her father's book was presented next to Atkins' prints reinforcing the idea that her work was both adjunctive to and supportive of the father.

Atkins donated her albums as loose-leafed print 'gifts' to scientific institutions such as the Royal Institute, Linnean Society, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew and the Royal Botanical Gardens of Edinburgh. The individual institutions then bound the prints however they chose, sometimes keeping them loose in a box, sometimes binding them together in books. The albums are presumed to be of 'nature' and reside in these institutions, as does the original herbarium of plant specimens that Atkins donated to the British Museum. The Linnaean Society's example is bound in black buckram, with plain ivory paper lining on the 'endsheet', whereas the Royal Society's version is engraved and bound in more expensive

gold-tooled Moroccan red leather. The Royal Society's name is on the spine, with Atkins' name printed, almost incidentally, underneath. The endsheet is in cyanotype blue; it is exposed paper with no image laid on it, as if at the beginning of creation there was no image, and after, none left. This also creates the impression of the book being made entirely out of cyanotype paper, as if the images are carved into a solid lump of it – a natural history specimen in its entirety.

I decided to look more closely at Atkins and her work. There was no doubt that the illustrations in *Lamark's Genera of Shells* were very accomplished and had gained acclaim under the name of the father. The cyanotypes, however, suggested that she might have played a role which was not always that of the dutiful daughter. Through an examination of Atkins' cyanotype prints, it appeared that in illustrating her father's work Atkins had also presented the cyanotypes in a format that followed the nineteenth-century female tradition of album making. In addition, I discovered that the actual specimens did not always follow a scientific approach of dispassionate recording. Instead, they were often cut and arranged decoratively. While Atkins had been playing the role of the dutiful daughter and handmaid both to her father and to science, she had also subverted the scientific narrative that her father's name depended on.

This new research was difficult to present in a straightforward narrative. The dominant scientific narrative could not accommodate this information because it did not adhere to its rules. Hence, I chose to use an approach that would allow me to imagine the objects as having witnessed more than the scientific narrative would allow. The conversations presented in three chapters seek to circumvent the dominant narrative which, as Walter Benjamin articulated in 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), is the narrative of the victors (Benjamin, 1988: 255). To help with reading these conversations, I provide a clef to guide the reader through each chapter and the accompanying album. Using Atkins' own articulation of her supportive status from her novel *The Perils of Fashion* (1852), I also adopted the supportive persona of handmaid/dutiful daughter.

> The willow stake, too, had some shoots; long and unsightly, but still adorned with the pale, narrow leaf of its kind. The root which had taken

> was unseen; but evidently its hardy nature had drawn sustenance from the *nourriture* prepared for the oak, and the mere stake had become a living tree. The hay-band was still there. The willow was still servitor to the oak. Another year. The shoots made by the sapling oak are ripened into twigs; one only had sprung fresh this summer; and a traverse branch of the willow,-mark, the stake had already made branches, just touched it, and by friction, caused by the wind had destroyed it. The stake no longer supported – it was neighbor to the oak!
>
> (Atkins, 1852, 54)

In this paragraph, Atkins articulates a transformation from *support* to *neighbour* that is central to the subversive project of the handmaid. Using this role and the equally subversive writing of Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a methodological lead, I provide three conversational chapters and a cyanotype album in the hope that Atkins' voice will become audible. Chapter One focuses on the object-as-witness. Chapter Two discusses the album as codebook and a safe ground for female expression. And Chapter Three examines the handmaid, and Atkins' dual role as the dutiful daughter and subversive daughter. Each chapter provides a conversation that uses Benjamin's concept of reading against the grain of the dominant narrative of the hero, as expressed in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'.

The response of these three conversations and my cyanotype album *Florilegia* stem from the disjuncture I encountered between Atkins' given biography and her cyanotypes. I felt that her presentation as dutiful daughter did not correlate with the subtle subversions visible in the cyanotype prints. The challenge before me was to find an approach that would give voice to these objects and challenge the dominant narrative. In adopting the persona of the handmaid to Atkins, I reproduced the cyanotype prints that had first captured my interest, namely *Papaver Orientale* and *Iris Sibirica*. Via praxis, I discovered that Atkins had doctored her specimens, cutting and arranging them to create chimerical images. This discovery, along with the examination of Atkins' and Dixons' final collaborative album and of Atkins' novels, provided the suggestion of an approach that would make the mute speak. In this way, my tri-part album of cyanotypes and three-chapter collection of stories, *Florilegia*, is a fictionalised

gathering of narratives that researches the albums of Anna Atkins and precipitates a new reading of her work.

The word *florilegia* is defined in several different ways:
florilegium
1. an anthology or collection of brief extracts or writings.
2. an anthology or select collection of literary pieces or poetic passages.
3. a collection of flowers, 1711; of poetic passages.
4. miscellany, garland, collection.

Example: florilegia of celestial stories, 1647.
In medieval Latin, a **florilegium** (plural **florilegia**) was a compilation of excerpts from other writings. The word is formed from the Latin *flos* (flower) and *legere* (to gather): literally, a gathering of flowers, or collection of extracts from the body of a larger work. It was adapted from the Greek *anthologia* (ἀνθολογία), 'anthology', with the same etymological meaning. Medieval *florilegia* were systematic collections of extracts taken mainly from the writings of the Church Fathers and other early Christian authors, as well as from pagan philosophers, such as Aristotle, and sometimes other classical writings (TheFreeDictionary.com, 2017).

My *Florilegia* comprises the three written chapters and the cyanotype album. *Florilegia* is a collection that was created by adopting the persona of the handmaid to perform haptic and fictional research into the cyanotype albums of Anna Atkins. The elements of *Florilegia* interact with one another to respond to the works of Atkins and to give her a voice.

The *clefs* take their name from the 'keys' in a *roman-à-clef*. A *roman-à-clef* is defined as:
a novel that represents historical events and characters under the guise of fiction; a novel in which real people are depicted under fictitious names; literally: a novel with a key (Dictionary.com, 2017). My clefs provide keys that enable the reading of the three written chapters of *Florilegia* to be understood in terms of their interaction with Atkins' albums and my cyanotype album. They have a tangential relationship to the fictional stories of the three chapters and support my methodology of fiction as research.

To show the cracks and breaks in the dominant narrative I voice the hidden stories of Atkins' objects. I construct historical and contemporary characters, each speaking in their own social environment and using objects to tell their autobiographies. Thus, storytelling is employed as a construct, to consider the work of Anna Atkins, via the objects she has left behind. Using the methodology of Charlotte Perkins Gilmans' writing on objects, I retell Atkins and her albums using the idea of the object-as-witness to articulate their interweaving and multiple narratives. This approach references Griselda Pollock's interpretation of Bracha Ettinger's definition of the matrixial (Pollock, 2004: 7), resulting in a trans-temporal and multisensory appreciation of Atkins' albums. This desire for a multisensory response to the work of Atkins' albums was one of my motivations for making *Florilegia* as an album-object. The interaction between my cyanotype album-object and my writing leads to the creation of multiple dialogues. Through these dialogues, the viewer-handler, the imagined objects of the narrative and the physical object of the album are co-opted into a relationship that emphasises the nature of the object-as-witness. This is a relationship that binds the viewer-handler to the story of Atkins, both as ally and witness. This notion of ally and witness takes its lead from Graham Harman's ideas on the relational agency of actants (Harman, 2009: 20), by which objects have voice via interaction with other bodies, human and non-human.

In the context of the canon of art history, Linda Nochlin's essay 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' (1971) posited the idea that the dominant narrative in the history of art excludes women. Nochlin advised new ways to consider the work of women artists. In the 1980s, Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker developed different ways to articulate the work of female artists using an alternative language and means to appreciate their work. Craft became a new focus, as exemplified in Parker's *The Subversive Stitch* (1984), which examined work by women artists who were using embroidery and traditional female crafts. In the absence of factual accounts of Atkins' life or work, I used the objects and touchable human traces that she left as my starting point, unpicking them by recreating them and making fictional allies. My discovery that Atkins had 'faked' her specimens opens a new understanding of her cyanotypes. The faking of specimens cuts against the received narrative of the dutiful daughter making works for the digestion of the male scientific community. This in turn casts light on the novels she wrote and gives voice to the objects she compiled. In *Florilegia*, I continue this process of subversive revelation by retelling Atkins' biography

through gatherings of allied objects and stories that underline the complexity of the female experience both in the mid-nineteenth century and today.

The act of countering narrative is a common concern in contemporary art practice. Catherine Grant discusses the process of praxis as research and gives the example of the re-working of *The Emily Davison Lodge* (Tate Britain, 2013-14) by the artists Olivia Plender and Hester Reeves. Grant writes: 'As in many contemporary artworks that delve into the archives, The Emily Davison Lodge has an air of ambiguity and fictionality' (Horne and Perry, 2017:12). Grant references Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'temporal drag' in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities* (2010), indicating that a contemporary performance of historical material does more than quote the past – it looks at the work anew while revealing the expectations of the contemporary world within which it is being re-played.

Installation shot of Olivia Plender and Hester Reeves' video work, *The Argument of the Broken Window Pane*, *The Emily Davison Lodge*, Tate Britain, (2013-14)

By returning to the historical characters Emily Davison and Sylvia Pankhurst, Reeves and Plender present their lives in a different context. *The Argument of the Broken Window Pane* underlines how shocking the actions of Davison and Pankhurst are to a contemporary audience; as a result, an emotional connection is created. Davison and Pankhurst are not treated as subjects to be examined and quantified, but rather as women to respond to and reconnect with in a contemporary setting. Similarly, *Florilegia* is a response to Atkins' works, but it is also creative of new voices beyond historicity.

The exploration of subjectivity through a re-enactment of collecting is part of the practice of contemporary artist Mike Nelson. His *Triple Bluff Canyon* (2004) presents a collection of objects that form a portrait of the missing male archetype. Nelson creates a stage set with

himself as the central hero, missing but commemorated and still part of the dominant narrative of the heroic male collector and artist. The missing man is presented as flawed and old-fashioned with his colonial collection of stuffed animal trophies. He is nonetheless a hero and as such already has a place in the narrative of history. In a shift from masculine hegemony, Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's installation, *Killjoy's Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House* (2013), suggests the possibility of a future feminist queer world that has rewritten a male-dominated history. Curator Sarah E. K. Smith considers Mitchell and Logue's works to be concerned with 'potentiality, belonging and representation' (Smith, 2015: 6). This feminist queer world and alternative vision of the future opens up the possibilities of dislocating the dominant historical narrative.

With *Florilegia,* I am, however, not presenting an archetype, but rather objects left behind, and I am giving the objects voices, in the only way that is available – through fiction. Indeed, *The Yellow Wallpaper*'s powerful and polymorphous objects reveal fact and fiction as indistinguishable. As Albert Camus wrote, 'Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth' (1942: 38). Nelson does not tell the stories himself; instead, he collects and arranges objects, thereby allowing the viewer to imagine the mythical figure. My fictive dislocation is an anti-apotheosis; it is performed through mimicry of Atkins and her persona as handmaid. Instead of following in the atelier tradition of copying the master until master status is attained, I copy Atkins to gain an insight into her dutiful role and to enable the objects she made to speak. Atkins' intimate knowledge of her domestic environment is echoed by that of Gilman, and both present worlds in which the object stands before language as a mode of expression. This is how Gilman's heroine and Atkins also express themselves, since there is no other narrative available to them.

The pre-eminence of decoration as storytelling in the original florilegia albums is important here. In the fifteenth century, florilegia were anthologies of decorative imagery and narratives, rather than the utilitarian or medicinal plant collections they later became. In Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, decoration speaks for and absorbs the central voiceless character. Decorative objects allow the reader to experience her overwhelming feelings, and it is through the language of objects, rather than the patriarchal language of medicine, that the protagonist's psychological state is revealed. Bathsheba Everdene in Thomas Hardy's *Far*

from the Madding Crowd (1874) also notes the need for women to find a mode of expression beyond language: 'It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in a language chiefly made by men to express theirs' (Hardy, 2003: 318). Rose Gibbs, at Day and Gluckman's symposium on *A Woman's Place*, remarked that, for female artists, not having a name for a way of working not only highlights how the work that women made in the nineteenth century was refused categorisation, but also symbolises the lack of importance placed upon their work (Di Bello, 2007: 31). However, this lack of categorisation afforded the work a form of freedom:

> The naming of things is important, and when it comes to gender feels like a double-edged sword. For while it might highlight a colour, it also owns things, people, pins them down, and nobody, I feel, wants to be pinned down in exactly that way.
>
> (Gibbs, 2015)

In making the work for *Florilegia*, I inhabit a space in-between; my adoption of the persona of the handmaid is inspired by Atkins' description of the willows that move from support to neighbour. This gave me the freedom to respond to Atkins' albums in a way that respected her methodology and the means by which she slipped between definitions. By presenting her albums as an object-as-witness, I question the authenticity of her persona as dutiful daughter. I position the album as a witness to Atkins, but simultaneously as something that may never be deciphered. I argue that our albums also bear witness to the context in which she was viewed in the 1850s and the context within which women are viewed in 2017.

'The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is never seen again' (Benjamin, 1988: 255). Benjamin's concept of fugitive histories is extended by Sherry Turkle in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (2007). Turkle explores how objects can take memories and emotions beyond words, commenting: 'We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with' (Turkle, 2011: 5). Atkins' mute objects are witness to another era and are inaccessible to objective forms of research. Turkle not only accepts that our relationships with objects cannot be objective, but she also presents the feelings and thoughts objects evoke as a form of research.

Using the feelings that these objects evoke as starting points for research is a method that I used for *Florilegia*; by employing practice-led research, I wanted to subvert the idea of academic research as solely objective and formal. The idea of articulating emotional and fictional research methodologies within an academic sphere was also my starting point for the structure of *Florilegia*. I intend the written and albumised elements of *Florilegia* to engage in a non-hierarchical interaction. Both are 'evocative objects' and the emphasis is on the feelings that both these objects provoke. This is a process reflected in the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the social sciences. IPA employs the multiple feelings that an object can arouse as the basis for research and attempts to consider a mediated average of these responses, as voiced by the researcher who interviews and collects the different interpretations of the subject of her research. *Florilegia*, however, does not present a mediated average or one reasonable outcome. Instead, it is unreasonable in creating many different voices, some talking with one another and some talking over others. This chatter is self-contradicting, enabling multiple narratives and avoiding dominance. The chatter also enables new narratives and problematic stories that offer neither definite answers nor resolution.

In *Biographical Objects* (1998), the anthropologist Janet Hoskins writes of research made through the emotional relationship with objects, and she notes that an object can be employed to catalyse storytelling on taboo subjects. Similarly, in *The Comfort of Things* (2009), anthropologist Daniel Miller has analysed social interaction, expectations and values through the rituals and relationships people have with the objects in their homes. In both cases, the authors consider objects as freeing a narrative. In contrast, the emphasis of *Florilegia* is on the commonality of our experiences as mediated through objects. In this, it seeks to free multiple stories simultaneously. This connective process is noted by Martha Fleming in her writing on my photographic series *Rue de Sebastopol* (2000):

> It is a thread we can see Dover following in other works which relate more to the tenuous nature of meaning that links people to the objects they collect, and which can so easily be unravelled. More Levi-Strauss than Susan Stewart, Dover's work in this regard is a kind of anthropology of intimacy.

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(Fleming, 2001)

The intimacy Fleming describes is something that I explore through *Florilegia* and is a central thread within my practice. Intimacy is also an important tool in my engagement with Atkins' cyanotypes. Each time I attempted a cyanotype copy of Atkins' cyanotype print, *Papaver Orientale* (1852-4), it looked very different from the original. This led me to contact the head gardener at Darwin's House, Rowan Blaik, as well as the keeper of Victorian seeds at Kew Gardens. Neither thought that a *Papaver Orientale* could look like the one depicted by Anna Atkins. I discovered that Atkins had 'faked' her specimens by using a knife to dissect and reassemble them. Indeed, close examination of the cyanotype reveals a visible slice in the stem above the lowest leaf; the scar-shadow gives her away.

This thesis makes no attempt to categorise the works of Anna Atkins as scientific illustration or early photography as has been customary, nor to stress the technical accomplishment of her cyanotypes as if this were the primary basis for validation. The highlighting of processual skill as an elaborate cover that prevents further and more nuanced investigation, as seen below, is typical in current assessment of her work.

The clarity and number of Atkins's exposures demonstrate remarkable technical skill and attention to composition. Each page was printed by hand, with the dried algae delicately arranged close enough to the paper to produce a sharp print without damaging the specimen. (Liberty, 2019)

Instead this thesis moves beyond the cover to open a fictional dialogic encounter with Atkins.

Methodologically the album-like and collaged structure of the thesis takes its lead from Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project* made between 1927 and 1940. It is not known how Benjamin intended the final draft of the *Arcades Project* to look, whether it would have become a formally conventional text or remained as the montage of quotations and exegeses published posthumously in 1982. Because of this Benjamin's text has been fictionalised to envisage its outcome. The text has undergone the awakening collision with the present that Benjamin himself envisioned:

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. "Awakening"
>
> (Benjamin, 1999: 462)

Here, in this thesis, it makes perfect sense to see *The Arcades Project* as a dialectic history ('narrative') made from the quasi-physical materials of history itself and to rename the arcades albums.

Benjamin's vision of history as a dialectic flash of light also provides an important methodological basis to the fractured temporality at the core of my fictional chapters, the *Florilegias,* and to the relationship between the *Florilegias* and the clefs. Following Benjamin, it is important to understand the clefs not as keys to the fictional section but as moments of dialectical incandescence. Between them both the *Florilegias* and clefs are in themselves interpretations of a life lived, but a life that can only be known through the production of narratives.

The decision not to produce a conventional literature review is also an extension of this collaged approach. It seeks to break against hierarchical approaches to historical research that form the basis of conventional interpretations of Atkin's cyanotypes by replacing them with albumic techniques of cutting arrangement and fabulation. Thus, the *literature* forms a part of a dialectic awakening that allows it to be examined afresh. This methodology becomes the perfect way to bring the largely devalued feminine voice characterised by Ruskin's description in *Sesame and Lilies* (discussed in clef 2) into the light. To value: "sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision… the qualities of things, their claims, and their places." (Ruskin, 2009: 50)

It is also important to note the use and choice of imagery changes between the *Florilegia* chapters and the clefs. In the clefs, the images have a more 'illustrative' function which appears continuous with say Atkin's illustrations of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells* (1833). In the *Florilegias*, though, their function transforms. Here they form a 'constellation' (Benjamin, 1999: 462), juxtaposing and disjoining word and image, but nonetheless remaining part of the fiction. A mix of found family photographs, artworks, documentary images and film stills, they interrupt the text but perhaps do not interrupt the narrative. Whilst in the printed dissertation the images are continuous with the word document, it is not ridiculous to imagine that in the *Florilegia* chapters they could have been literally cut-out and glued to the surface of the pages forming a further, overlaid narrative. This imagining echoes the form of the Victorian album, a creative arena for female storytelling where cutting and rearranging become the primary gestures of communication

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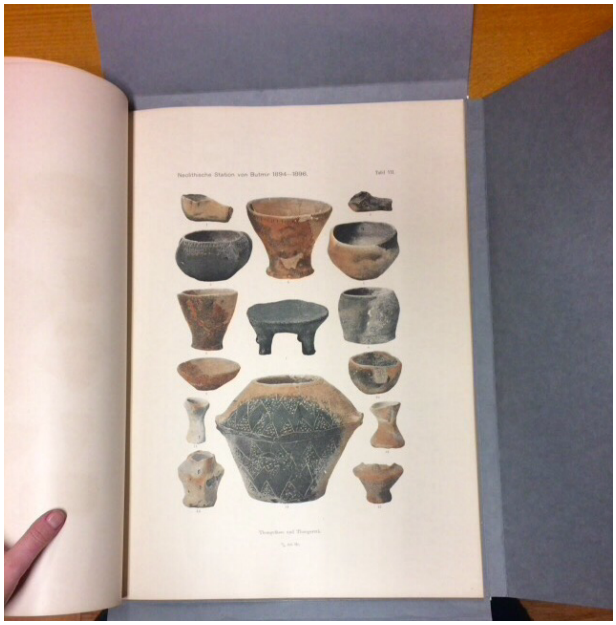
Florilegia
Chapter One

Papaver Orientale (c.1853)
Atkins, Anna, born 1799 - died 1871

> The ecstasy of the Polaroid...to hold the object and its image almost simultaneously as if the conception of light of ancient physics or metaphysics, in which each object was thought to secrete doubles or negatives of itself almost simultaneously that we pick up with our eyes, has become a reality. It is the optical materialisation of magical process. The Polaroid photo is a sort of ecstatic membrane that has come away from the real object.
>
> (Baudrillard, 1996: 135)

The windowless, artificially yellow-lit print room on the top floor of the V&A is a humidor for disparate collections of paper artefacts; a hospital for fragments. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was scooped up from The Crystal Palace and ordered, along with medieval manuscripts written in the January of 1496 when five feet of snow in Genova held people inside. After

seeing an elephant on the frozen River Thames, George Davis walked home from the last Frost Fair to create *The drawings Frostiania; or a history of the River Thames in a Frozen State*, 1814, recalling the fair of 1536 when King Henry VIII skidded passed in a sleigh on his way to Greenwich, and people ate hot roasted Ox. Bear baiting was commonplace just 3.8 miles away from this spot or a twenty-eight-minute tube ride to Bankside, a brief home to the young Derek Jarman. Babies died at the rate of one per two births, and an average life expectancy for a person living in Whitechapel was forty-five years old.



British School at Athens Archaeological portfolio, S.R. Simpson, (1912)

The *Paper Museum* created by Cassiano dal Pozzo and his younger brother Carlo, started as they argued with one another over the classification of nuts. The drawing of a Hazelnut tree created by Carlo, was later wrongly labelled as an Apple tree, and credited as anonymous, he painted a face in a hazelnut like a deformed foetus. Cassiano picked the gnarled lemon as the bells of St. Mary Magdalen were hammered and the black carpenter bees cut away at the

edges of the leaves he drew. His wife, eight weeks pregnant and yet to tell him why she was feeling listless and sick.

The hazelnut and malachite drawings were later moved to the Royal Palace where the curator would die of AIDs but say it was cancer and the queen would tell Prince Phillip it was a bind to have these paintings and that she wished that Hugo Dixon-Smith would sort out the Weaponry collection. Michael Gambon, spent his time when not shooting *The Singing Detective* getting on the train to Windsor, imagining the thrill of a duel at sunrise whilst touching the Eighteenth Century German gun that fires heart-shaped bullets.

Fourteen years after the death of her brother-in-law, the curator of the Armory at Windsor Castle, Lucy Dixon-Smith, would attend the publication of the catalogue of the Armory collection and go next door to look for the drawings of Cassiano dal Pozzo. She wears grey silk shoes from LK Bennett that cut into her thick ankles so much she almost succeeds in getting her stockbroker husband to order a taxi. Instead she walks her size 8 feet over the gravel at Windsor and shreds the 'Midnight Pearl' Dior tights she had bought from Dickens & Jones. She had seen a Chelsea Pensioner in the queue, he was buying thermal socks. She joked it must be cold in the barracks and he asked if she was Joanna Lumley. People often did that, especially men over 60. She went out into Sloane Square and saw the lumps of ice in the fountain. She remembered the time she worked just two roads away and would go to the Colbert for lunch. One day she saw David Bowie smiling at her through the window, a smile so full of love and adoration that she said 'David' back. She went right up to the glass and realised that he was looking at his reflection. She had touched the window by then and left

fuzzy patches of sweat around her fingers, a hand print in Lascaux. She turned around and the waitress said, 'Oh he's done that to me before'.

Emerald Necklace, rayogram, Annabel Dover, (2003)

The poppy, like a coffee cup stain, a negative of a plant cut and pressed in 1853 with its thin veined petals. The blue and white print has the night-time glow of a Joseph Cornell ice-cube box or a Stan Brackhage film, the poppy glows but is absent. Atkins' dirty fingernails are pressing the damp skin of the poppy into cotton wadding and blotting paper, until the life has dried out of it. The shroud, then peels from its body, reveals the sap-drenched tears of its stem and days of photosynthesis seeped out and over. She found it on a piece of dry ground, living on grit, with no trace of parent or sibling and perhaps created by a bird who had excreted it. She thinks of poppy-seed buns that her aunt, Anne, had made at Easter for her children, and the extra one she had always saved for her. Slightly stale, it had journeyed with her in muslin, in a wicker basket that smelt and tasted of her aunt's King Charles Spaniel, Doublet. She could never tell her about it tasting of Doublet and, as nobody else received food from this basket, Anne would never know.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

This sole survivor, she picked when it was vivid and waxy. She had watched it on her way to take letters to the post-box, a small weed at first, and then the hairs on the stalk could be seen and identified it to her as a poppy. The bead of a bud came two days later and divided into a segment. It was at this stage when she was young that she had scored the head open with her jagged thumbnail and seen the crumpled poppy inside, still damp and raw, pale purple and crimped all over. It had felt as if it were humiliating for the plant to look at it in this stage and akin to, as Ruskin had described, an onlooker watching a painter at work. She found it simultaneously irresistible and shameful, like the time she had picked up a mouse the cat had almost killed and folded back its pale pink ear to see another smaller marbled pink ear concealed within the first. Or the time she pushed her fingers inside her father's marginated tortoise Melpo's shell. Melpo had come from Athens and had a frilled skirt-like shell that housed an extra bit of flesh and perhaps, she thought, accommodated an organ. Melpo had lived in the Ancient Agora among the hoopoes and magpies, lizards and swallowtails, but now had a restful life in Kent on a striped and glossy lawn, fed with sleep inducing lettuce which hypnotized her into a laudanum haze.

When the poppy flower started to peer out of its green bonnet, she came back every half an hour.

The enamel clock in the drawing room makes its pretty sprinkled laughter chime, disturbing the parrot who walks on its mahogany stand away from it, shitting as it goes. A new sound comes from the kitchen. She could hear a change of activity often brought on by the chime and guessed that the cook did things in half hour shifts. The air is warm and dry and she is glad the poppy wouldn't have its petals knocked off by rain. She touches the most

courageous petal and it fastens to her finger like gold leaf. Peeling it off, she grabs its roots and pulls it up, it clings to the ground and some of its roots snap off in vain. Grit stays attached to the specimen in her hand too. The plant and its shadow are gone and there is a small rupture on the ground where it had been. Hippies in the 1970s went around their gardens warning weeds that they would pull them up the next day, pulling them slightly to ease them into this next phase, they claimed the weed gave itself willingly the next day once it knew that its life was over. In the sun, she can see the thin, straight hairs on the stem of the plant, like the fine blonde hairs on her upper lip that her husband loves. Poppies, neither white nor red were yet associated with commemoration for wars, they would take another 62 years to start and 93 to end. Field Marshal Douglas Haig, "Master of the Field", "Butcher of the Somme" will be born nine years hence on the 19th June in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, to an alcoholic millionaire owner of Haig & Haig Whisky Distillers and the great aunt of Noel Coward. War at this point meant fashionable underbust dresses and the Napoleonic pillboxes of the East Coast, that looked like castellated jellies. The Californian Indian Wars and the Second Anglo-Burmese war seemed remote and the Crimean War will start on October 1853 in a year's time.

The style of the Empire line dress in the attic belonging to Anna's mother, lined in dull gold silk was worn by Vigée Le Brun at a Greek Supper she hosted in 1788. Smelling of rosewater and the sweat that had eaten away at the pale-striped turquoise watered silk at the seams of the armpits, it left obscene proof that her mother had once been alive. Moths had, in a cannibalistic cycle, started to consume the dress. The *Morus Alba* Mulberry tree that the moths made the silk from still grows, residing gently in East Timor, as I view Atkins' cyanotype.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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The moss that was soft and cooling the first time she bled, the ferns that packaged the delicate china plates in the tea chests when they moved, she drew these in light.

The Rabbit on the Wall, Horatio Nelson King, Albumen Print, (1860s)

Poppies didn't grow in gardens by accident, unless they were the Opium Poppy, and then they were only planted by Bohemians such as Byron. They flourished in the month of my birthday. The hot sun that forces the ripe belly of the poppy to burst did the same for my

mother. After weeks of swollen ankles, her pregnancy-blood feeding pregnant Ugandan mosquitoes and then Liverpudlian ones, she gave birth. She bled too much and under anaesthetic talked to the surgeon about gardening, her dislike of Hostas and love of Hellebores. She came to, and her new husband popped a champagne cork with a sword. The Ward Matron ran in and asked what the sound was and later my mother heard her say the word "psychopath" as they left the ward. She thought she would ask her second eldest daughter Esther to get the red Webster's dictionary down from the shelf in the study, but she forgot.

The night was pale, light silver and she could easily see the poppy petals as she peeled them off the blotting paper, parting them with a fuzzy, ripping sound. She removes her husband's and her father's books from the table that had pressed the flower down, and places them on the floor where the cat instantly sits, spreading her legs like a gymnast on a pommel horse and washing her furry thighs. She holds the used blotting paper, thinned by the specimen, pressed into a see-through description of a bled-out poppy. It is the silhouette of a plant painted in the vegetal juice of its being and the light shines through it like a stained-glass window for a dolls' church. The Murano glass ash tray holds the empty cigar ends, she tells Sarah the housekeeper to leave. The velvet curtains stink of smoke too. He's in Haiti and she wonders if he'll remember to get the Cocoa Bean and the Chrysalids and whether Lady Ashton will ask her in that annoying way, if she has missed him. Will he find the Haitian women attractive with their smooth dark skin? She touches the chickenpox dip on her forehead and the mole next to it. It reminds her of a freshly dug grave, a hollow with a mound of earth next to it. She had tried one of her father's cigars when she was on her own in the

house once, it had scorched her throat and made her dizzy. It felt like having Scarlet Fever again.

Knitted models of interpenetrating surfaces, Alexander Crum, Whipple Museum, Cambridge, (1885)

The largest moon of the year was rising when Elizabeth Barrett Browning picked a cowslip for her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and she pierced the meniscus of water at the mouth of a tiny blue glass bottle, with its stalk. The night that Anna Atkins was making her poppy cyanotype, the wife of Henry Liddel, the Headmaster of Westminster School, soon to be Dean of Christchurch Oxford, gave birth to Alice. The midwife had told her that new moons bring about new births.

Disraeli is appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Museum of Manufactures, predecessor to the V&A, is opened at Marlborough House. There is a duel at Priest Hill between two French political exiles: Emmanuel Barthélemy and Frederic Cournet. Cournet is killed. It is the last fatal duel on English soil. Barthélemy, a friend of Victor Hugo, is tried for murder and is instead convicted of manslaughter. Two years later he is hanged for another killing but goes on to be immortalised in *Les Misérables* and as a wax effigy in Madame Tussauds.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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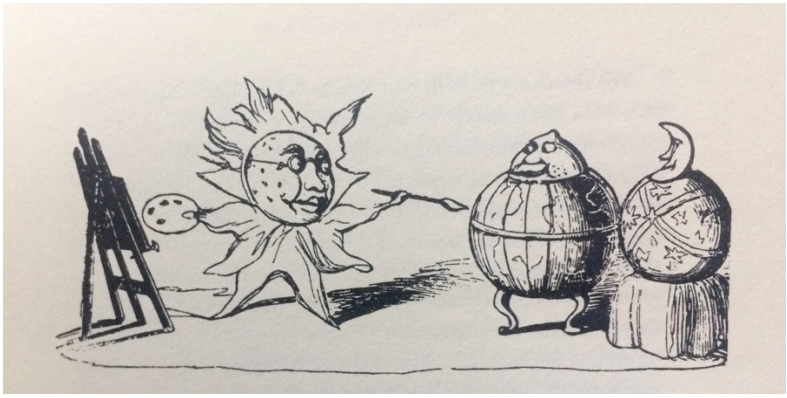
Anna Atkins writes the name *Papaver Orientale* on a piece of paper that had wrapped the Broderie-Anglaise petticoat she had bought from Denny's in Bishop's Walk. Atkins had already created a comprehensive three-volume album of seaweed and then of ferns.



Advertisement for the studio of Southworth & Hawes, Boston, (1854)

Mathematician and daughter of Byron, Ada Lovelace dies. The first public toilet for women opens as does Great Ormond Street Hospital and the House of Commons, designed by Barry and Pugin. Pugin dies. Thomas Edison draws a quincunx on his forearm with his tattoo pencil machine; maybe his wife Mina's name in Morse code. The cicada grub that John Pelly Atkins brings for his wife from Haiti stays underground at the edge of the asparagus patch in their garden in Kent for another 17 years. When the Cicada hatches out in 1869 it is surrounded by Dahlias. Anna has two years left of her life; Rasputin, Edwin Lutyens, Typhoid Mary, Matisse and Gandhi are born. French missionary and naturalist Père Armand David is given the skin of a Giant Panda by a hunter, the first time a Westerner learns of this species; he also has the "pocket handkerchief tree", named after him *Davidia involucrata*. Meanwhile in France, Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès patents margarine and worldwide: the Boshin War, Ten Years War, Cretan Revolution, Glorious Revolution and the Red River Rebellion are all stirring.

In 2012, I visited Overstrand, The Esplanade, Cressington Park, Liverpool. The owners of the house, a Physics Lecturer at Liverpool University and her husband, a Classics Lecturer,

showed me the Shaker kitchen they had recently had put in. Their Labrador, Ralph, followed us up the stairs and they warned me to stoop when I got to the attic. They couldn't remember where the light was for the back part of the attic. I swiped my hand across the plaster wall until it touched the round Bakelite switch. It fitted exactly in my hand, as satisfying as a soap and I turned the light on. There, as I leant over the dripping black open water tank, were the drawings. A tracing in pencil of our cat Isadora, my sister's foot, the profile of 'Leathers' the boy that two of my sisters loved and something I had forgotten about: a piece of my sister's arm cast and on the floor a dried-out piece of yellow Sellotape stuck with short blonde strands of hair from our dog Biscuit.

Tate & Lyle the guinea pigs lived and died in this attic and so did the tadpoles that dried up in the Le Creuset pan leaving the black charcoal patches of their swimming bodies under every casserole I made on top of them at college.

The ruined sofa that used to belong to Ellen Terry rested here too with ha'pennies and Fox Terrier fur wedged into its ripped calico armpits. The picture I drew on the sofa was of a man dropping off a cliff onto some jagged rocks. It was done in green felt tip and I was quite proud of it. Although if I had done it again I might have put a windswept tree on the cliff top. A child psychologist had been called and I was asked to name my friends: I could name six, and I was left alone. The six were my sisters and the cat but the psychologist didn't find that out. I see a mouse lying Ophelia-like in a puddle by the back door as I leave.

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Tolstoy's death bed shadow traced onto the wall, Astopovo train station. (1998)

Tolstoy on his Deathbed, postcard, (1910)

Sweat draws down the groove of Anna Atkin's back as she lays the dried poppy's body onto dull grey paper. She places the heavy glass she had taken out of the frame of her nursery sampler onto the taut dry plant. The sun beats down and makes a rainbow sheen on the glass. The grey paper tarnishes dull copper and Anna picks up the bucket, pushes the glass off with her burgundy kid-slippered foot and the water washes the paper flat. The

poppy image turns black then a deep poison-bottle blue, then white.

Hiroshima shadows, unknown photographers.

Cora, the Daughter of Scyon, Drawing her Lover's Profile, Maria Fortuny (c. 1856-1858)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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Tony's Wardrobe, Annabel Dover, (2010)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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The wardrobe that had been in the attic, was still there. It was too large and heavy to move from the house and had come straight from Paris to Liverpool with the new owner Professor Zibbert in 1842, the year Atkins collected her seaweed samples for her first cyanotype volume. She wonders if she is anaemic as she walks with her friend Anne across the beach at Deal. The pressure of her shoes makes a dainty pressure patch in the gritty sand that is a negative, and then a positive of the pointed kid slippers that she had quickly squeezed her feet into. The seaweed had to be collected in the water to look like its living self. Wading into the sea with her shoes off and soaking her petticoat, her dress loops around her shoulder and neck like Leda and the swan embracing. She presses the thick rag paper into the water and is amazed at the pressure needed to do so, and then at the strength needed to stop it from being pulled to the bottom. She snaps the seaweed's neck and feels cruel, feels it gasping for air as she does it, and lays it sideways onto the paper, spreading its fingers as if it is grasping life in its new death.

Stills from Jean Cocteau's film, *Orphée* (1950)

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The wardrobe has ovals of flowers on the two doors that flank the central looking-glass. Marquetry garlands, cut and stitched together form an elegant dense pretzel of leaves and flowers and ferns. The glass has turned to mercury and has a pleasing 1970s Vaseline lens reflection, with murky silvered silt at the edges; a collection of every reflection it has witnessed. The handprints of past users show up again in a mist of breath.

Loss Series, cyanotypes, Imperial War Museum, Annabel Dover (2001)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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The sock and scarf drawer housed curled up grubs, living underground for twenty years they live for twenty-four hours or less on the neck or feet and knees of the owner.

On June 8th, 1871 Anna Atkins raises her sopping wet arm from the sheet to prop herself up, she had seen that this was how Rembrandt slept when she visited his house in Amsterdam and she wonders in her delirium if she would get to meet him soon, does heaven have a chronological order? Are people kept in sections or areas, eras or geographical countries, class or status? And would animals be permitted? Sudrowe the cat who died in childbirth and her mother who died soon after, would they be angry with her? She looks at the mirror embedded in the armoire at the foot of the bed. She knows it is silly but she hopes that she will become trapped inside it. She had asked the housekeeper, Sarah, not to cover it with a black cloth, Sarah believing her to be foolish and perhaps un-superstitious agreed. Her death creeps in early next morning as the rooks make their sound in the high Ash trees at the edge of the garden and the light turns from blue to white. Sarah and Emma pull the key out of the clock in the bedroom and put the hands to twelve, Emma holds the pendulum in the long case clock. Sarah stops the sprinkling laugh of the Sévres clock in the Withdrawing Room and hangs on the weights of the kitchen clock until it is strangled. The parrot's cage is covered in mauve felt and the curtains are drawn. The early June sun presses on the pale cream cotton linings and gently scorches the lattice of the windows into their threads.

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Anna Atkins *British & Foreign Ferns* frontispieces, (1853)

There were fat Danish pastries in the drawers of the wardrobe: thick walking socks with grey flecks, of the kind still sold in old-fashioned men's outfitters. These would be our Christmas stockings once a year, holding a deflated satsuma, a piece of coal and some Lakeland pencils. They came from Keswick along with the 1960s packet of Kendal Mint Cake that was in the cupboard above the iron, that we ate a chunk of when we were desperate. They had been my father's mountaineering socks and gone to Snowdonia and Ben Nevis. His Naval coat, remained in a plastic shield. My mother talked about a man in uniform and my sisters said it sounded repulsive. The brass buttons had been stripped on his dismissal from the Navy. My mother sewed some fake ones on from her Aquascutum wedding coat. Flesh coloured silk ballet shoes lay hidden underneath the coat. The pocket held an amethyst the size of a scrabble tile that my mother had chosen from a bag of stones from Ceylon, later

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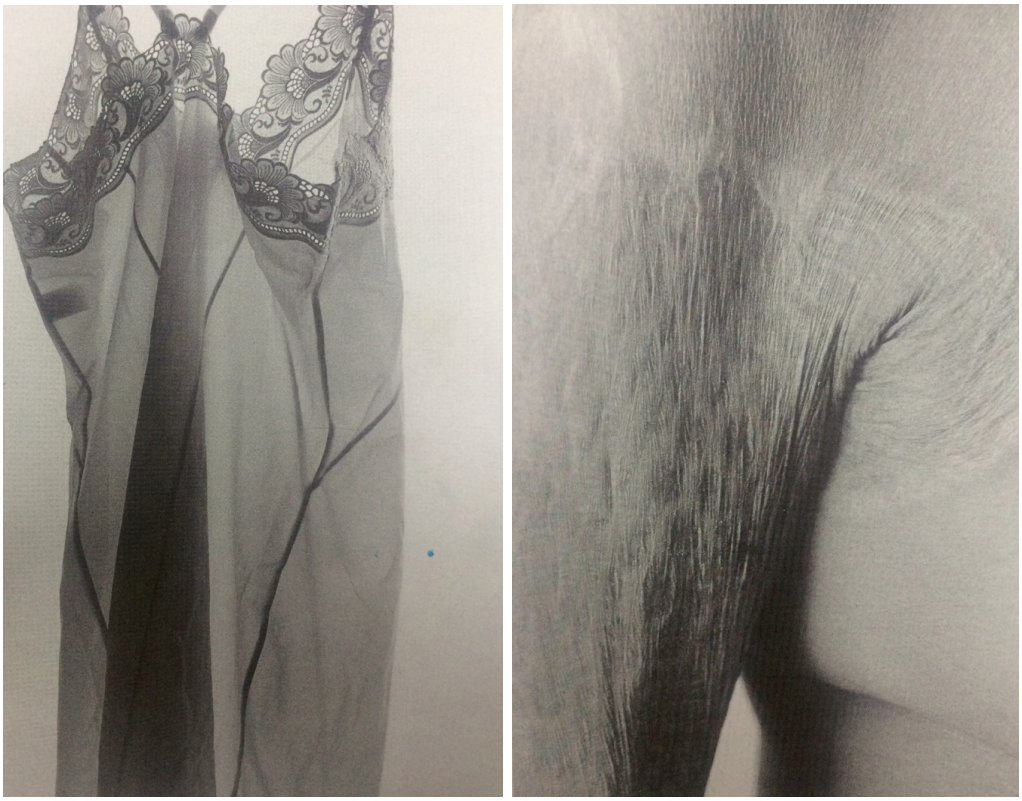
Sri Lanka.



Miyako Ishiuchi,[i] Mother's #49, (2002), & Mother's 25 March 1916 #31, gelatin silver print (2000)

The jet buttons on the Astrakhan cape have been rubbed. The unborn calf, still crinkled, pulled out of its mother's womb to make the glossy ringlet fur that shimmered in sunlight. A button could be rubbed to counteract bad luck if a funeral procession was encountered and there was no escape. Anna starts to turn around as she meets abruptly the procession of the funeral for the Starkey's boy. She pushes her thumbnail into the tartan pattern of the cut jet button grooves and continues instead. She had felt hurt by seeing the Alderton girl turn around at the sight of her father's funeral.

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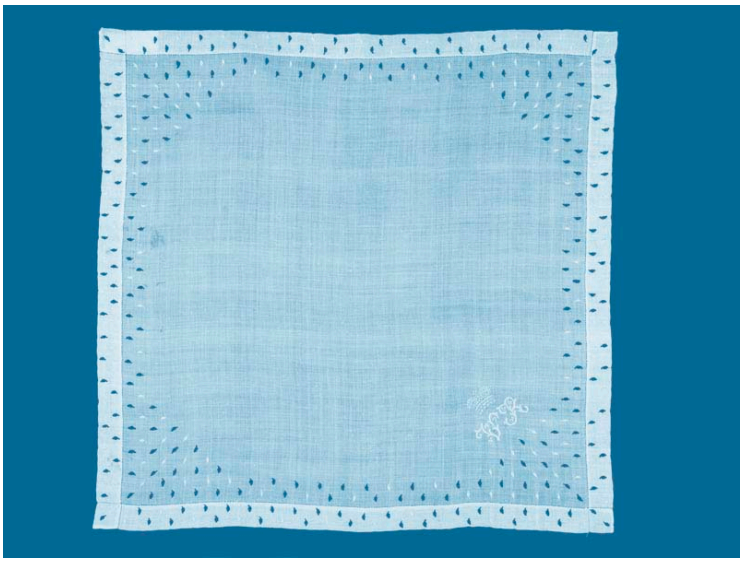
Page from Anna Atkins' & Anne Dixon's final untitled album; a gift for Captain Henry Dixon, (1861)

Thomas' baby socks, pale 1950s ribbed powder blue cashmere worn at the heels by the Startrite shoes he had only just started to walk in. No boy came after. A case of three-year-old boy's clothes returned to North London from Uganda, cushioning his bear Edward. The socks

curled around themselves. They were the colour of the electric writing at the greyhound track in Romford. They would have warmed the cool marble baby feet that rest on Queen Victoria's writing desk at Osborne House.



Tears, Queen Victoria's mourning handkerchief embroidered with tears, cyanotype, Annabel Dover, (2012)

A corner too dark to look in, held gloves with the initials T.A.M and F.H.M. sewn inside on Cash's name tapes. Father and son, remnants of their threadbare physical bodies now in Uganda and Geneva. In front of these was the damask table cloth that was used for the Christmas dinner. Later it ended up being used for our cleaning lady, Mrs Sharpe's body to be laid out on. I had seen a person laid out before. One of the times I had tried to leave home and walked to Otterspool in the dark. I had stopped to look at the pretty yellow candlelight in the Forrestal's bay window and saw Cis Forrestal, who was in my house at school

(Mayflower), lying perfectly still and with the bloom of a frosted plum, on a white cotton sheet, on a table. Her feet were in the white ankle socks she always wore for school, and I wondered why she was wearing them at the weekend. They didn't have the usual grubby foot print that they did during PE. There was nobody else in the room, just their cat Siskin who was curled as tight as a nut on a low nursing chair by the fire. Cis' straggly hair was spread over a pillow, along the table. Hanging over the edge it looked as if it was damp and maybe

Cyanotypes of British Algae by Anna Atkins (1843)

The Nature-Printed British Sea-Weeds: A History, accompanied by figures and dissections, of the algæ of the British Isles. Johnstone, William Grosart & Alexander Croall. London: Bradbury & Evans, (1859-60)

she had just been swimming. That night, I pulled the old hair out of my Boar bristle brush and laid it on my pillow.

Ken's sock was washed and sewn with custard-coloured wool by the nurses in Essen. It rested curled up by his camp bed with his old LKIM tin. A sock for a foot that no longer existed. His cardboard ice-cream cornet leg made by the Russians was burnt in St. Barth's hospital incinerators along with the matchstick boxes and bookmarks he had bought from them with food.

Whistle and I'll Come to You, dir. Jonathan Miller. (1968)

Francis's scarf, was a pound of ecclesiastical silk. Woven by hands who had witnessed bound feet but not yet the Cultural Revolution, shipped to Liverpool, taken to Silver Street in Cambridge in an enamelled green Austin van and displayed, wrapped and talked about by the gentlemen staff of Ede & Ravenscroft. The ivory knitted silk scarf is stained with something yellow that looks like rust; a brass key that was wrapped in it left its indelible mark. "Trinity Hall" was written in small self-conscious copperplate on the label, as it was in the interior of his copy of *Paradise Lost*, the first inscription before the other notes. These notes were an anagram of notes written at Trinity Hall by J. B. Priestley. They had lived in the same room

and written about the symbolism of Satan, struggling with hangovers and leaving the burgundy linen curtains semi drawn as the rain ran down the leaded windows and their vision of the quad was reduced to a misty green lozenge. Priestley had looked at the crack in the ceiling and saw them as donkey's ears, as Francis did 33 years later.

Nestled inside the Trinity Hall scarf like the stamen of a fat silken flower was my mother's Guerlain Mitsouko soaked handkerchief embroidered with angry geese. We were allowed to wrap the goose hanky around our necks when we had a sore throat.

My mother's 34C bras were kept here too, before her breasts turned, after five children, to loose stockings. Her tulle nightgown and bed-jacket, reminders of her pre-baby sex life, we wore as evening dresses to our fantasy debutante balls. I didn't understand the point of the nightgown being see-through. Period stained sheets from five different wombs also arrived here to make patchy ghosts and to be ripped up to polish the silver.

Emma uses the Horsetails that Anna had cut with a carving knife from the corner by the potato patch. She guts them and then wraps their prehistoric bodies in a dishcloth and scrubs John's silver tray with the silica oozing stems.

Rebecca stills dir. Hitchcock (1940)

In the drawer named handkerchiefs, there was a round, red and gold box of collars and studs that I never understood, a packet of ancient condoms along with a copy of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and Len Deighton's *Twinkle Twinkle Little Spy*.

John Pelly Atkins no longer took precautions. Anna had never become pregnant and he guessed it was not God's wish that at 41 she would ever be a mother. He felt guilty at the wet patch she left on the sheets and mattress each month and the sodden moss she dried and burnt in the grate curled up to smoky nothingness.

The Glove, Max Klinger (1881).

The rigid Freemason case held a slab of material woven with thread that persistently bullied a thin cotton square, the cardboard-enforced moiré silk and the Egyptian eye that I would see much later in the stained-glass window of a lodge, folded neatly into a 1950s-housewife style apron. There were white gloves too, of the kind I would wear later when I cleaned the glass cabinets of silver fish-shaped perfume bottles in the National Trust property, Ickworth House.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Leaning over the mirrored table, smearing off the Christmas Cactus juice drops, I could always see the scars on my chin. Sometimes as I arrived in the room at 7am I could smell cigar smoke coming through the keyhole of the Billiard Room. The Marquis still lived in the east wing. I could hear the crack of billiard balls hitting one another, quiet laughter and the chink of cut glass tumblers being toasted. Once I looked and saw three young boys lying asleep on the floor, like Labrador puppies in a basket.

SERRATED FUCUS.

Herbarium of Fuci, Natural History Museum Library (1862)

Ectoplasm photograph, unknown photographer, (1900's)

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The paper curls up like a fortune teller fish in the hand. The ghost of a poppy is left and its spirit transferred to the paper forever. Anna places it in a rice paper shroud and blots it dry under her father's *Atlas of the Empire* and *The Mode in Costume*.

My sister Susannah had a pair of ersatz Levi's with one pocket on and a deep indigo patch where the other pocket had come off. She wore them with white plimsolls and a light blue sweatshirt, printed with dark blue writing, from an outward-bound holiday in Matlock. From the moment they arrived from the charity shop, the jeans had never been washed. My mother complained of the dirt they left on her side of the double bed. A filthy palimpsest lay next to my father even when Susannah had gone and he lay asleep all morning and all afternoon. The shadow within a shadow left an impression in my mind, I recently saw it again, the dark patch where there had been a pocket. I saw my sister in those jeans so often I saw them as her skin, the darker blue was the inside of her body, bleeding out like an uncapped felt-tip and the grubby leg-shaped marks that seeped into my mother and father's sheets seemed to me, her skin rubbing off.

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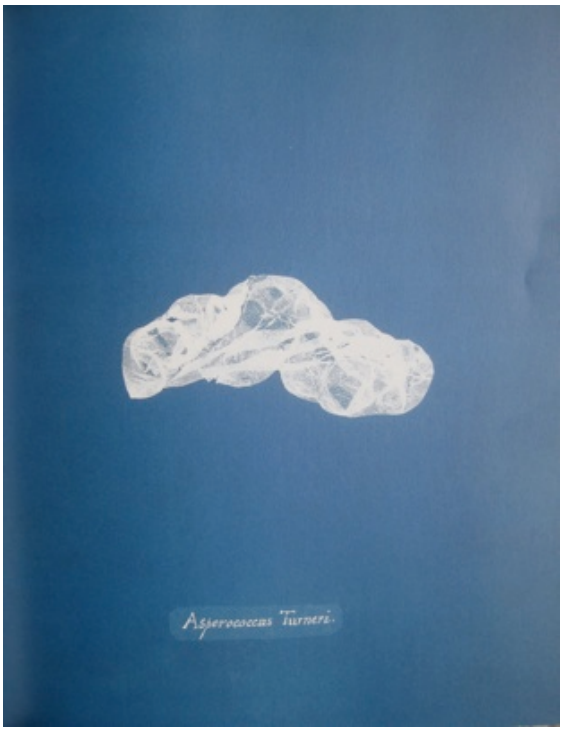
Unknown Girl photograph, Annabel Dover, (2014)



Cyanotypes of British Algae by Anna Atkins (1843)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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Clef 1

Anna Atkins' album *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843) resides in the Royal Society library among other Victorian scientific works. The album is a facsimile catalogue of botanical specimens, and an archive presented as a scientific truth. Atkins was the daughter of natural scientist J.G. Children and had illustrated her father's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells* (1842) with 250 drawings and engravings.

Anna Atkins, watercolour for J.G. Children's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells* (1842)

Anna Atkins, engraving for J.G. Children's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells* (1842)

Atkins continued to make botanical illustrations after her father's death in 1852. These were in the form of cyanotype albums that used the technique she had developed from her father's friend, the mathematician and astronomer Sir John Herschel, whom she credits in her introduction. The dominant narrative presented by the Royal Society is that Atkins served as handmaid to her father and to Herschel. Her description on the Royal Society website is typical in stereotyping her illustrations and cyanotypes as supporting material for the scientific theories of J.G. Children, Herschel and Fox Talbot (Jukes, 2017). She is presented as a handmaid to men who play a significant role in the narrative of science. Atkins herself actively encourages these definitions in both her introduction to the albums and in her 1853 biography of her father. In the latter, she willingly adopts the persona of the handmaid, presenting herself as the dutiful daughter and servant to a well-known and important scientist. In the preface to the biography she describes her work as a 'little' memoir, for 'private distribution', full of 'details' and 'trifles', and not fit for public scrutiny:

> In the hope of gratifying many of the Friends of the late Mr. John George Children, by acquainting some for the first time with the principal events of his Life, or by recalling those events to the recollection of others, and as a tribute of deep respect and of affection to his Memory, this little Volume has been prepared for *private distribution* only. The Reader will kindly bear this in mind, as many details and trifles have been inserted, which, in a Memoir intended for the public, would have omitted.
>
> (Atkins, 1853: 3)

In the introduction to her album *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, she continues this theme of servitude, thanking Hershel for his help in making her 'offering' (Atkins, 1852). Even in these examples Atkins herself does not appear to have her own voice. On looking at Atkins' albums in the Royal Society I felt that there was a problem with this dominant narrative of Atkins as voiceless handmaid and that the obvious passion involved in the making of the albums suggests that there is something more here. This feeling was reinforced by reading her descriptions of objects in her little-known novels *The Perils of Fashion* (1853), *The Colonel* (1853) and *Murder Will Out* (1859) which whispered hidden

stories. Atkins' considerable output in the years leading up to and following her father's death led me to the conclusion that more voices were there to be heard beyond those of the dominant narrative.

Neither was this narrative limited to the Royal Society and the other institutions that house Atkins' work. In a 2013 exhibition at Turner Contemporary, *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing*, Atkins continued to be presented as a curious adjunct to the male scientist:

> Her father, John George Children, was a prominent scientist who in 1839 chaired the meeting of the Royal Society where William Henry Fox Talbot described his process for making photogenic drawings. Sir John Herschel, the natural philosopher, son of astronomer Sir William Herschel, and friend of Atkins and her father, developed the cyanotype soon after.
>
> (Dillon, 2013: 182)

In this catalogue text, Atkins is again defined by her proximity to her father and depicted as an inert vessel through which Children and Herschel could extend their scientific work. Even more recently, *A Weed is a Plant out of Place*, a 2016 exhibition at Lismore Castle, also featured Atkins' cyanotype prints. The description that accompanied her cyanotypes was prefaced as being the by-product of creating illustrations she had made for her father's translation of *Lamarck's Genera of Shells* (1823). An image of her father's book was presented next to Atkins' prints and her name was appended to the dominant narrative of the history of Western art alongside the label 'vintage photographs'. The term 'vintage' suggests a decorative and general category of photograph of little artistic or monetary value. It is a term often used on online auction sites and at craft fairs to designate a work as suitable for the enthusiast.

This idea was confirmed to me by one particular print; *Papaver Orientale* (1852-4), I encountered in the V&A. It appeared artificial: an illusory dream in its chimerical perfection far more than a mere illustration of another's scientific theory. The cyanotype of the poppy *Papaver Orientale*, with the pellicle-like thinness of its petals and its fine stem hairs – an ephemeral plant pressed in stasis – suggested to me that there were other narratives to be heard. The delicate flower, so short-lived that it cannot be put into a cut flower display, was

paradoxically presented here as seamlessly transported from sometime between 1852 and 1854. This temporal uncertainty parallels the ambiguous nature of Atkins' own story. Although Atkins herself has no role in the narrative of science, there is another presence within these cyanotype pages.

Viewing Atkins' work at the library of the Royal Society brought to mind Walter Benjamin's 1940 essay, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. In this essay, Benjamin comments that it is the victor in the story of history who is commemorated: 'Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate' (1988: 248). Applying Benjamin's thesis, Atkins' father is the hero and Anna Atkins' narrative has been suppressed. However, Benjamin also talks about other moments not remembered – the products of 'anonymous toil'. Michael Steinberg develops this idea from Benjamin's essay to discuss how the pyramids are as much markers of the nameless slaves as they are of the pharaohs (Steinberg 1996: 209). This introduces the idea that the object could speak for the losers as well as the winners. Given this, I constructed the idea that Atkins' cyanotypes, if given voice, would tell other stories beyond those expressed in the Royal Society. Like the nameless heroine's description of objects in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), the cyanotypes connect to the emotions of the protagonist, reflecting her inner state:

> The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing. You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream. Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes – a kind of 'debased Romanesque' with delirium tremens – go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity. But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.
>
> (Gilman, 1892: 18)

Here, the author uses the animation of objects, giving them active physical expression – 'slapping', 'trampling' and 'knocking down' – to voice her protagonist's inexpressible emotion. In the following chapter, I pursue a similar approach in using *Papaver Orientale* as

a fulcrum by which to articulate multiple voices to tell silent stories. I adopt Gilman's description of objects as the basis of my methodology, and this is instrumental in my construction of the concept of object as witness. This methodology takes the lead from the object both as subject and active agent. In this way, the shadow narratives of Atkins' albums can be re-voiced. This is necessary to dislocate the reader from the heroic scientific narrative of her current presentation in the Royal Society. To hear these voices, I have constructed a narrative device of my own in Chapter One.

The dominant narratives have pushed Atkins to the side, turning her into a wallflower. I seek to empower this objectified status. A wallflower: a silent woman without a partner, pressed and trapped against an interior structure – yet also freed from the role of partner. She becomes an observer of activity, and a witness and even narrator of the scene. In this way, the wallflower and *Papaver Orientale* become freely voiced witnesses. Currently, the theories of the indexical, trace, and the *biographeme* consider ways in which the object might speak; however, although useful, they do not give full voice to those forgotten in the dominant narrative.

James Elkins builds on Barthes' concept of the *noeme* and references philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce's definition of the indexical. In considering Peirce's theory of signs, Elkins observes that Peirce defines an 'index' as a sign connected to its referent along a physical axis, such as a thumbprint or a footprint. This offers a one-to-one correspondence with the thing it represents. Importantly, Peirce signals the complexity of photographic meaning, noting that the photograph is both an index and an icon (Elkins, 2007: 26). The suggestion of one thing by another and the concept of signs and the indexical was first discussed by Peirce in the 1860s. He defined three types of sign: the symbol, the icon and the index, each of which fulfils different relationships between signified and signifier (Atkin, 2017).

Joan Gibbons has also developed Peirce's definition of the indexical object. She offers the following definition of the physical presence of an indexical object: 'The indexical sign may involve abstraction or, indeed, may be heavily mimetic, but it is distinguished by the fact that the signifier retains at least something of the existential "having been thereness" of that which is signified' (Gibbons, 2007: 30). The indexical sense of loss and connection felt

when looking at a cyanotype are magnified by the simultaneous proximity of the object the cyanotype depicts and the absence of the object's presence.

The cyanotype can be considered an indexical representation of both the object and the performance of its creation. David Green and Joanna Lowry describe the act of photograph making as performative and therefore indexical, commenting that the photographer herself often leaves unintentional traces (West Brett, 2005: 190). This can be seen in the work of Julia Margaret Cameron, whose prints have her fingerprints embedded in the edges. A stray hair can be seen on one of Anna Atkins' seaweed prints. These traces reassert the haptic physicality of the artist. Because the cyanotype depicts the missing object in its exact size, it is easy to relate to its tactile presence. The physical process of making a cyanotype is important here. Anna Atkins, for example, would press her specimen flat prior to laying it on the surface of ferrous cyanide and sodium ferrous citrate treated paper. This would then be placed under glass to press the specimen and further ensure as much of the object's texture as possible could be 'seen' by the sun. In a parallel to the x-ray, cyanotypes can reveal some of the inner workings of the tender leaves, variations in thickness and suggestions of texture and density. The prints have aspects of the microscopic eye that can provide the human observer with an enhanced visual perception, suggesting the potential to see through an object and discover its true nature. The sheet of compressing glass also protects the specimen and the paper from the breeze and helps to concentrate the sun's rays. After exposure, the treated paper is washed with water until no more ferrous yellow can be seen, and the white of the paper beneath emerges in contrast with the various tonal shades of Prussian blue that 'draw' the now absent object. The resulting trace creates an image of the specimen in negative. This inverse retelling presents a proof of the object's existence in its absence and records the maker's hope to capture it. The cyanotype process is an unpredictable one, dependent on variations in humidity, chemical mix and application, as well as on the strength of the sun.

The fingerprint of the object in the form of Atkins' poppy is evidence of its presence; it is a witness and it shows that Atkins herself was there too acting as a commemoration. Tony Walter, in *The Mourning for Diana*, describes how the flowers laid for the princess outside Buckingham Palace were kept in their individual cellophane wrappers, despite being left in a vast tribute. Each person self-commemorates, and, when people are gone, objects are all that

is left to show that they mattered (Walter, 1999: 37). In *The Cultures of Collecting* James Elsner and Roger Cardinal echo this by suggesting that collecting is part of a complex play to commemorate oneself in the future, and so to guard against being forgotten (Elsner and Cardinal, 2004: 5). The dialogue between Atkins' albums and my own also serves as a commemoration: a proof that she and I existed.

> As in an album of photographs or a collection of antiquarian relics, the past is constructed from a set of presently existing pieces. There is no continuous identity between these objects and their referents. Only the act of memory constitutes their resemblance, and it is in the gap between resemblance and identity that nostalgic desire arises. The nostalgic is enamoured of the distance, not of the referent itself. Nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss.
>
> (Stewart, 1992: 145)

The gap between the connection Susan Stewart describes here – the seeming nearness of communication and yet the lack of it – produces the feelings of loss articulated by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*. Barthes describes mourning as expressed through a photograph of his mother in the Winter Garden:

> In order to 'find' my mother, fugitively alas, and without ever being able to hold on to this resurrection for long, I must, much later, discover in several photographs the objects she kept on her dressing table, an ivory powder box (I loved the sound of its lid), a cut-crystal flagon, or else a low chair, which is now near my own bed.
>
> (Barthes, 1993: 64)

Barthes describes his search for the essence of his mother through her photograph. Barthes does not reproduce this photograph in *Camera Lucida*, an omission that allows the reader to superimpose their own mother, or a fittingly poignant memory, into the narrative. This powerful object offers a time, a place and a person that Barthes wants to return to but cannot. He is confounded by a cyclical yearning for the physical object in the photograph (Barthes, 1993: 63).

The indexical trace of the photograph and the cyanotype offers the illusion of a tangible presence; there is a sense of loss at its absence. John Bennett, Director of the British School

at Athens and Director of the School of Archaeology, wrote of the *Florilegia* album and the presence of the objects in Chapter One, that it is by nature archaeological because 'Archaeology is made of objects and stories' (Bennett, 2017: 12). Bennett develops this idea from Nancy Shawcross' statement: 'Do not take the photograph for a "copy" of reality, but for an emanation of past reality' (Elkins, 208: 2010).

The indexical guides us to loss: it points to an object and creates a direct but unfulfilling connection to the object. The concept of indexical trace attempts to link the past with the present through an object. This evocation of a lost object by an existing object limits them to a closed duologue. In *Florilegia*, however, I create dialogues with multiple objects and offer many alternative stories. I use the cyanotype print process in parallel with Chapter One, using objects as fulcrums around which voices are formed.

The notion of the indexical offers an interface between time and space. The objects offer tangible proof of interaction with another story in time and place, and in some ways they create the illusion that the position of emotions can be objectively analysed and explained, and they suggest the sacred transfer between one object and another. While the indexical is an imprint of an object, the trace can be interpreted and developed in various ways, as demonstrated by Annette Messager's *L'ombre Dessinées sur le Mur* (1971-2). To develop her own biographical fable, Messager reinterprets the notion of the trace in Pliny the Elder's retelling of Butades. The line between biography and object is retold in the trope of the invention of drawing.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Joseph-Benoît Suvée, *The Origin of Painting*, 1793

The story of Butades, told by Pliny the Elder, describes the daughter of a potter who traces the shadow of her soon-to-be departed lover on the wall as he sleeps. Immediately, this shadow drawing, this photograph, is defined in terms of its witness to a departed object and as a form of romantic memory. The myth does not, however, tell the story of the unnamed daughter who draws on the wall, but of her father, the potter Butades, who from the drawing makes a sculpture of the departed man, the object of his daughter's love. Marsha Meskimmon and Phil Sawdon describe how for centuries the myth became known as the origin of painting as opposed to the origin of drawing (Meskimmon and Sawdon, 2016: 23). The drawing made by the daughter is not in itself commemorated in Pliny's story; rather, it acts as inspiration, and she is the muse and shadow who inspires the artist to create a sculpture and painting:

> the first act of drawing, undertaken by a woman, is relegated to the status of support, or more precisely, to the base matter from which higher forms of art would be created. Within this story as first told and later invoked, *drawing* and *woman* are aligned structurally as handmaidens in the mythic histories of western art, whether that art is two or three-dimensional.
>
> (Meskimmon and Sawdon, 2016: 23)

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Annette Messager, *L'ombre Dessinées sur le Mur*, 1971-2

Examining *L'ombre Dessinées sur le Mur*, in the context of the myth of Butades, Meskimmon and Sawdon discover that Messager returns to the woman who makes both the drawing and her own shadows. In Messager's work there are several shadows (drawn and real) and all are equally important. Messager describes treading on a sparrow on a street in Paris, and with each retelling of her story she links herself to the work in a mythic corroboration of the object as witness. Butades' daughter has no name in Pliny's story. The daughter is merely a narrative device, a support to her father's creativity. Atkins performs the same supportive role for her father. It is through her love, her amateur spirit and emotion that he is commemorated in her biography of him. It was her illustrations which solidified his name in the dominant narrative of scientific history. Meskimmon and Sawdon discuss this point in relation to Messager's work:

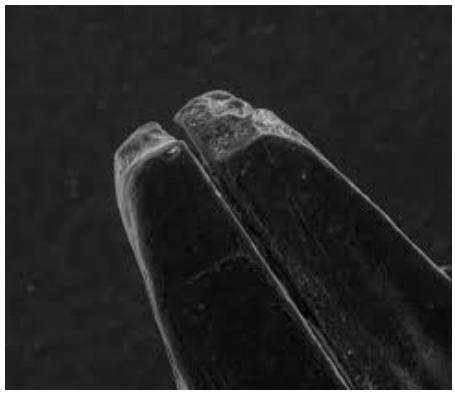
> Such an alignment is wholly in keeping with a dualist epistemology in which woman is to man as matter is to form and body to mind. But *L'ombre dessinée* creeps behind the limits of such simplistic binary thinking, speaking across the boundaries of object- and image-making, obscuring the borders (The Boarders?) of painting and sculpture – indeed, of art – suggesting a carnivalesque undoing of the gendered cul-de-sac of creative origin myths. Drawing is here a graphic grapheme,

> an open and vital element of a conversation-in-process that is capable of speaking a subject-in-process. Dialogue should not be confused with 'duologue', it does not adhere to duality and is not a temporary bridge between two fixed terms. Rather, dialogue as with drawing, speaks across, through and with more than one term, and describes a process of exchange whereby every term engaged within the dialogue emerges from it altered.
>
> (Meskimmon and Sawdon, 2016:23-24)

In the myths of Atkins and of Butades, the shadow on the wall and the shadow in the form of the daughter allows their respective fathers, the heroes, to be remembered. In contrast, the multiple shadows in *Florilegia* escape the myth via my writing in Chapter One, subverting the story and setting Atkins free from her subservient position and allowing her to become a nexus of multiple dialogues.

The tracing of a shadow simultaneously both creates a portrait and captures the essence of a person through their absence. Like Julia Margaret Cameron's fingerprints, it also captures devotion. Both in the case of the myth of Butades' daughter and subsequent photographic objects, it is the absence of the traced subject that makes them desirable (Stewart, 1992:145). The cyanotype 'traces' the artefacts in Atkins' albums and mirrors the drawing of the Corinthian maid. This is further extended with Barthes' concept of the *noeme*, the drawing with light, by the touching of the surface of the desirable object (Barthes, 1993:79). A poppy just removed and leaving an inverted shadow from 1853, viewed by me for the first time in 2003, suggests Barthes' 'transparent envelope' and his description of a *noeme*: something 'That-has-been' and which gives a sense of 'It was there'. The hologram-like suggestion offered by the cyanotype is exactly this: a witness of existence, but not the existence itself, and a metaphor for memory. Sometimes an individual's memory is the only proof that an event happened. The desperate search for 'proof' is confounded, and the shadow, the echo, the reverberation is the only witness. The photograph has entered a strange in-between space, neither fully past nor fully present; it becomes a mediating object which can offer us an understanding of the past and an emotional means to access it through fiction. Barthes considers the importance of looking and the subjective appreciation of a photograph as opposed to an analytical, intellectual evaluation (Barthes, 1993: 79). In the case of the *noeme* or *eidos*, he considers how a photograph differs from other objects, and how it is the nature of

photography to be eternally present and to connect to its referent: 'I didn't yet know that this stubbornness of the referent in always being there would produce the essence I was looking for' (Barthes, 1993:6). The eternal presence of Atkins' cyanotype images reiterates her own presence. Atkins is gone but her trace lives on to be interpreted and re-interpreted. Barthes' struggle for the *noeme* shows he is trying to find the essence of the photographic image, the *punctum* or key to a truth that has been concealed and that leads us into the image through the object of the photograph. He identifies the unique essence of photography as being both in the past and in the present. The shock of experiencing Atkins' cyanotypes is that they appear to be robustly in the present and open to dialogue.



Cornelia Parker, *Brontëan Abstract* (Emily Brontë's quill pen nib), 2006, silver gelatin print

Cornelia Parker, *Avoided Object*, 1999, infrared photograph

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Cornelia Parker, *Feather from Freud's Pillow*, 1998, photogram

Nancy Princenthal's article, 'Cornelia Parker, The Dream Life of Objects' (2013), considers Parker's connection of objects to our unconscious and her presentation of the trace that objects leave and their roles as witnesses. In *Brontëan Abstract* (2006), Parker makes a silver gelatin print of an electronic microscope image of Emily Brontë's pen nib. Parker uses the microscope to discover the physical trace of Emily Brontë: the way she held her quill and how that brings to mind imagery of Brontë's thoughts flowing through the quill to be written on paper. The alchemical nucleus of an object is here revealed. With *Avoided Object* (1999), Parker takes an infrared photograph of clouds using the camera that belonged to Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz between 1940-3. Höss' camera 'sees' with the eyes of one that has witnessed incomprehensible scenes and enables the images of the multi-tonal clouds, which are neither black nor white, to be imbued in our imagination with the weight of the images that the camera has witnessed. Parker uses the metaphor of homeopathy to describe the mechanisms of her work: 'The homeopathic premise of treating sick persons with extremely diluted agents that – in undiluted doses – are deemed to produce similar symptoms in a healthy individual' (Grey, 2017).

With Parker's *Feather from Freud's Pillow* (1998), the feather, is a witness to the psychoanalysis sessions that Freud conducted with his patients. The image of the feather comes in and out of focus; it appears as an active agent of recollection, fading in and out of

memory. Parker's photogram conjures an image of the patient lying prone upon the couch while the feather absorbs their psyche. Trace more than the indexical opens up beyond an inverse of an object can become retellings of objects, it is still a duologue; a closed conversation. I want to interpret Atkins' objects more widely and relate them to other objects and people to portray the hidden voices of histories untold.

In Chapter One, as with *Brontëan Abstract*, I return to an object left behind to conjure the circumstances under which it was created. The object is shown to be the witness to and only connection with a significant and secret, or unresolved, moment of the past. This offers those in communion with the object the only possible means of transportation to that past. Rather than telling one story, however, Chapter One of *Florilegia* acts as a prism, diffracting rather than focusing, with the suggestion that many possible histories emanate from each object. This diffraction responds to Griselda Pollock's idea of the plurality of the *matrixial* (Pollock, 2004:7) and points to an alternative reading of Derrida's writing on trace and autobiography, replacing his 'I' with 'we':

> That trace would already be the guarantee [gage] or undertaking [engagement], the promise of a discourse on autobiographical method. Whether it is pronounced, exposed as such, thematised or not, the 'I' is always posed autobiographically. It refers to itself. The 'I' shows itself, it speaks of itself as living, living in the present, in the living present, in the moment in which 'I' is said, even were it to be already a dead thing speaking. The auto-biographical does not have to occur to an 'I', living or dead, that would come to speak of itself. The auto-bio-graphical derives from the fact that the simple instance of the 'I' or the autos can be posed as such only to the extent that it is a sign of life in presence, the manifestation of life in presence, even if the what, or who, male or female, that thereby gives this sign of life finds itself to have passed over to the side of death, and even says 'I am on the side of death or rather on the other side of life'.
>
> (Derrida and Mallet, 2010:56)

Autobiography in *Florilegia* is not about the self, but the 'us' as a collective narrative of women of the past and present. Carol Mavor describes the process of making the cyanotype as a communal activity. The 'we' of the children is held by its simple magic:

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How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

> As children, many of us had the satisfaction of making simple cyanotypes (camera-less photographs). We took sheets of rich blue, light-sensitive paper out into the bright sun and placed objects directly onto paper. Perhaps these were a hat, a sock, a flower or an Ophelia wreath of leave. Then we waited for the blue paper to turn white in the sunlight. This took about five to seven minutes depending on the brightness of the day. Next, in the kitchen sink, or the bathtub, we developed the image under water. While watching the blue fade and then reappear like sped-up film of a changing sky, we saw the exquisite 'white negative' of the chosen object magically appear.
>
> (Mavor, 2013: 77)

The cyanotype encapsulates elements not only of presence, absence, the keepsake, and the specimen, but also of presence and absence of its makers and their multiple voices. Atkins' albums have a tangible, domestic presence, which can be shared, and which place this new medium within the feminine tradition. In this way, her albums combine the nature of a keepsake and that of a photograph. A keepsake, such as a lock of a loved one's hair, is a substitution of part for whole; it is a synecdoche of an absent figure and is therefore a metonymic object. It is also a line of connection between bodies. Atkins' album forms a distilled, connective web with her friend and collaborator Anne Dixon. Chapter One of *Florilegia* engages with this connective idea and extends its reach to contemporary audiences.

Anna Atkins and Anne Dixon would have prepared the light-sensitive cyanotype paper in darkness:

> Darkness is essential to recollection. In a sense, recollection depends upon the darkroom of the mind to develop the negatives of memory that have been lying dormant, waiting to be realized.
>
> (Colley, 1998:212)

As much as the cyanotype projects outwardly into light, it also sucks up into darkness; it is like a succubus who visits us in the night. Darkness is essential to recollection. In a sense, recollection depends upon the darkroom of the mind to develop the negatives of memory that have been lying dormant, waiting to be realised (Colley, 1998:212). Ann Colley's premise is the basis of Brian Dillon's personal and emotional autobiography, *In the Dark Room: A Journey in Memory* (2006). The idea that personal insights are gained from retreat into a dark

place is familiar: Descartes retreated into an oven, Plato a cave. From the dark comes the remembrance. Sharon Kivland, in her work *Reisen* (Travels) and accompanying publication *Reisen: der Rauch von Dampflokomotiven* (Travelling: the smoke from steam locomotives), describes the darkroom as a sort of dream-space (Kivland, 2013:5). The cyanotype process must be conducted half in darkness and half in bright daylight, and the resulting image has traces of both environments. It is not until the print is developed in the sun that the marks made by the cyanotype solution in the dark can be seen, and these include the splashes made inadvertently on the body of those making the cyanotype. The process is analogous to a confession being brought to light and of a secret revealed. This makes the cyanotype an appropriate process to convey secret, overlooked and untold narratives and unconscious reflections. This is an example of Barthes' *biographeme* (Barthes, 1993:30), as developed by Carol Mavor (2013:79).

Annabel Dover, *Stocking*, 2001, cyanotype, Imperial War Museum collection

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In *Like a Stocking: Two Paths of Metaphor and Metonymy*, Mavor develops Hayden White's interpretation of the *biographeme* via an examination of a cyanotype print I made of my grandmother's stocking, and which was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum. Mavor describes *Silk Stocking* (2010) as a single image that tells multiple hidden stories from a time that no longer exists. In doing so, she describes the heroine (me) gaining power and the means to escape via fantasy (Mavor, 2013: 77-90):

> To read Dover's blue stocking as floating like Ophelia is a metaphor, and is to ask 'What is it? What does it mean' – the real question [Barthes tells us] of critical and philosophical writing. To read Dover's blue stocking as her grandmother is metonymic, and is to ask another question: 'What can follow what I say? What can be engendered by the episode I am telling?': this is [Barthes tells us] the question of the novel. For Barthes, philosophy is metaphor; the novel is metonym. Barthes like Proust, strives for both, and is 'metaphorico-metonymic', like Dover's blue stocking.
>
> (Mavor, 2013: 77)

Mavor later characterises the stocking as a metaphor of Ophelia, as a metonym (as it is missing) and as a displacement of my grandmother's desire for her missing husband. Using my print to examine Atkins' plant cyanotypes, she describes metonymy and metaphor as 'friendly in touch' and defines them using examples given by Hayden White: 'Metaphor, means anything that has to do with similarity', whereas metonymy has 'anything to do with contiguity … A nearness, a closeness, a communion wafer, like a representation of missing plants, their outlines clearly visible, they must have existed, but now they have gone' (Mavor, 2013: 77).

Imbibed and consumed, touched and felt, lived and believed, my plant cyanotypes and the objects in the stories of *Florilegia* can also be described as 'metaphorico-metonymic': they are both the objects and the people that they represent. In *Florilegia*, *biographeme* becomes a storytelling object that speaks to the unconscious of the viewer and helps them to tell their own stories. Barthes identifies a physical and parental connection between body and photograph, describing it as 'a sort of umbilical cord [which] links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze' (Barthes, 1980: 81). *Florilegia* moves beyond this duologue

to Meskimmon and Sawdon's productive dialogue (2016: 23-24) to produce multiple stories.

The concept of the *biographeme* releases stories through the sense of recollection that it inspires in the viewer-handler; it emphasises the non-linear nature of autobiography, memory and stories which break against historical narrative. Believing curriculum-vitae-type autobiographies to be reductive and demeaning to memory, Barthes (2010) favoured the photograph, the haiku and the *biographeme* as effective conduits to biography. *Biographemes* allowed Barthes the freedom to tell an autobiography outside the realms of logic, science and causal narrative, and within a 'mirage of the real' (Barthes, 1971: 8-9). In the retrospection that the *biographeme* arouses, time/memory and fact/fiction have a moving and interchangeable relationship. The unsettling and residing feeling that I felt on first sight of Atkins' *Papaver Orientale* was one of recognising something I had forgotten. A preliterate Proustian response was outlined by Benjamin in 'The Image of Proust': 'the past is somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect, and unmistakably present in some material object (or the sensation which such an object arouses in us)' (Benjamin, 1999: 155).

Anna Atkins, *Papaver Orientale*,1852-4, cyanotype

The poppy had a connection with my unconscious; it told stories and one of them, I felt, was mine. This unconscious storytelling is described by Derrida in *Memoirs of the Blind*: 'By accident, and sometimes on the brink of an accident, I find myself writing without seeing. Not with my eyes closed, to be sure, but open and disoriented in the night' (Derrida: 1993: 3). Mavor uses my cyanotypes as a similar catalyst to unconscious storytelling. In doing so, she describes Atkins' cyanotypes as Rorschach tests, each having the powerful ability to provoke an emotional response (Mavor, 2013: 89-90). The Rorschach test is a neutral object on which a person may project their unconscious feelings; Mavor suggests our cyanotypes are more than this, and that they have their own powerful language.

Mavor's describes Atkins' algae as going beyond the vegetal: they are no longer plant life, but a metonymic visual for stories. In doing so, Mavor returns to Atkins' cyanotypes, interpreting them via my work as vivid, poetic objects that tell stories:

> The algae stories are wide-ranging:
> Some are feathery. Dichoria viridis.
> Some are strangely modern: Laminaria fascia.
> Some are like a flash of lightening that has hit the ground.
> Some are stick drawing.
> Some are forlorn Christmas trees without enough branches.
> Some are sewing threads.
> Some are frazzled, worn, satin ribbons.
> Some, like Halyseris polypodiodes are milky gouache, more gouache than watercolour because of the opaqueness.
> Some are pressed nasturtium flowers. Padina pavonica,
> Some are cauliflower.
> Some are metal shrapnel.
> Some are burst onions.
> Some are curly long hair pulled from a woman's brush after a full week of combing.
> Some are the roots of the bean grown in a glass with a paper towel in my kitchen when I was six years old.
> Some are foxtails rushes.
> Some are whimsical French print on a blue 1940s silk dress.
> ...
> One is my mother's nylon stocking scrunched up and alone, like many housewives felt in the 1960s'
>
> (Mavor, 2013: 89-90)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Mavor acknowledges the powerful ability of Atkins' cyanotypes to provoke an emotional response. The cyanotypes themselves suggest visual narratives that inspire a beguiling and physical reaction. My prints and writing act in a similar way, but they also interact with each other as an album of parallel physical and visual representations that create stories. Barthes' *biographemes* are not fictional and are limited because of this; they are closed loops of history. Using Gilman as a lead, I extend the *biographeme* in Chapter One to the fictional in order to release the silent stories of women.

Anna Atkins, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, 1843, cyanotype

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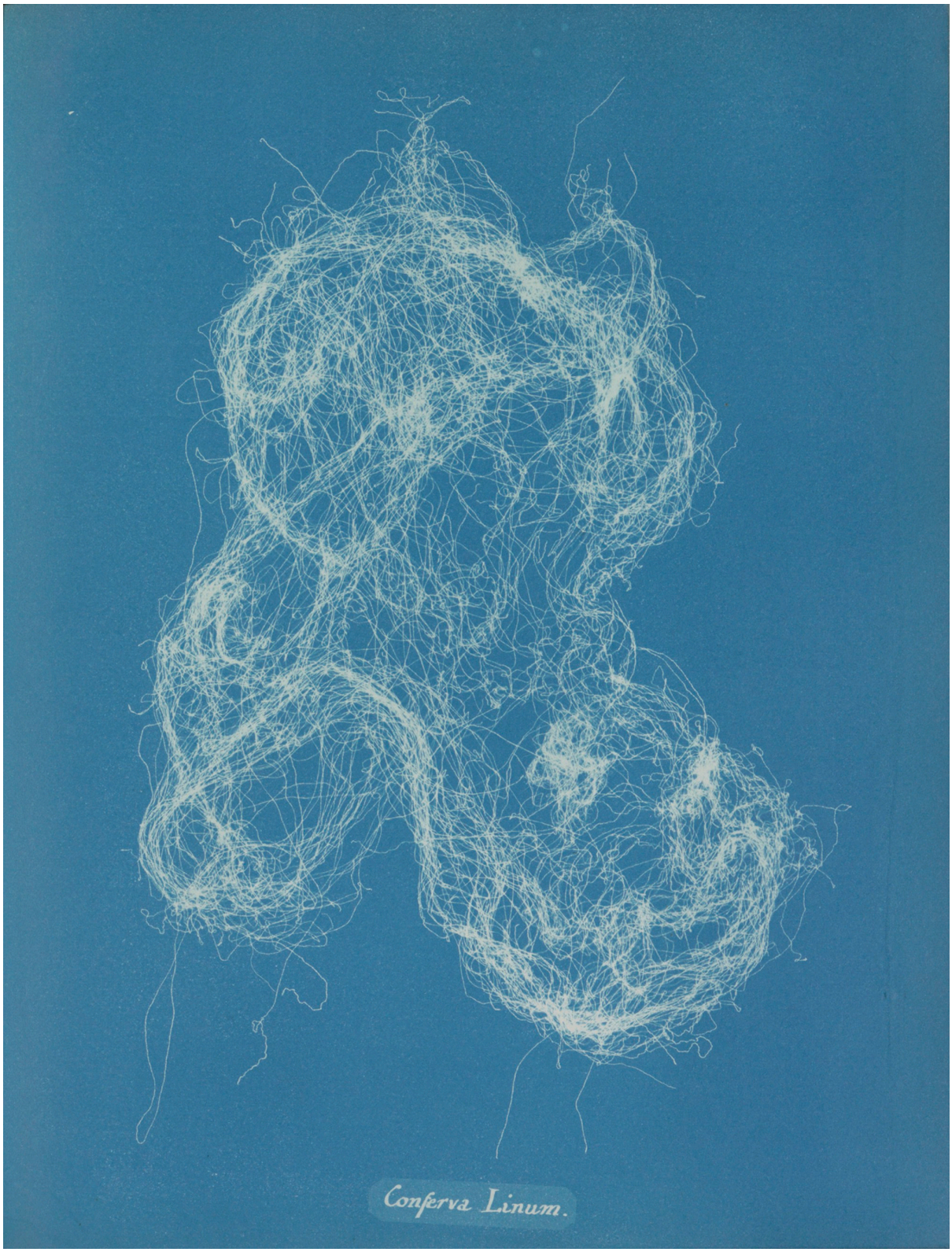

Anna Atkins, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, 1843, cyanotype

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Annabel Dover, *Negligée*, 2001, cyanotype, Imperial War Museum collection

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Using Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the process of remaking as a methodological key, I investigated the role of storytelling as a means to give objects a voice. The physical remaking of her work has led me to consider how objects can speak. I extend the current understanding of the *biographeme*, the indexical and trace to create fictions that are productive of new stories and, via multiple interactions, continue to grow and expand. Research by praxis led me to a close examination of Atkins' cyanotype albums. I began with these relic-like objects and used them as 'evidence' to respond to Atkins' work and the dominant narrative of her life. My mimicry of Atkins' cyanotypes revealed that she had faked the botanical specimens in her albums. Her own hidden process of fictionalisation opened up the possibilities of interpreting Atkins' work, and led me to understand that fiction is the key to understanding the voices of objects. More than the trace, indexical and *biographeme*, all of which are ultimately tethered to the object, fiction allows the voice to fly free. *Florilegia* is a prism that, rather than focusing, diffracts fiction(s) and elicits productive dialogues that unlock multiple possibilities for Atkins beyond her role as a handmaid to science and her father.

Chapter One has many narrative voices that relate to one another and reference the potential stories of Atkins' albums. In this chapter, I give voice to the objects of the albums to reframe Atkins' biography. In *The Perils of Fashion* (1852), a three-volume novel that details the life of an aristocratic Georgian woman in England, Atkins writes about the interior objects in a similar way to Gilman. Both animate the inanimate female through the interpretation of surrounding objects:

> A survey of the room in which he sat, still more confirmed him in his impression. He saw the harp, the piano, the guitar, reposing in all the glory of mother-of-pearl and blue ribbons on the sofa; a landscape in oils, half-finished in an easel; a bust on a drawing-table, of which a very bad copy lay beside it some exquisite little gold working implements on the table; and though these have promise of some useful art, Mr. Joblyn guessed that they had only reference to the magnificently-covered embroidery frame which stood beside the now inactive Mary.
>
> (Atkins, 1852: 133)

Here, in opposition to Gilman's active objects that 'slap' and 'trample', and in sympathy with the inexpressible emotions of her protagonist, Atkins uses her description of interior objects to articulate her protagonist's mute state. Mary, the woman of the house, is 'inactive'; she appears at the end of a description of a long line of objects and is presented as an object herself. The embroidery frame, not Mary, is 'standing' and it seems to have more significance to the character of Mr Joblyn than she does. The 'reposing' and silent harp, piano and guitar are admired not for their voice but for their delicate mother-of-pearl and blue-ribboned decoration. The only indication of the outside world is a half-finished landscape painting confined to an easel. The objects of Atkins' novels speak for the speechless woman:

> She would look wistfully to the fierce-looking tiger *couchant* on the hearth-rug, who gleamed at her with horrible red worsted eyes, until she felt that it would be almost better to be in the wild woods with such a gentlemanly-looking beast, rather than be confined within these walls, where everything was so sordidly decent, and irritating from its contracted propriety.
>
> (Atkins, 1852: 142)

Here, the object has voice. In likening herself to a stuffed tiger, she reanimates the animal/object and herself. The tiger has only fabric eyes with which to look at her; and the eyes are 'worsted', a reference to the type of wool out of which the original 'blue stocking' of the Cambridge and Oxford lady's uniform was created (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2017). Atkins may have been alluding to William Blake's 1794 poem, 'The Tyger':

> Tyger Tyger burning bright,
> In the forests of the night:
> What immortal hand or eye,
> Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
>
> (Blake, 2001: 42)

This tiger – who, unlike the docile, innocent subject of Blake's sister poem 'The Lamb', cannot be tamed – is the embodiment of all that a woman of the era should not be. It is interesting that Atkins references a wild, awe-inspiring creature to voice her character's sense of entrapment in the domestic interior. The lamb's wool, with which the tiger's eyes have been replaced, does

not quieten the wild outlook of the powerful beast. Despite its role as a hearth-rug, it is there to look impressive: it is a symbol of status, comfort and wealth. The objects that surround Atkins' female character voice her yearning for freedom. As is evident with the heroines of Atkins' novel *The Perils of Fashion* and Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, objects can express the emotions that are unacceptable for a woman to articulate. While Atkins' heroine looks at the rug and sees it as a desperate tiger, stuffed, powerless, and trapped in a stifling interior, Gilman's' heroine is driven to ripping the wallpaper off the walls. In both cases, the objects reflect the protagonists' mental state. In Chapter One, I continue the approaches of Gilman and Atkins that use the objects in the stories to unlock possibilities beyond dominant narratives. By attending to these voices, our understanding of Atkins breaks through the boundaries of conventional appraisal of her work as a support to her father. Chapter One of *Florilegia* seeks to give voice with the object using three techniques: *Irrationality*, *Displacement* and *Multiplicity*.

Irrationality represents a counter-scientific approach that denies both logical and linear thinking. This approach is epitomised by the central conflict of *The Yellow Wallpaper* in which the logical, scientific narrative of the male figures of husband and brother are set against the magical, emotional and overwhelming voices of the objects. The protagonist articulates her bond with the objects when she describes how she is forbidden by both her physician husband and her brother to talk of her inner life. Instead, she expresses another inner life of the domestic interior:

> I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus – but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad. So I will let it alone and talk about the house.
>
> (Gilman, 1995: 2)

It is, then, these objects that conjure her emotional state and thoughts. In Chapter One, irrationality is engaged in a number of ways. The stories presented do not follow a linear logic that examines evidence to expound a theory; rather, they are clustered together in a series of non-causal narratives. They do not work chronologically; instead, they juxtapose time and place. Conventional sentence structure is eschewed in favour of an impressionistic

style that suggests rather than states, and images materialise in the text without explanation or clearly defined purpose. This enables the objects to create dialogues with each other that the reader can engage with, thereby encouraging a reading method that looks for associations and emotional emanations. It is a method that defies logical progression. In this way, objects, like Atkins' tiger-skin rug, reanimate and speak.

Displacement of the object and the reader is both a consequence of the technique of irrationality and an active agent in Chapter One. Displacement here refers both to the placing of an object in a new context and the transposition of voice to an interior object. Chapter One is a construct that enables me to move Atkins and her albums into a different context, allowing them to be heard. It is in this shifting that new meaning is released. In Ian McEwan's novel, *The Cement Garden* (1978), objects only become noticeable to the narrator once they have been moved. Furniture is moved upstairs at a transitional moment of the narrator's life – the impending death of his mother. The significance of this voice-object spatial and narrative shift is reflected in the protagonist's new-found observance of his parent's object:

> To have the dining-room table up here was still a novelty to me, I could not quite leave it. I saw for the first time the swirling black lines of the wood's grain beneath the dark lawyer stain. I rested my bare arms along its cool surface. It seemed more substantial here and I could no longer imagine it downstairs.
>
> (McEwan, 1980: 45)

McEwan describes the beguiling and tactile power of an object and the importance of the environment for the appreciation of its existence. On first sight of Atkins' *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, I stared at the prints for over two hours and still could not understand them, yet I also felt a sense of recognition and imagined many stories related to them. These spectral images seemed misplaced in the environment of the Royal Society library. By dislocating them from the institutional context and re-placing them in a series of fictional narratives, the objects are dispersed and rearranged beyond the grasp of dominant scientific and institutional narratives; they are experienced anew. This freshness of experience gives the objects voice. In Chapter One, the poppy, for example, appears in the

V&A print room in 2017, in nineteenth-century poppy seed buns, in 1950s Uganda, and in Byron's garden. Each of these appearances tells a new story and creates open dialogues across the text, with the reader and with the objects and characters in each fiction.

This multiplicity of voices is another important aspect of Chapter One. The narrators of each story are varied in age, gender, sexuality, social position, and era. Their voices cross over in their close examination of objects. These dialogues express often inexpressible thoughts and feelings. Indeed, the narrators are often most honest with the objects that surround them. The objects also talk back, standing in for absent people like fictional *biographemes*. In addition, the separate stories of *Florilegia* also engage in an interwoven meta-conversation, the interactions of which activate the objects' voices. Barthes gives women the role of interpreting the voiceless: 'it is woman who gives shape to absence, elaborates its fiction, for she has time to do so' (Barthes, 1993: 32). The 'time' Barthes notes that women have access to is available for the very reason that they are set outside the dominant historical narrative: women, in being at the periphery, have been forced into the role of the wallflower, and thereby become object-witnesses. Therefore, it is necessary to attend to objects and to give them voice. It is only in this context that we can hear their stories.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Florilegia

Chapter 2

In 1786, the last wolf in Ireland is killed at Myshall, County Carlow by a pack of Irish wolfhounds. Thirteen years later the dogs are all dead, Anna Atkins is born and two days after that, her mother dies. In 1861 Anna Atkins, in her sixties, with her cousin Anne Dixon, make their final album for their nephew, Captain Henry Dixon.

Prince Albert's face greys as quickly as a beach covered by a cloud and he closes his eyes. The wife of the choirmaster of St Paul's is woken by the doleful tolling of the bell at twenty past ten at night. The prince's name is omitted from the prayers for the royal family the next day. Queen Victoria continues to have his wash basin filled, and his filigree silver pocket watch from Cologne, wound up every night, until she dies 40 years later. Queen Victoria and later Freud ask their staff to make an inventory of their belongings; Freud has his maid reposition his objects in the same position on his arrival from Vienna, to Hampstead. Queen Victoria has her objects photographed from every angle, and these photographs are put into albums for her to look at, so enormous is her collection, she can only view it in miniature.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti draws the painter Joanna Boyce with a silverpoint as she dies after giving birth to a fat baby girl, Joanna Margaret Boyce. A heart-shaped tin holding Ann Boleyn’s heart is discovered during renovations on the chancel of St. Mary’s church in Yorkshire, and on the 29th June, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wakes to hear the swifts outside her window. The Florentine sun casts a loom across her cheeks and illuminates her green-grey eyes. She is wet with hot sweat and her husband holds her as she dies.

It is a hot day in Tonbridge too, and Anna Atkins is unaware for another week that Elizabeth Barrett Browning is dead. The miasma kills hundreds of people on a day like today in London. Anne presses the bell at thirty minutes past ten in the morning. The maid hasn't wound the doorbell up completely and it lets out a flat quaver like a sick choirboy.

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Anna watches as Anne slowly bends her head down into the coats and hats that hang in the porch, her skirts crinkling. Her lips touch General Carruthers' velvet skull.
He sits on a corduroy covered chair, hidden under Anna's Sunday jacket like a muffler in a roly-poly pudding position; his paws tucked in and closes his eyes in contentment.

The ritual is medieval Anne had told Anna. The cat of the house must always be kissed. Anne was very much taken with Darwin's *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* and seemed put out when she told him about her love of animals and he seemed irritated. On Anne and Anna's walks together, Anne would help animals: moving a toad to some mud under a protective hellebore for example, as it oozed acid on her hand and desperately tried to escape.

They go through their finds for the sun prints:
String from the New Year's Day goose
Ostrich feathers
Pheasant feathers found in the woods, killed by a fox
Pencil shavings
Lace from Seraphina Rowe's worn out petticoat
Feathers from the pillow
Seargent's fur (Springer Spaniel)
Flowers from Thomasina's funeral
A butterfly that got trapped in the study in the hot August sun
A Dandelion seed head mostly intact.
Fingernail clippings (Anne says no to these)
Lace gloves
Part of the broken Chinese parasol
Talcum powder
A Spider
Hair from the brush
A broken cut glass necklace
Net from Emilia's bonnet
A Handkerchief

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Water lily leaves from the pond that have skeletonised
A cucumber slice, pressed

Anna tells Anne that Margaret received Mrs. Beeton's book last week and the recipe for fried cucumber was quite disgusting. Isabella Beeton loathes cooking. She prefers fashion and becomes fashion editor for *The Queen* magazine. Four years later at the age of 28 she dies after a series of miscarriages resulting from syphilis; her husband likes to visit prostitutes in Burlington Arcade. There is a report in the newspaper that the MacAllistair sisters are asphyxiated by night-time flowers after their nanny forgets to remove a vase of Cornish violets from their room before bedtime.

Anne tells Anna that she has read a poem by a female slave. She is reading Admiral Nelson's letters now, and he calls his wife's *Mons Veneris*, his ‘little thatched cottage’. Anne opens the door to the garden holding the chemical-soaked paper. She looks up to see the ghost moon above the Yew. René Lalique's mother makes a final exhausted push whilst closing her eyes and her baby is born, as purple and squashed as the dead pigeon chick Anna found on the lawn last week.

A hundred years later, the glome of a glass woman rides past the lucky cat and the Coca-Cola neon on Piccadilly Circus. Her opalescent breasts glow lilac, her knees are bent as if wading into a river, her close-cropped bob is sleek in the wind and the flats of her arms are raised to the midnight sky. Kenneth Clarke's Rolls Royce *Silver Wraith* glides by Eros on its way from The Ritz to his castle.

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Venice, pin-hole photograph, Annabel Dover, (2013)

I tread on a tiny nugget of glass in Père Lachaise cemetery. Wilde's huge sailboat of a tomb covered in lipstick kisses, docks close to the wall where the communards were shot and where Delacroix and thoughts of his maid lie rotting. Autumn leaves cover a shard of broken bottle. I try to pick it up. It is a clod of amber glass and marks the remains of René Lalique.

In 1894 Coca-Cola is served in bottles for the first time, a syzygy of planets occurs when Mercury transits the sun, *The Owl Club of Cape Town* has its first formal meeting, Alfred Kinsey of the Kinsey Report is born along with Jean Renoir; and Henry James stays in the *Hotel Palazzo Abadessa*, overlooking the lagoon in Venice.

He saw that she had arranged objects on the desk and he ignored it. Two of his cigar stubs were lined up like warships docking at Portsmouth Harbour next to what looked like the lump of sugar he had given her at *Hotel Danieli* as a joke. The thick, crocheted lace at the window

left a mosaic shadow of a little girl holding a basket on the marble floor. The roses were much earlier in Venice than in New York City, they pulsated and curled towards him, raspberry-ripple streaks on veined petals. A Stargazer lily stamen, laden with sweet pollen dropped its cocoa-powder dust on the marquetry. He could feel them inhaling his breath and gaining vitality.

He mm'ed as she showed him her album; other peoples' photographs of the Doge's Palace and then the one of her brother standing in the water, his feet magnified. He had felt irked by this image, it seemed an obscene photograph and he had told her so. She had laughed. 'Phillip is only a boy.' But the strong pink ankles infected him like a fever. At night when he couldn't sleep, and despite the rising spring heat he had put his worsted socks on to cover his own pale feet.

He regarded the flushed dome that she resided in both day and night. The rosary on a nail above the occasional table, the plush pile on the heavy curtains. How many other peoples' breath had they absorbed? An engraving of a gerbil standing on its hind legs, where had that come from? The brocade on the cushions looked like it should be on an altar. She was quiet now and he saw that her eyes had the sheen of fresh raindrops. He saw the glittering drops at her ears, the ash in the grate from the night before. 'A perfect Voltaire in petticoats' he had called Clover Adams. 'Which writer am I?' she had asked him, and he couldn't think.

As he saw her brother's paisley scarf on the back of a chair he noticed that his tongue flattened to the roof of his mouth in the way that he had he felt his spirit rise to the roof of Chartres Cathedral on beholding it for the first time. The King Charles spaniel stretched its eyes up towards him momentarily under her ginger eyebrows and closed them again. A squadron of swifts squealed at the window baring their breasts, and he imagined how painful it must be to never land on the ground, sleeping, mating and eating on the wing as they did for years.

He kissed her goodbye. She smelt of icing sugar, of dust and of Lily of the Valley; how he imagined a female moth might smell. A faintly metallic odour too arose from her noisy skirts and he stepped back onto the edge of the rug and felt the uncomfortable lump of a silk tassel

under his leather sole. He perceived her pale cheek bloom under his lips and he thought of the repulsive shock he had felt, on instruction from his nanny, to touch the central spine of a mimosa leaf and watch as it curled to forefinger. 'Isn't that wonderful?' nanny had said 'that's why it's called the sensitive plant'. Later she asked him why he no longer used the sponge in the bath once she had told him it was an animal. The dog groaned and he thought how the brown patches under its eyes made it look as if it had been crying. It had its paws out in front now like the Landseer lions at Trafalgar Square, he knew he should ask for his umbrella. Her friend Justine stood up behind him 'What a fine, jolly buttonhole' she said looking at his lapel and opened her palm towards the door. Behind her was a frail pile of skeleton leaves and other feminal fandangles that were ordered with what seemed to him the taxonomy of a lunatic. He was suspicious of anything Justine said after he heard her remark that he reminded her of a satyr. He had taken care to keep his side whiskers in meticulous order since then and they were never again allowed to cross the boundary line demarcated by his mole.

It had been the next evening whilst closing his eyes and listening to the gentle fizz of the lump of ice swell and butt the cut-glass of his Perrier, that he had been told that she was dead. She had jumped from her window, broken her neck.

The lagoon was foul and smelt of hundreds of years of Venetian dinners rotting at the base of the wooden stumps that held it up. There was sea-smoke above it like a low thundercloud and the women had pulled their starched laundry in. Holding a plump bundle of her dresses, he asked the young gondolier to take him to the deepest part of the lagoon, 'Acqua piu profonda', he had said in an offhand way. The boathook slung down the side of the gondola looked like the one that his friend Arlo had used to open the windows of the schoolroom. The brass of the hook was polished beautifully, the boy's nails he had noticed were clean, bar the white spots of malnutrition and he felt glad that he had chosen this gondolier; clean and inexperienced.

Sitting down in the boat, he looked at the colour of the fabric in his hands which he knew to be puce. Once he had picked a still warm sandy hare up by its long silken ears and saw a spray of animalcules jump onto his bare forearm. Grabbing one between his fingers and

thumb he saw its blood-filled body wriggling against the trammels of his fingerprint and let it go. It jumped onto his neck. Later he saw a speckled blood stain on his collar.

He threw the dresses overboard and saw them float on the surface, they pulsated like a cloud of jellyfish and clung to the side of the boat. The dresses inflated, the plum-coloured silk grew into breasts and the full skirt became buoyant. He pushed the black balloons down into the water with the pole and they bobbed up elsewhere. The loose smocked waist filled and ripened like the furry fruit on his Grandfather's Schumacher tree, the fruit he had used to push into water to make pink 'lemonade'. Standing up he pressed the wet crinoline as deeply as he could and lurched in the boat, he held the bodice down and it swelled up in a rush. A wet purple bulge like a cow's bladder inflated and engulfed the end of the boathook, and pulled his stomach towards it. He felt that the boat might overset and he broke the pole free and rested it, dripping, on the red velvet seat of the gondola. The droplets pooled and were then absorbed leaving dark patches. The gondolier looked up at the driver of the passing water taxi, Paulo. Instead of his familiar Ciao! The gondolier remained mute and looked into his friend's eyes for as long as he could. He touched his own cheek with one hand before replacing it behind his back in the stance of an English tourist in a museum.

He saw a glint of her hair flash gold in the reflection of light on the water, it was wound tightly around a bone button. Another button, this one jet, floated up and he almost grabbed it. His stomach tightened as he realised he had left the lapis brooch on the bodice of the dress, the one she was wearing in Boston, the first time they met. It held his gaze as it sank slowly towards the carpet clams. The final dress had a cotton undergarment concealed within it. It crawled out of the skirts in the water, and spread its paper-white arms to the sky.

Later, in his room, as he lay his dress-shirt on the bed, he saw the Rorschach sweat patches on the cotton and he wondered if the Shroud of Turin would be worth seeing.

The oily scum on the lido puddles into marbled patterns.

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Venice II, pin-hole photograph, Annabel Dover, (2013)

Her chin looked like it had been badly carved out of butter. Her eyelashes were long and blonde. She was wearing white cotton which she had never done in life. She had a bruise under her eye and what looked like pastry moulded to her cheekbone, it was the same colour as the skin on her face but a different texture and for the first time he wanted to touch her. He saw the watercolour veins of her hands, he'd never seen her so close. Her nails were perfect, buffed but matt, like sugared almonds. He saw a sliver of a gap between her lips and could just about decipher what looked like gamgee tissue. A woman came to kiss her. She whispered to her in Latin. As she moved the knot of hair resting on her throat he was shocked to see a piece of wire had been pushed through her neck and into the lilac satin pillow below. He did not attend her funeral.

Once she had gone, he began to love her.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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The silk and cotton rotted on the lagoon bed, carpet clams made their homes in them and were served to Mariano Fortuny, in a Vongole, as he dined at the *Osteria al Cantinon.*

The sound of the water on the flat slates in the stream outside made her need a piss most of the time. She heard the cotton fluff they fed into the machine came from a hot country, she knew that the Lamb of Tartary wasn't true, there wasn't a spring sheep-babe with a blue silk riband around its woolly neck growing from a plant in India. She unbuttoned the top of her chemise and lifted her sore breast into the hole in the door. There was a cold breeze on her nipple and she imagined what it must look like on the other side to see a blue veined globe in a circle of wood, like the holes in the boards with a strongman and a mermaid painted on at the South Pier in Blackpool. How did sailors do the things they wanted to do to Mermaids?

She felt a hot tug on her nipple and hoped it was her baby girl. A nursemaid chided the baby on the other side 'stop wriggling now you naughty boy'. She looked at the grain of the wood that was close to her face and wondered how old the tree was, when it was cut down and why it looked like the whorl on her fingertips. Lewis had told her that you can find out how old a whale is by its ear wax. The baby finished, she let go of the door and saw she had a splinter in her thumb. It ran like a purple shard under the nail. The pain made her gasp as she lifted her breast back into her cotton top. When she got back to the jenny she felt she might cry. She chose not Lizzy who was kindly and sweet but Sarah, the poison pudding, to remove the splinter. Sarah came towards her with a pair of nail scissors and a bodkin. Her breath smelt of tobacco, the clay pipe that lay cracked on the wall outside must be hers. She had watched the rain empty it. Silently, Sarah cut the nail until it was thinly covered with papery skin. At Sarah's funeral, her husband said he only ever saw her with a sour expression, and that she scowled in her sleep. But after she pulled the snag of oak from her thumb, Sarah looked in her eyes and curled the edge of her mouth upwards like a nursery rhyme cat.

The bundles of cotton arrive in Bollington after hot, airless weeks on a ship from Malda. Herodotus, describes Indian cotton as "a wool exceeding in beauty and goodness that of sheep." And when Alexander the Great invades India, his troops start wearing cotton clothes.

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How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Pari's head rests on the unsorted cotton and she lies her body sideways on the cool floor. The Ortolan Bunting has been stealing the sticky seed coat, human hair, jute, metal, dust and grass, whipped up in the small broken cottonseeds, grease and oil in the lint. She felt a dismal ache like a metal pan in the stomach. All she could think about was the seersucker she wore meaning sugar and milk, the smooth of the milk stripe and the jagged crystal lumps of sugar for the yellow stripe. She'd hidden two things in the hole in the Drumstick tree this morning. She sees from its earthly nest the Ortolan rises to sing at heaven's gate, its smooth body so small it could rest in her cupped hand.

'Today you will learn to eat Ortolans' Aunt Alicia says to Gigi in Collette's novella.

Eaten whole, all bones intact, like a car in a crusher. The dinner guests wear large white linen napkins on their heads to savour the smell, spit the bones out under, and to hide from the eyes of God. They resemble an eyeless assembly of the Ku Klux Klan. Roman Emperors stabbed the birds eyes out to make them think it was night so that they would gorge themselves on millet. They grew like a veal calf and white asparagus, disorientated and delicious in the dark. Drowned in a vat of Armagnac the Ortolans are served illegally. On New Year's Eve 1995 President Mitterrand, eight days before his death from prostate cancer, ate 30 Marrennes oysters, a capon, a quarter of a pound of foie-gras and two Ortolans. Each bite tastes of his own blood as the bones prick his mouth, figs, fat, meat and organs. He dribbles as he feels the beak and the Ortolan's tongue with his tongue and the cropped feathers on the skull. He crushes it between his back teeth.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Orpheus, C-Type, Annabel Dover, (2010)

My grandparents spoke loudly to one another between the bedroom and the bathroom opposite. I saw them from the landing at night, their pubic hair had fallen out. Once, Timmy the Siamese must have pushed the door open to their bedroom. My grandmother was asleep on her back, her Marks and Spencer nightdress with the autumn leaf pattern was worn and showed the slump of her low-slung bosoms slipping down under her armpits. Next to her, Margaret Priseman, from church, was asleep with her head on my grandfather's chest. Romeo, the standard poodle, was lying at the foot of the bed, his glossy marble eyes looked at me. Timmy waaahed like a crying baby. I was too frightened to go to the loo so I went back to bed, peeing on a puddle of Earl Grey in my mother's teacup instead.

The walls of the upper floor flat in 25 Noel Road, Islington have a vast population of onlookers pasted onto them, Henry the VIII, Donatello's shepherd boy, Saskia Rembrandt, the Virgin's head cast down in shame, the naked Maya, the three Magi, the Lady with an Ermine, Bacchus looking queasy.

Whenever I looked at Kenneth I saw his big round back, he reminded me of a hedgehog, much more back than front, and more like Mrs Tiggwinkle than Fuzzypeg. Joe walked around the flat naked like a man on one of those Greek urns, he was so cheeky. He loved

looking at his silhouette on the wall and called it, the shadow of Mr Punch. And sometimes he left me things on the table when he was making his collages, a cat because he knew I liked cats, that had been cut into the shape of a cock. He told me quite a few things. Once when he was lying in bed with asthma and he found out it was my birthday, he told me Lady Day, 25th March was the start of the New Year in the old days.

'Just in time for Spring cleaning eh?' 'fark off' he said imitating me before I said it. Some people I cleaned for thought I enjoyed it. My mother laughed. 'You a cleaner! My days' 'That's right' I said, but thought of Joe saying 'fark off' in my head. He gave me some chocolate on my birthday. He had stolen loads when they worked at Cadbury's and they kept it all in the bathroom cabinet, next to the rolled-up snake of a posh school tie Kenneth had got from somewhere. He'd never even been to the school.

When I asked him 'Do you want a cream cake with your tea?' He'd answer by mouthing 'Are they homosexuals?' impersonating his mother, like 'Is the Pope a Catholic?'. It's what she always said around Joe's friends. I'd always say, 'Stop it Joe', but sometimes I'd ask him stupid questions just to make him do it because it made us laugh so much.

The little hedgehog took 22 of his Nembutal pills and drank them down with the juice from the tin of canned grapefruit I'd left on the side for Joe. Joe's sheets were still warm when they found him. They said his head was cratered like a burnt candle.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Statue of Hermes, from shipwreck, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, (1st century BC)

In 1983 Klaus Barbie is arrested in Bolivia, wearing a seatbelt becomes mandatory in the UK and Michael Jackson performs the Moonwalk for the first time. ‘Hitler’s Diaries’ are published and later discovered to be forgeries.

'Haven't seen one of those ties for quite some time.'
Says the consultant to my father. My father does a loud echoing laugh. I knew he'd wear Francis' tie today.
'Do you know Bob Osborne-Hays?'
'Bobby! Know and love him' says my father.
'Hahahaha are you a member of the squash club?'
'Hate to say it. Spend most of my life there!'
'Good man. Good man.'
I try looking in the eyes of the student doctor. He looks away.
'Nothing to worry about here'
'It miiiiight be an allergic reaction I suppose. Probably just a hygiene issue I imagine.'
'Yes, mucky Arab'
'You a doctor?'

'No no', says my father, like he'd dismissed the idea as a weak choice.
'Run a children's home. For my sins.'
'Tough work. Rewarding I imagine.'
'Seen the E-type in the car park?'
'What a beauty'
'My father-in-law has one, never lets me touch it though.'
'Who can blame him?'
Guffaws and handshakes. I look one last time at the student doctor, but he has his head bowed. The nurse ignores me. I see my father has pressed my mother's Max Factor Creme Puff in Gay Whisper onto his Borstal quincunx tattoo. The blue dots show through the powder: the prisoner inside the four walls.

Stanley Eavis was my grandfather. He was proud of his E-type Jaguar, he came from a poor family that did something unglamorous and poorly paid to do with grain. He was clever in a boring way and patented some things to do with lightbulbs. He owned 13 factories and had a chauffeur and later a plane. When I knew him, he wore big rust coloured cotton trousers that looked like Thames Barge sails on his thin legs. He had a huge nose and ears both of which my mother inherited. His voice sounded like the foghorn at Alcatraz and he liked talking about money. 'Fifty K' he would say, looking at the FT, smirk and pat his Siamese cat Timmy hard on the arse. He would get very angry if he didn't eat on time, sometimes fainting as my grandmother was talking about chicken stock not being quite ready. My grandmother didn't know anything about chicken stock as she never cooked, that was left to Pat. Pat got a huge love bite when, the weekend before her daughter's wedding, a hot fish finger fell off the high grill onto her neck. She always looked as though she was imagining her way out of her present situation. It's a look I've seen on life models faces since and one I always had in PE lessons. 'You are never in your own body' Miss Lister had told me, like it was a bad thing.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Still from *Grey Gardens*, Albert Maysles (1975)

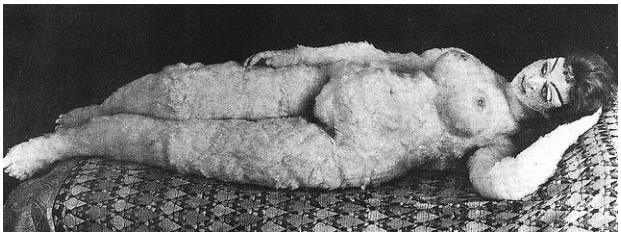
It was not surprising when my grandmother's heavy gold charm bracelet with the names of: grandchildren, children and cousins went missing and got melted down. I hated that bracelet because I had a different script from everyone else, tackier and more ornate, and Thomas' disc was placed the other way around, because he was dead. It reminded me of the suicide grave in the churchyard. I also hated it because it looked like a chain-link fence. I was glad Pat stole it along with a large rainbow opal with chips of refracted sunlight, reined in by a tight gold band: an electric jelly.

My grandfather was church warden and once he got a priest to exorcise the boot of his Volkswagen Passat because it had contained candles and tree branches that people practicing black magic had left behind the altar. We weren't allowed to call a Stanley Knife a Stanley Knife in front of him. He went doolally in the end and stopped speaking with an R.P. accent, returning to his Leicester twang. After he died, I found in the heavy oak drawers stamped with "Heal's", lots of Ham radio stuff, an old Christmas Radio Times, the minutes from Diocese meetings, RSPB subscriptions and a scrapbook.

My grandmother Mikey had given me a scrapbook like this. It had a picture of Holly Hobby on it and she bought it for me the time she bought me Panda Pops and a Wildlife bar. She didn't accept her pension, she said that was for poor people. The post office shop was in a caravan in a field and had warning posters about dogs with rabies and Colorado Beetles. I

was so disappointed when I found out the Colorado Beetle I had caught was a ladybird nymph.

I was excited when I opened my grandfather's scrapbook because I love nature and I saw a collage of a mottled pink octopus. Then I looked at its hairy mouth and I realised it was a woman. Like Ingres he'd taken different parts of different women and collaged them together into raw chimeras. One looked like Helen, the Postman's daughter, she'd been born with her feet on back to front. There was a black woman's glossy slender thighs and an Asian woman's face, marshmallow pink breasts with Turkish delight nipples. Some of the faces were composed of different parts too, like Henry Tonks' Guinea Pig Club, Linda Grey's sapphire eyes (this shocked me, we would never have been allowed to watch *Dynasty*) with Mariel Hemingway's catlike wide cheeks, and from a photograph my sister had taken, my mouth. He had coloured in the gaps with my Mothercare clean-easy felt tips and the pen had seeped into the sugar-paper making the women look like they'd been flayed, Simon Weston faces flashed on Hannah Hoch bodies.



Doll of Oskar Kokoschka's wife commissioned after she left him for Mies van der Rohe (1918)

Coming out of the loo in the Rose & Crown on Lower Sloane Street, I felt a tug and thought I must have my hair caught on a chair. I turned around and saw a Chelsea pensioner holding it in his hand. He recited a poem about his Danish daughter, Amelia and her aquatic life in the womb. Her eyes he described as Whitby jet. He hated the X-Factor but most of all Carol Thatcher, he loathed vulgarity and respected Rodin's *The Kiss*. This he thought was something beautiful, love not lust. He thought of his Danish wife and daughter and felt they had been washed away on an ice floe in the night.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

After seeing Alan Clarke combing his hair in the reflection of his Navy Jaguar XJS window outside Albany Mews, I walked to the Royal Academy and put my holey Fairisle cardigan on, whilst waiting for the students to come in. Lying down on the sofa I looked at the plaster cast of Stubbs' horse and the flayed smuggler and fell asleep.

Lady Hertford, takes John James Audubon's *Famous Birds of America* and begins to cut a flamingo from its page. Later in her bedroom at Temple Newsom she tries to get warm and writes to her sister.

> 'The weather is beastly cold and grey as usual and I really find Yorkshire to be a most miserable place. Visitors tell me that it is so verdant and lush but really my view of the arboretum might be lovely if it were not constantly smeared with rain. Even squinting with one eye at Peterson's folly this morning allowed only for the impression of an indecipherable ink blot through the window pane. Juliette is well, her favourite new habit is not one I hope she exhibits in public. She searches for grit in her hair with her little fingers and on finding some eats it in the hope that it is sugar from a bun she had at teatime. She seems almost as pleased when she discovers it is soil from the gardens.
>
> I do not know about George. It *is* all exciting but, Edward is as you might imagine seething, and my confiscation to Ireland rather inflamed him. He is determined I become his paramour. He sent me huge reams of paper for the walls of the Chinese Dining Room and I lavished it upon them. The house drank them up like a cat in the sun, how in need it is of cheer and exoticism.'

Later she writes again.

> 'He does suffer as his father did and his corpulence now precludes him from mounting the stairs let alone the pleasures we once shared. I

> found the book that Edward gave me. Such a vast book and such beautiful plates that I knew it would enliven the tropical walls of the dining room. I carefully cut each bird from its page and with hoof glue and a sable brush pressed them into place in their new fantastic home. The room looks alive with creatures and I can almost hear their musical cries. I am so excited for George to visit and for him to see what I have done!'

George mistakes a large tree for a Prussian King and his son becomes regent. He has the Brighton Pavilion built and he dips his gouty feet into the sea. During the First World war the pavilion was again used for recuperation and served as a military hospital for Indian Corps troops, gaining consciousness they beheld a phantasm of India. George III's surgeon was at a loss. Piss is not generally purple, true, but his father had the same and perhaps with their royal blood they had an affliction mortals could never suffer. His supply of laudanum could barely satisfy the king's ravenous demand and the corset that they made for him at Ede & Ravenscroft could no longer hold his waist to 50 inches. Near twenty stone he'd puffed up and each of his limbs too. His braces looked like the string on the Sunday lamb and a normal chair could not cradle his buttocks. He was breathless to near asphyxiation and when naked he looked as though he were a sausage stuffed into its covering. At half past three on the morning of 26th June 1830 at Windsor Castle, he yelled to his page, "Good God, what is this?", grabbed his hand and said, "my boy, this is death", A tumour the size of one of Sloane's oranges did cling to his bladder. His stomach, a mount of blood, and his heart was as waxen as a Twelfth Night Stilton.

Lady Hertford arranges for an avenue of trees to be planted in a quincunx formation to commemorate him: four beeches protecting one pine, like five dots on a die. The nightjars nestle their downy underparts onto the rustling copper leaves and warm their eggs under the third quincunx. Napoleonic sailors arriving at Southwold cut drawings of anchors and women into their trunks and by the 1900s the trees are called the Butley Clumps.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

The Audubon collage on the walls of Temple Newsom remains protected from the light with blinds. The trestle tables are set up on the lawns of the house. It is 1922 and under a cedar tree the glittering silver lies on a trestle table. The New Year frost casts a crisp sugary layer on the grass and the objects laid out for the sale look like maidens in bud. The British Empire is at its largest extent ruling over one in four people in the world. Christian K. Nelson has just patented the Eskimo Pie, Samuel Gravely is the first African American to command a US warship. Shackleton, Proust, the Barbary Lion and the Californian Grizzly Bear all become extinct. Proust is buried in Père Lachaise cemetery in a double bed sized grave with his sport loving brother and father. Judy Garland is born. At the close of the year Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* is published and Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon enter the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun, the first people to do so in over 3000 years. Eighty-eight years later the crates of whiskey that were buried beneath Shackleton's Antarctic hut, are discovered and tasted.

Untitled, photograph, Justine Moss, (2012)

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Would the house remember her now that its entrails had spilled onto the gardens? Her baby fingernails under the floorboard in the nursery. The coil of her red hair before it turned pale yellow and then white in the corner under the bath. The comb that fell through the boards when she tried to brush Lovelace's thick coat. The cat's whisker she poked down there herself. The drips from Harold's nosebleed behind the sink. Her skin; the dust when the next owner opens the curtains. Will they see her shadow on the path on Midsummer Eve, like the hollow in a mattress, the scuff of her ankle boot where she grabbed Boadicea? The sway of the Silver Birch is reflected in the looking-glass and the Italian scene on the dinner service fills with rain. The lining paper in the drawers made from the Christmas wrapping paper flutters in the wind and reveals the orange Iodine spill in the top drawer. The delivery note in chalk on the bottom of the upside-down balloon-chair has a Marylebone address on it. The red Moroccan leather copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* spills a lucky four leaf clover she constructed by adding another leaf. The flattened maidenhair fern from Lake Coniston pokes out of the side of the Baedeker of Rome, there is a postcard of a Thanksgiving Turkey in the *Lives of the Saints*, 1290.

BLUES

No.	Names	Colours	ANIMAL	VEGETABLE	MINERAL
24	Scotch Blue		Throat of Blue Titmouse.	Stamina of Purple Anemone.	Blue Copper Ore.
25	Prussian Blue.		Beauty Spot on Wing of Mallard Drake.	Stamina of Bluish Purple Anemone.	Blue Copper Ore.
26	Indigo Blue				Blue Copper Ore.
27	China Blue.		Rhynchites Nitens	Back Parts of Gentian Flower.	Blue Copper Ore from Cherry.
28	Azure Blue.		Breast of Emerald crested Manakin.	Grape Hyacinth. Gentian.	Blue Copper Ore.
29	Ultra marine Blue.		Upper Side of the Wings of small blue Heath Butterfly	Borrage.	Azure Stone or Lapis Lazuli.
30	Flax-flower Blue.		Light Parts of the Marein of the Wings of Devil Butterfly.	Flax flower.	Blue Copper Ore
31	Berlin Blue.		Wing Feathers of Jay.	Hepatica.	Blue Sapphire.
32	Verditer Blue				Lenticular Ore.
33	Greenish Blue			Great Fennel Flower.	Turquoise. Flour Spar.
34	Greyish Blue.		Back of blue Titmouse	Small Fennel Flower.	Iron Earth.

Werner's Nomenclature of Colours, Patrick Syme, (1821)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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St. Margaret is the patron saint of painful childbirth, and the name Margaret means pearl in Sanskrit. It's where the French chemist and inventor of the colour wheel Chevreul got the name for the pearlescent drops of oil he discovered in 1813, that became the basis of margarine. Cottonseed oil was the key component of the margarine that Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès patents in answer to Napoleon III's competition for an invention of a cheap butter for the army, navy and the lower classes. Chevreul's *Cercles Chromatiques* consists of a sequence of 11 colour wheels. The first is divided into 72 pure colours. In the subsequent wheels, 10 per cent black is added until the last wheel is completely dark, colourless.

1290 was the 'year without winter' in Britain and Western Europe. Autumn leaves rusted and were replaced with soft lime green ones with fresh accordion pleats. No frost touched the haws and the sky did not darken early. Some said it was a punishment from the Jews who had, on July 18th, been given the edict of expulsion by King Edward I of England. Beatrice Portinari dies, aged 24, on a cool day of June of this year, and Dante imagines his childhood sweetheart in heaven, showing him what to expect in the *Divine Comedy.*

Emma Darwin's Shed, photograph, Annabel Dover, (2012)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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I come home to find my way blocked by a pile of furniture, tubes of Anusol, divorce papers, my brother-in-law's knighthood certificate, stump socks, cigarette cards, pebbles, King Penguin Classics and picnic hampers full of receipts, dining-room furniture, my sister's milk expresser, a relic of St. Agnes. Three of my sisters had received similar piles and I was jealous of the one who got my stuff and the Freemason apron and case.

On her wall my mother had a picture of Saint Pol Roux. Standing in a garden of Hollyhocks and Mallow, he is a solid figure with a conjoined apparition. Divine, his daughter, looks like a ghost that has developed on the film. In 1937, on the advice of a clairvoyant, the newly rich poet Pol Roux built a manor house over a fisherman's cottage on the volcanic west coast of France. On the night of June 23rd, 1940, a German soldier broke in and, when confronted by Roux and his daughter Divine, opened fire. The poet was shot twice and his housekeeper was killed as she threw herself in front of Divine. The soldier then attempted to rape Divine but was driven away by her Alsatian, Felice. Roux and his daughter survived, but when they returned home three months later, they found that the house had been ransacked by the Nazis and Roux's library and manuscripts burned. St Pol Roux died a few days later in St. Eglantine hospital, Paris. In 1944, the British bombed the manor house, leaving it in ruins. The ruins revive once a year in July when the fruit and flowers St Pol Roux planted for his daughter, return.

There is another postcard, of Winston Churchill. He sits in a green fringed Lloyd Loom chair in the shade at Chateau de Loumarin. A card table holds a pickle jar full of stout, squirrel brushes with russet handles. A mahl stick, a silky swathe of Utrillan pastels and his tightly stretched linen stolen from the curtain lining of the nursery at Chartwell rest by his brogues. A Japanese scroll screen shades the painting, it looks like a pissoir. He has a tumbler of Scotch, Martini, a breakfast Hock, a Quorum Julieta cigar dunked in brandy, port, a Fedora hat, a scientist's white overalls and a painting of a section of the view.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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January 3rd, C-type, Justine Moss (2015)

In the bathroom, my mother has put up a wrinkled copy of a Julia Margaret Cameron photograph of Tennyson in a clip frame. My sisters and I all put a towel over it when we get naked, so similar is Tennyson's wiry pubic beard to my father's. Under the beard is a bad oil copy of a Reynolds painting made by my mother. A very hairy baby with a huge cannonball head is held by a woman; his mother. The baby's head is being cradled in the way that Jackie Kennedy held JFK's when his brain fell out in Dallas. The fontanelle is seeping and the anguished mother is in a helpless crisis, the Poplar trees in the background are indifferent, rustling in the wind. 'Sir Joshua Reynolds used to sign off all of his letters to Nelly O'Brien, "Yours to the hilt"' my mother says one night in a low voice as she pats me down with a towel, looking at the painting and snorting her huge nostrils.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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Mask of Agamemnon, gold funeral mask, (1550-1500 BC)

A section of Botticelli's *Venus* hangs on her bedroom wall, where it has always faced her bed in whichever house she has lived. The framed print was given to her by an admirer, the arabesques of her hair reminded him, he said, of hers when she silently served food at the dinner table, her head bent over as she landed a heavy bowl of chilled Vichyssoise before him. The whole image would have shown my mother as Venus in her full nakedness, spherical peach fruit breasts, soft feet unfolding from a giant scallop, waves pulling forwards. My sister Susannah and my mother were often mistaken from behind, their long dense hair folding over their shoulders and ending in a bouncing flick of Lady's Mantle. The unbridled pelt, the waterfall of fur as rich and dark as a waxed piano.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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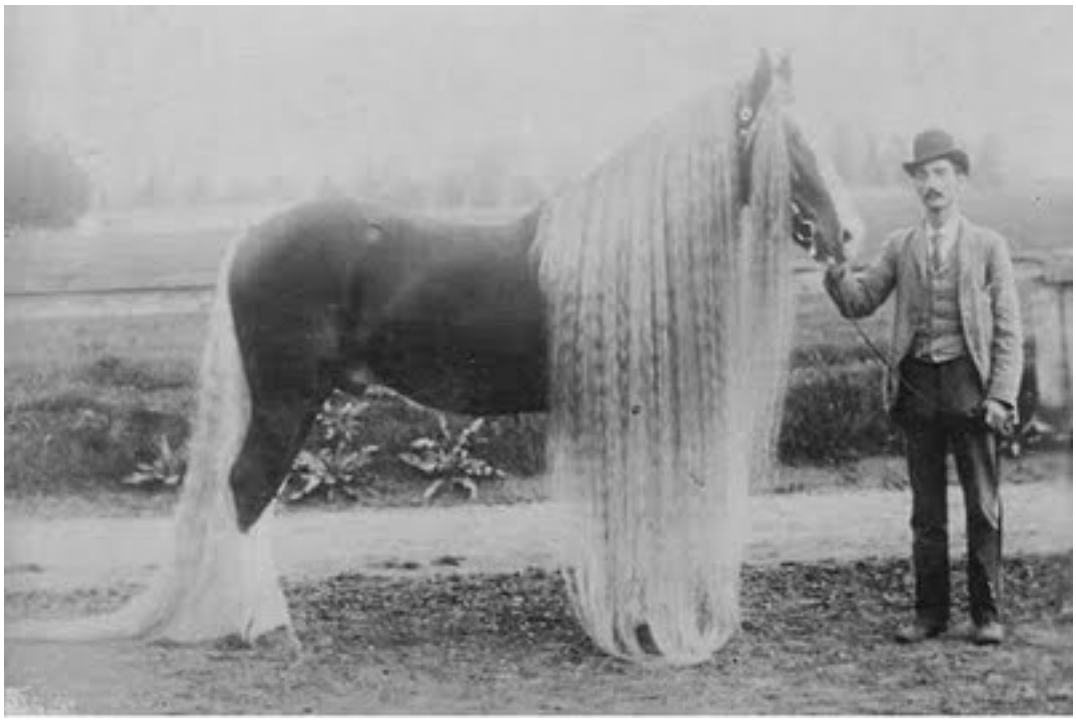


Linus, photographer unknown (c.1896)

The bay window had my mother's desk in it. I could look out and get a glimpse of the pavement often with a chicken on it trying to get grit from the road. My mother's diary was laid out showing the encrypted writing that I was so embarrassed of in school notes. Later I faked it, when I lived on my own. Like Rebecca's, prepared for a life as a mistress of a house, it was a three-leaf desk with oak leaf garland handles; it fitted perfectly into the large window near the flowerbed. I had found an earring belonging to a previous owner of the house in that flowerbed; she had been the first woman in the village to have electricity and had hosted a lot of parties. The earring was shaped like a wedding bouquet but I think she never married. I hoped that her bedroom had been my bedroom and that the earring had been on her dressing table by the window and had flown out with the heavy push of an expensive curtain. Or maybe she cast the wedding bouquet out of the window as she danced into bed with a man. She had inherited money but used it up quickly. She, like my mother, sewed clothes for rich women.

My mother's desk had a range of artifacts on it: heather and a snail shell from Skye petrified inside a glass paperweight. I tried to chip the heather out, but the glass went opaque and I mildly ruined it. There was a bible with a solid silver front. Every time I looked at it I had the

same impulse I have with a Bourbon biscuit: to bite the top solid part off the soft papery bit and indeed I had done that when I was five, leaving the bible delicately held together by the immobility of the desk. If a moth had landed near it, it would have disintegrated. I wanted to break my mother's paperweight apart, to find the living breathing truth within. But when I tried to get to the heather which, magnified, looks fresh with ecclesiastical purple flowers, bubbles of dew upon them, it confounded me; a dried piece of twig fused to the glass forever.

Toll House Mae West Lips sofa, Collection of West Dean, Vivien Greene, (1978)

My mother often amused my friends when they came over. She would do handstands at tea parties (in sheer knickers). She would wail if we cut ourselves and run away crying. We would trap spiders for her as she bit her knuckles and whimpered. She would put crisps in the oven until they went soft and call them 'game chips' she marvelled that we could cook an egg or cut bread. She would slam doors if she was excluded from a midnight feast. She would sleep until midday and faint upside down naked on the stairs, my father would tread carefully over her, his moccasin tassels touching her hair. She had fainted in Harrods food hall too and at a Francis Bacon private view where she clung on to a painting. The gallery assistant had run towards her and peeled her fingers off the frame.

In 1972, Viviene Greene was employed to make an inventory of the Nurnberg dolls at Monkton House. At night, she read about Alexander Pope’s grotto, how he shot a stalactite from the roof of Wookey Hole. She had enjoyed an account of animal husbandry in the 1700s. In 1698, a Dorset farmer writes in his diary ‘My old dog Quon was killed and baked for his grease, which yielded 11lb’. She no longer wants to read the book and instead, lies on

her bed and looks at the ceiling. She wakes up cold and the wrens she has grown used to hearing are silent. She looks out of one of the seven windows that surround her bed. There is a coverlet of snow on the garden. She wanders the house barefoot, agog at its ethereal order, James' bedroom is cool and elegant, and smells of basilica incense. The house was designed by Lutyens and was born in 1902 along with Tallulah Bankhead, Charles Lindbergh, Ogden Nash and Leni Riefenstahl.

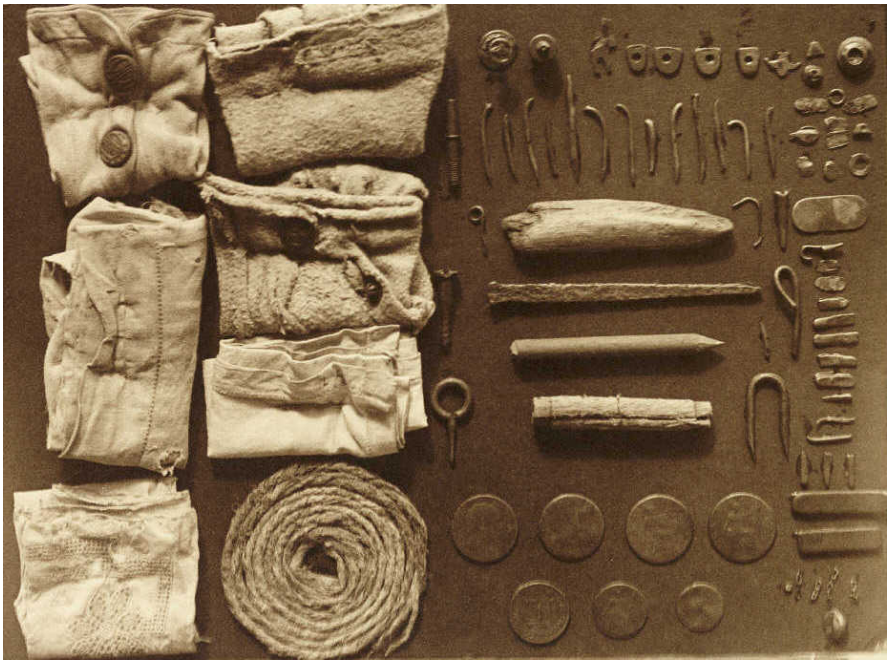
Pevsner is born this year too in Leipzig, he admires the cultural and economic policies of the young Adolf Hitler and says that 'There are worse things than Hitlerism'. He travels to Monkton House which he thinks is one of the things that is worse than Hitlerism. Pevsner writes for information about the house from Betjeman who tells him: 'Shortly before the war Mrs. Willy James' son, Edward Frank Willis James had a house in the woods designed by Dali. It was in the shape of a womb and inside it was lined with fur. There were curves in the shape of Mae West's hips. I wonder if it is still there.'

She beholds James' bed as a mirage. It is a replica of Nelson's funeral car; luscious plumes of carved ostrich feathers hold the canopy of gold and pink Egyptian carved Cherrywood. Pongee mourning dress curtains hang at each corner and the interior is a flushed peach tulle of the type his wife Tilly Losch had worn ruched up in curves on her soft pink nipples. Vivien imagines how it must feel to rest a hot cheek on these soft swagged ripples. There are two globes, two lips, two lamps with emu feet, and a Venetian depth pole with a swirl of red and white swizzled up its length holding a candle that is lit every night. The bed she sleeps on is curved like the arch of a spine, the ceiling above her is shot glass, sprinkled with golden stars that awaken as a celestial illumination at night, the walls are eau de nil velvet. The bathroom is made entirely of Portuguese rose marble and looks like the Amber Room in the Catherine Palace. James' bathroom is as pale and smooth as single cream.

There is a collage that she knows is by Leonora Carrington. In the marbled inventory book the title is listed as *Foundress of the Sisterhood of the Holy Little Jumping Virgins*. Wraithlike figures gather in a discarnate landscape and Hero Twins cast a visitor in a boat off to the underworld. She hears the dogs bark downstairs, laughter, and the door opens, Edward James has made a return from Mexico. Sitting in Mae West's huge lips Vivien beholds the

man: a bonfire, a double-bass, a very large bear. The walls are padded pale pink leather and studded with buttons, it is like falling into a giant blushing Chesterfield.

From her cold house in Oxfordshire, years later, Vivienne makes a model of Magritte's *La Reproduction Interdite* using her daughter's watered down poster paints to go on the wall of a miniature version of Monkton that she calls The Toll House. Cutting a piece out of a Turnbull and Asser charmeuse silk handkerchief she unrolls the edges, it smells of Jicky and was a present to her husband from Lady Catherine Wollston. She prods the silk down the back of the miniature Mae West lips sofa with her unpicker. Her husband, esteemed author, is in Capri.



Contents of an Ostrich's Stomach, by London Zoo photographer Frederick William Bond, showing gloves and hankies stolen from the public (1927)

Mary Lee Glesner, puts the paintbrush with school blue Indian ink in her cup of lukewarm tea. She adds the effects of cyanosis (blue cheeks) to the woman's face and she wonders if she needs to add two more tiny lumps of modelling clay to the eyes, to give the impression of bulging.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Anna and Anne look at the blue paper in the sun. As they wash the chemicals off the paper with a huge bowl of cold water, Amalie von Ranke wife of Alfred Graves, an Irish schools' inspector, gives birth to her fifth child. At the age of seven the child has double pneumonia and measles and almost dies. Later he gets stabbed through his lung and suffers from Spanish Influenza just before he is demobbed. The Prussian blue chemicals do not know that they will be turned into Zyklon B or used to kill Alan Turing in an apple after he is caught cottaging, that 900 people will drink them in Flavor Aid at the Jonestown massacre of 1978, that Rommel, Eva Braun, Himmler, Goring and Blondie will take them in glass capsules to die. They will be used to kill the cicadas and locusts in the citrus groves of California, then prisoner Gee Jon. Gee loses consciousness after five seconds, his head continuing to nod up and down for six minutes. He is completely motionless after ten minutes. Some of the witnesses said they thought they could smell almond blossom as he died.

In 1985, serial killer Leonard Lake dies in custody after having ingested cyanide pills he had sewn into his clothes. Five lionesses at the Singapore Zoo are put on birth control. Dian Fossey is found murdered in scrubland in Rwanda and Robert Graves is found on the cold floor tiles of his bathroom in Spain. And after reading that it is one of Sylvia Plath's favourite pastimes along with drinking sherry and sunbathing, I am having a hot bath in the room where I host my Nature Show.

Queen Mary's Dolls House, Annabel Dover, (1999)

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The Victorian slipper-bath has my grandfather's hoist above it and a cork step for a makeshift plinth for jars of mosquito larvae, fake owl pellets that I had made from used cotton wool and pencil shavings, and other traces of nature I could find in the suburbs of Liverpool. I placed one of the many period stained sheets, a sheet produced by six women over the bath. Often the Nature Show left traces of its exhibitions: large striped garden spiders, mosquitoes, mould and damp from the artifacts I had found in the River Mersey that abutted our house. My mother and sisters would come and talk about where my father had gone, my mother tear-eyed and raw, her face a shattered plate, poorly glued. She'd light a cigarette and share it with my elder sisters, the earwigs would wake up from their cold stupor and creep into the crevices behind water pipes and overflow holes. They would use words I only vaguely understood and would try and remember to look them up in the dictionary in my father's out of bounds study: 'Neurotic', 'cash', 'mistress', 'possessive', 'obsessed', 'quim'. Sometimes the warmth of a bath would invite the insects back and I remember a particularly terrifying Monday winter evening when I was stuck in the slipper as a cloud of daddy long legs puffed out of a dark corner and landed elegantly on the roll edge like the pilots of Pussy Galore's Flying Circus. In my latest Nature Club, I show an example of a dog rose. Cut in the wrong way a cultivated rose returns to its natural wild ancestor.

Carousel, Annabel Dover, (2001)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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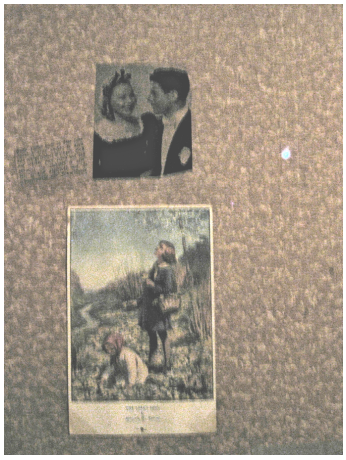
In the morning when I was the only one awake, when the birds started to sing over the containers in the docks next door; when the container ships blew their horns on the Mersey; I'd look at the things in my room. Jemima the doll had frustrating hands, each was made from one piece of fabric and the fingers were sewn lines, like the Citroën ambulance car with the doors that wouldn't open and my Clothkits dress with fake pockets. My grandmother's arthritic hands were the same. Holding her hand was like holding the hand of a shop dummy or an oven glove.

The Boobly Oobly was my favourite toy. If I woke up early on Sunday and couldn't go back to sleep, I would think about what look I might give it that day. I'd look at my sisters' wall: Grace Jones, Buzby, Faye Dunaway in Bonnie and Clyde, the one with the dark hair in Charlie's Angels, Rowan Atkinson, Eliot Gould, Hot Lips Houlihan, Anthony Andrews with Aloysius the bear. We didn't have a TV but we had a deal with our neighbours, Luke and Andrew, that they would push their TV close to the window and we would stand on the roof wearing hats and cagoules in the rain. I had to wait till the afternoon to get Boobly Oobly and I could only get her at certain times of the year. It wasn't until we had games day at school and I saw Girls World, Etch-a-Sketch and Weebles, that I realised that Boobly Oobly only really had appeal for me. I felt shame when I got her delivered to me in a tea towel on Sunday afternoons after that. I now think of Boobly Oobly when making John Le Carrier's minestrone soup, because Boobly Oobly was an overripe marrow, a parsnip or, when we moved to York, a sugar beet that I put lipstick on.



Anne Frank's Bedroom Wall, Annabel Dover, (2010)

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

My dollhouse had fragments of my grandmother's William Morris Blackthorn print, outsize in the miniature sitting room and taking on an overwhelming, but comforting, psychedelic scale. The dollhouse father could never relax, he couldn't bend his legs so I lay him on the chaise longue in the sitting room next to the pipe-cleaner cat. He was at the mercy of the botanical wallpaper and its powerful supine curves, lying in a never-ending hypnogogic trance.

One afternoon, a woman came to the porch door. She had hair the colour of "Butterscotch Angel Delight", mother said. She said she had found a piece of paper in a library book. She left laughing and said it was a delight to meet a man as charming as my father. "Cheap perfume" he said as he shut the door and took out the tin of panatelas from the breast pocket of his tweed jacket.

Ophelia, detail, Millais, (1852)

My grandmother's herbarium was made from Alpine plants. One day in her house on the Isle of Wight, while my grandfather was away at a conference in New York, and her children were at boarding school, she told the chauffeur Raoul that he was to drive her to Switzerland. He was unable to contact my grandfather who at the time was buying my grandmother, Mikey, a bracelet from Saks. Then followed her herbarium, asylum and her first of thirty-two

sessions of ECT. Nobody wanted the herbarium but me. The frail, tissue like Gentians, the Edelweiss crackling and perishing with age. Today she would be diagnosed as bipolar, then she was termed hysterical. She wore black underwear when she was energetic and went on huge spending forays buying plants and flowers, Jersey for Narcissi, the quillets of Cornwall for Sweet Violets. I thought of her when I heard of the story of Narcissus staring at his beautiful reflection in the pool, and how Freud would not have helped her either. After her back, legs and arms were broken, her lungs punctured, her jaw shattered, the grandson that was sitting on her lap, killed, she took trunks of lilies home in the ambulance from Uganda to the UK, wrapped in silk headscarves she had drenched in water. There are photographs of her in the private ambulance, holding the lilies in a headscarf, like a newly born baby.

The caramel coloured roses of my grandmother's garden used to loll in cut glass cornets. She showed me how to make flower arrangements when I was a child. I won prizes at school, at the *Liverpool Show*, and the *South Suffolk Show.* My mother made me present the flower arrangements and the cups to my father. He would leave them where I put them until the water in the arrangement (usually a shell) stank of cabbage. My mother left them there, unable to reach that part of the room for all the newspapers in their geological piles. He'd never remove them; he'd cover them with more newspapers. After a year, I would have to burrow under my father's things to retrieve the cup. Once I had the humiliation of not being able to find the cup at all. Two years later I found it trodden on in my father's wardrobe, under his dirty jockstrap pile.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Stains, Annabel Dover, (2011)

My mother said my grandmother taught her nothing useful, only things about dogs and plants. 'I'm on heat' she had said to Matron as the hot blood trickled out of her. She placed her hairbrush next to the whimsy of a badger and photograph of her mother, father and brother in the mosaic enamel frame on the bedside cabinet and placed the fat white Sanitary towels in the top drawer.

Anna looks at the fish on the pale blue plate. Plaice start life with eyes on either side of their face, then one eye travels to join the other and stays there. She sees, under the melting butter, the path the moving eye took on the fish's skin. Anna is in bed. She squints one eye to focus on the words of her newspaper. She knows she will live maybe one or two more days, the Astranias in the Waterford Crystal vase by her bed will outlive her, but she still feels compelled to know about the world. To marinate in it and float out into it, a full treacle soaked sponge not an empty husk. She would like to have died on her birthday, a neat circle, like Rafael and Shakespeare, but like in all things she lacked forethought.

She reads an article by the frightful Henry Labouchère: 'Yesterday, I had a slice of Pollux for dinner. Pollux and his brother Castor are two elephants, which have been killed. It was tough, coarse, and oily, and I do not recommend English families to eat elephant as long as they can get beef or mutton.' He goes on to mention rat and Cuissot de Loup, Sauce Chevreuil (Haunch of Wolf with a Deer Sauce), Chameau rôti à l'anglaise (Camel roasted with an English Sauce). Champion racehorses were being eaten in Paris too. Only the lions and tigers survived because they were too fearsome and the monkeys because they were too human, the rest of the zoo in the Jardin de Plantes had been consumed.

Poor Castor and Pollux, she thinks. I would so like to meet them in heaven and apologise and to my mother for killing her by being born. And what is the English sauce that comes with the camel?

Clef 2

> But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle, – and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places.
>
> (Ruskin, 2009: 50)

Arranging was considered a suitable pastime for a respectable woman of the 1850s and one that the album distilled. The family album was central to the household, and was placed on the parlour/withdrawing room table where it echoed the previous position of the family Bible. This Clef looks at the haptic nature of the creation and reception of the album. Specifically, it examines albumisation, cutting, arranging and storytelling in order to show how these processes were, and can be, used to give voice to those cut out of the dominant narrative. The word *album*, from the Latin *albus*, meaning white, suggests a blankness, purity and openness. It freely accepts whatever is placed upon its pages. It is a place where objects and images of objects are kept, arranged and sorted. It then becomes an object itself: a book, a place for fact and fiction. In this role, the album and the woman adopt a position of interchangeability. John Ruskin's description of women's role from *Of Queen's Gardens* (1887), in the epigraph to this Clef, highlights this transposition. Ruskin ascribes: 'The woman's duty, as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the ordering, in the comforting and in the beautiful adornment of the state' (Ruskin, 1887: 127). The ordering of beauty, adornment and providing comfort are also the principles of an album. Like the album, women were embodiments of Ruskin's trinity of *order*, *comfort* and *adornment*.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

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Victorian woman and album, Chris Helemy/Alamy Stock Photo

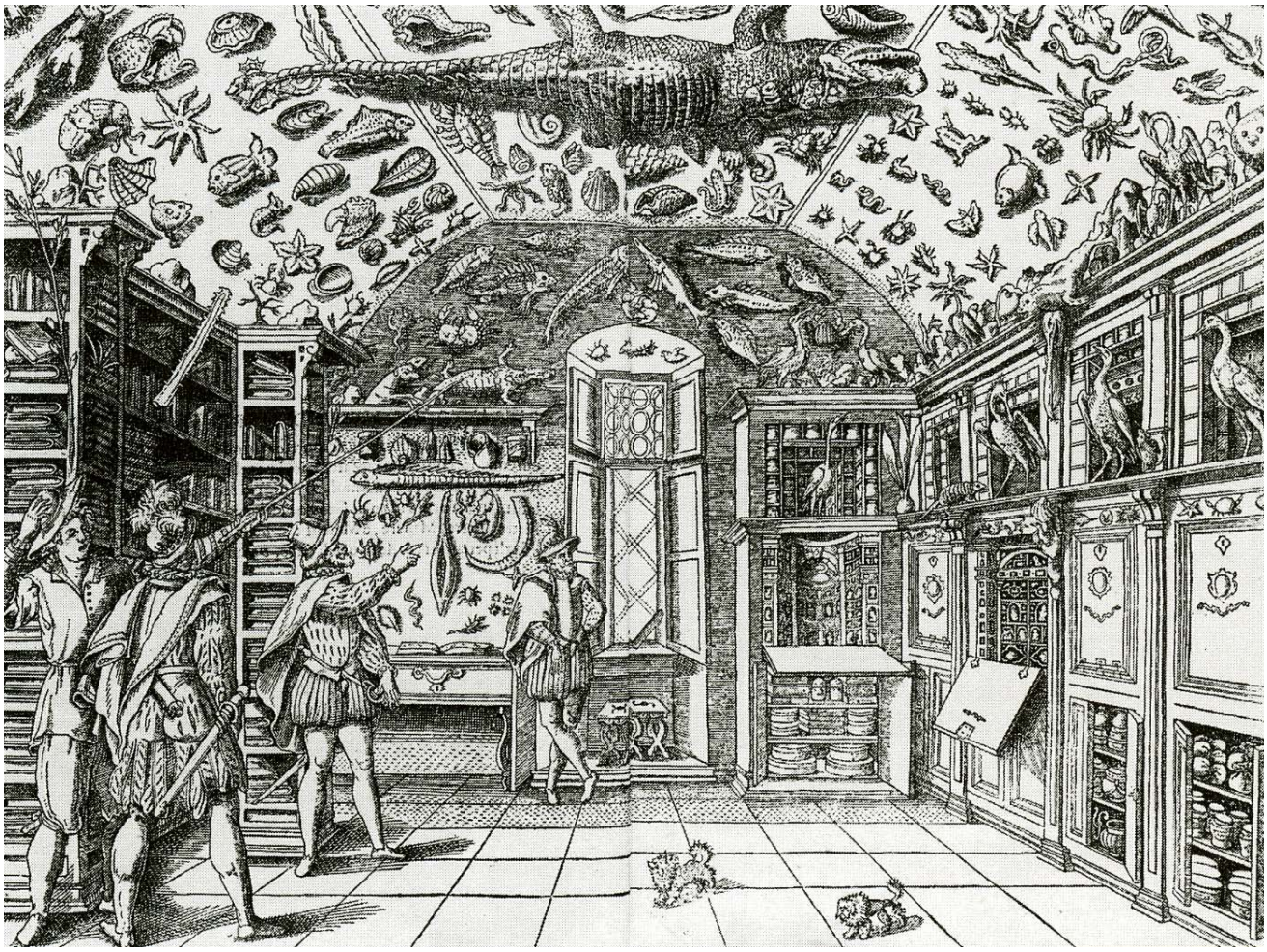
In Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979), a novel about books and fictions and truths, the protagonist, The Reader, searches through the room of his soon-to-be lover.

> But on closer examination every object proves special, somehow unexpected. Your relationship with objects is selective, personal; only the things you feel yours become yours: it is a relationship with the physicality of things, not with an intellectual or affective idea that takes the place of seeing them and touching them. And once they are attached to you, marked by your possession, the objects no longer seem to be there by chance, they assume meaning as elements of a discourse, like a memory composed of signals and emblems...
>
> In one corner of the wall are a number of framed photographs, all hung close together. Photographs of whom? Of you at various ages, and of many other people, men and women, and also very old photographs as if taken from a family album; but together they seem to have the function, not so much of recalling specific people, as of forming a montage of the stratifications of existence.
>
> (Calvino, 1998: 143-4)

He describes the room as album-like, containing the accumulated objects of the woman; The Reader, as he is bound to do, *reads* the room in terms of its *signals and emblems*, of its ability to tell stories and reveal truths. The objects themselves are understood in terms of *seeing and touching*, the dual experience of the album. His final description of a series of photographs 'taken from a family album' alludes to the temporal function of the album. Usually made and experienced over time, the album presents an archaeological series of layers, each revealing new knowledge and discovery. In Calvino's novel, this notion that both 'woman' and her objects are there to be 'read' by the male is at once a trap and an opportunity to give voice to the disenfranchised.

Florilegia and Chapter Two present multiple stories in albumised form. Individual memories are far from controlled and corralled; they are celebrated, and these stories thrive and grow in parallel. To encourage, this Chapter Two is arranged like an album of snapshots. Short passages of text are apprehended in association with each other to create interstitial narratives. Neither fixed by chronology nor by an inanimate memorial tome, the album and Chapter Two are animated by the talk and touch of storytelling. As discussed in *Clef 1*, the notional and actual confinement of the middle-class woman of the nineteenth century is to some extent countered by her relationship to the domestic object. The album, because of its

domesticity and inherent interiority, holds a special place in this act of counter-narration as a form that was socially encouraged. In re-using the album, I am engaging with this occluded form of storytelling and opening dialogues.



The Wunderkammer of Ferrante Imperato, Naples, *Historia Naturale* (1599)

While the monumental museums of the nineteenth century were being built by men, such as Henry Wellcome and Reverend Pitt Rivers, who had travelled to different parts of the world, women were collecting in miniature in the form of the album (Smith, 1998: 58). In this case, the album becomes analogous to the Renaissance Wunderkammer where the cosmos could be controlled from one artefact-filled room (Putnam, 2009: 10). In the domestic album, in contrast to the narrative 'truths' presented by the museum, collections of images were cut, rearranged and collated into a book that could be touched and inspire multiple personal narratives. The album existed in various forms before the photograph album of the late

1800s. By the early nineteenth century, it already had a place in the domestic setting. An anonymous 1822 almanac article entitled *Qu'est-ce qu'un album*[?] ('What is an album[?]') lists all the forms that an album could take: these included travelogues, registers of autographs, signatures of visitors. But the true album was 'exclusively devoted to little collections... of pieces of poetry, [or] of music, [or] of original drawings'. (Leca, 1823: 33). The phrase 'little collections' indicates not only scale but lack of importance, and suggests that the contents of the album were not under scrutiny.

Mrs Lane Fox, from *Heath's Book of Beauty* British Library, (1838)

> They all bear the same character, and are exactly like the Books of Beauty, Flowers of Loveliness, and so on, which appeared last year… The poetry is quite worthy of the picture, and a little sham sentiment is employed to illustrate a little sham art.
>
> (Thackeray, 1985: 128)

Thackeray lampooned the frivolousness and 'sham sentiment' (Thackeray, 1985: 128) of the album in *Vanity Fair* (1847), further promulgating the idea that the album contained nothing of importance. In functioning marginally and acroamatically, the album allowed the author

freedom to create her own personal stories. Atkins' album, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843), ordered like a botanical compendium and complete with Latin names, has aspects of the seriousness of scientific endeavour. However, it retains the touches of the uniquely crafted object, with handwritten inserts, labels and extravagant, collaged seaweed letter decorations. These marginal additions jar with the scientific mien of the herbarium. On first viewing, I recognised that this collision indicated layers of hidden meaning, clues to emotion, and visual codes to be deciphered within the album.

British Algae, Volume One, Anna Atkins, Seaweed Letters (1843)

In this way, the album format becomes a codebook for the domestic female communicating and hiding familial, social and biographical stories. This coding is noted by authors such as Patrizia Di Bello and Rosalind Coward who suggest that the nineteenth-century album was designed for consumption by the upper and middling classes (as they were at that time more commonly understood) and dealt with an aspirational approach to gentility (Coward, 1984: 62). According to Di Bello, the centrality of the album to the nineteenth-century household would have echoed the positioning of the family Bible, which in the early nineteenth century often had details of the family tree drawn into it. The incidental scraps, pressed plants, watercolours, rubbings and drawings in family albums were coded for the delectation of visitors. As Di Bello notes, this created a new and active role for the woman of the household.

For virtually the first time, the aristocracy and gentry could begin to

> construct their own histories, abandoning their reliance on painters... From its very beginnings, [portrait photography] has been used to produce a favourable impression of upper-class lifestyles.
>
> (Di Bello, 2003: 14)

Soon, the advent of early photography conjoined with the already well-established maintenance of an album. This new medium seamlessly adopted the narrative demands of an album and celebrated the Victorian ethos of the centrality of family, which, in turn, afforded the female album-keeper a further degree of control over the narrative of family identity. John Edwin Mayall's hugely successful series of informal, domestic photographs of the Royal Family, published as the *Royal Album* in 1860, engendered a new tactile relationship with the idealised family. With Mayall's album as the exemplar of the family album, early photograph albums were created in a number of different ways.

J.E. Mayall, *Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Queen Victoria and their Children*, Albumen photograph, (1849)

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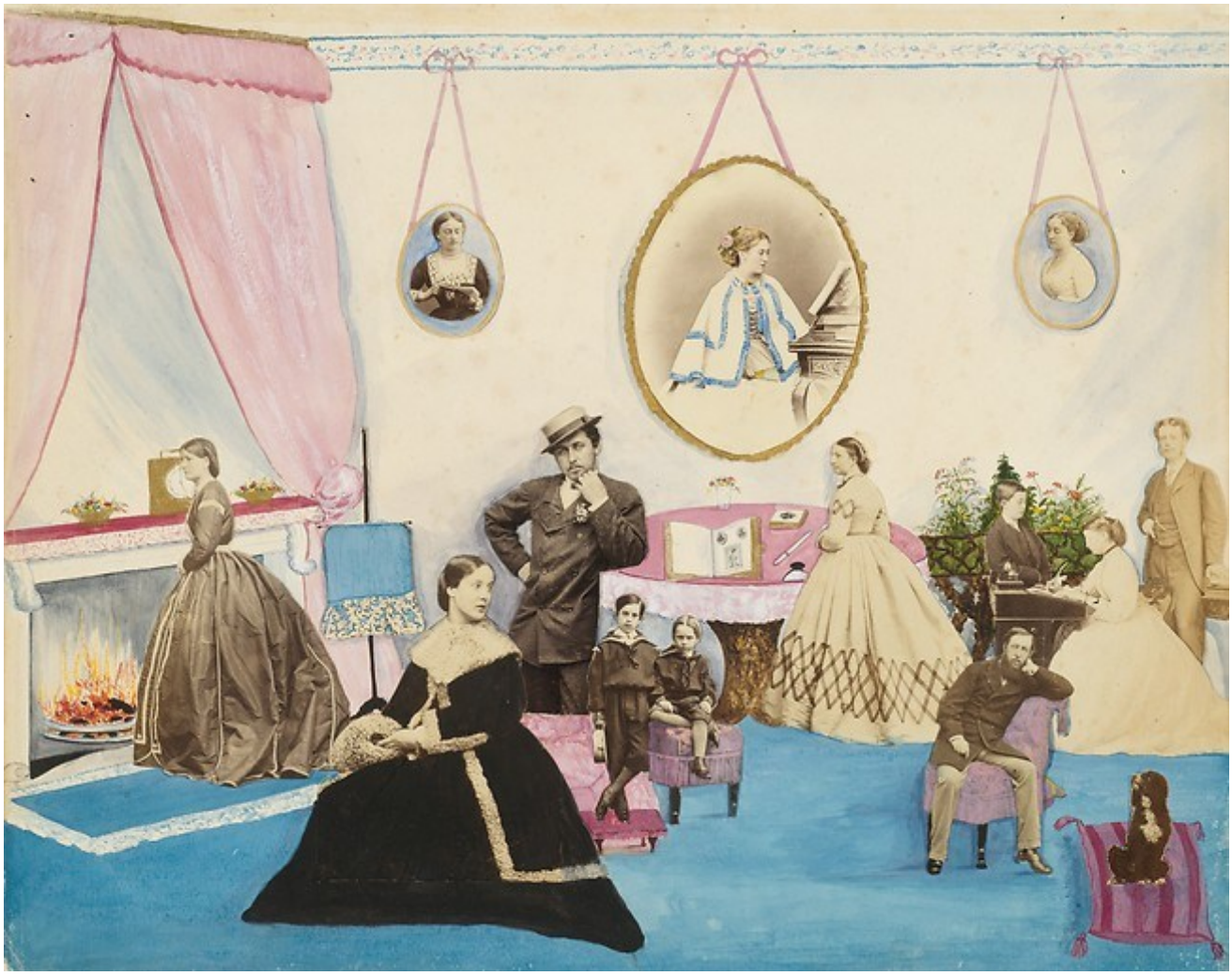
The Milles Family Drawing Room, Lady Milles Album, (1860-74)



Lady Filmer in her Drawing Room Lady Filmer Albumen prints, watercolour and ink in an album (1860s)

Lady Filmer (1838-1903) and Lady Milles, for example, both use the album to create a fantasy of personal aggrandizement, collaging the Royal Family to share scenes with their own families. This seemingly frivolous and self-indulgent project reveals one way in which the album format functions. Its blank pages become a playground for the imagination, a space where arrangements can be made safely and without censure. Victorian family photograph albums often had floral borders framing the photographs and entwining around the images of family, thereby transforming and uniting them with nature and often extending the photographer's scene-painted backdrops. This act of decorative fictionalisation again reinforces the notion of the album as a site for storytelling and creating new realities. Atkins' use and design of title pages for all her albums, and specifically her approach to the

albumising of her work, references this family photograph album format. Each chapter is introduced with a garland of plants surrounding the title of the category of plants it depicts. The album format then functions through its marginality. Its decorative borders, 'sweet arrangement' and the open white spaces are coded with meaning and hidden by the frivolity of decoration.

Left: Four seasons photograph album page (1872); Right: Title page to *British and Foreign Flowering Plants and Ferns, Atkins* (1854)

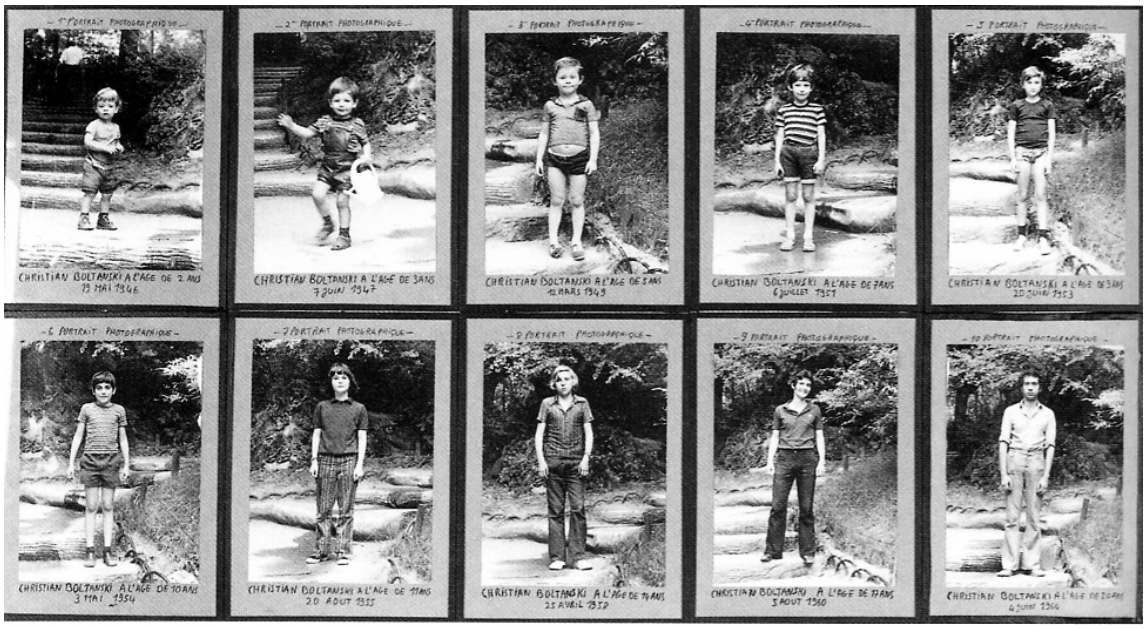
Contemporary artists have engaged with the possibilities of the album as a format for fictions. Martha Langford notes the openness of the album and the 'meta-album', which she describes as a device, a format and a means of expression:

> A hobbyist's way of collecting and organising pictures may mimic scientific or curatorial practice. Or the amassing of metonymic images may function as an individual life history,

> replacing the diarist's chronological entries with an autobiographical collage.
>
> (Langford, 2008: 41)

This is used by contemporary artists as a methodological device usually to tackle notions of family and validity. In *The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater* (1974), the artist Ralph Eugene Meatyard presents an unsettling image of the family album.. Meatyard's characters wear translucent masks and the photographs mix the grotesque and the familiar to create an unnerving experience. The mother figure, also masked, appears in every photograph with her name underneath, highlighting the role of the mother figure as the stabilising force in the family album. Here, far from being the reassuring protector of the family, her bizarre and frightening appearance transforms her into an unknown figure.

My writing in Chapter Two, like Lady Filmer and Lady Mille's fictional arrangement, plays with characters of the known and unknown and questions the validity of their stories. However, I use the notion of the album page as a playground to open up the stories even further. Chapter Two, like an album, holds an assembly of characters on a blank page. Then, just as one might do when opening an unknown family album, the reader/handler is forced to look for resemblances between images, to narrate the spaces in between the pictures.



Christian Boltanski, *Ten Portraits of Christian Boltanski between 1946 and 1964* (1971)

Christian Boltanski uses the format of the album to plays with notions of association and narrative validity. *Ten Portraits of Christian Boltanski 1946-1964* (1972) is a self-portrait of Boltanski as ten children, of differing heights, hair colours and builds. The photographs give the initial impression that Boltanski has had his portrait taken over ten years. Boltanski uses the candid form of an album to convince the viewer that his self-portraits in the park are true. However, the viewer soon realises that the photographs are 'fakes' made by the artist in a single day. Boltanski subverts the notion of family photograph album as a document of objective biography. Only when they are scrutinised do the photographs reveal themselves as 'fake'. On discovering that these believable, paradoxical images are not real, the images no longer hold our attention; as Daston remarks: 'Only when the paradox becomes prosaic do things that talk subside into speechlessness' (Daston, 2004: 24). As an influential and much vaunted artist, Boltanski can afford to make this kind of joke, and I would say that instead of reading against the grain and questioning the dominant canons of art with this work, he is reasserting himself within it. While Boltanski's album 'subsides into speechlessness', leaving us with the artist's sardonic smile, he misses the coded richness of the album format. With Chapter Two and *Florilegia*, the album format is recognised as subtly giving voice to the voiceless. Chapter Two emphasises the magical paradoxes within and acknowledges the album to be both real and unreal, whereas Boltanksi's album is first real and then mute.

Whether being praised or mocked, women/albums conveyed the idea that they bore witness to a harmonious family. In line with Ruskin's sentiments in *Of Queen's Gardens*, in the patriarchal family model women/albums were expected to perform very similar roles of support and propaganda. Here, the role of woman/album as passive witness and recorder becomes more important. In fact, throughout this Clef the album takes on the female gender. Calvino's active male protagonist, the Reader, apprehends the album/room of his soon-to-be female lover; Atkins makes albums as an act of daughterly devotion and female companionship. The word 'album' also continues this tradition of connotation. As Susan Gubar notes in her 1981 paper, '"The Blank Page" and Female Creativity', the idea of the blank page has long been associated with ideals of femininity:

We can see this clearly in Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady*, where

> the ideal jeune fille is described as 'a sheet of blank paper'. So 'fair and smooth a page would be covered with an edifying text', we are told, whereas the experienced woman who is 'written over in a variety of hands' has a 'number of unmistakable blots' upon her surface.
>
> (Gubar, 2017: 243)

While accepting the Derridian idea that identifies the pen with the penis and the hymen with the page, Gubar goes on to suggest an increasingly powerful interpretation for the blank page which acknowledges its vital role in creativity. I argue that the album takes on this power and magnifies it. The album was and is primarily an object of female power and an object that can be used to give voice to the overlooked. On its blank pages, women have witnessed, responded, transformed, cut, arranged and created new narratives for the future.

The primary language of the album is cutting and arranging. The words and images of Atkins' album are collaged, cut and pasted. They are rearranged as if in a domestic interior and smoothed out into a seamless narrative that nonetheless retains the scars and disjunctures of its incisions. Writing on the culture of collage, Di Bello remarks:

> Collage at once cuts and repairs, fragments and makes whole again these cuts and wounds are never fully 'healed', into a smooth continuous surface, neither physically nor conceptually.
> (Di Bello, 2007: 3)

Looking at Atkins' cyanotype print *Papaver Orientale* with a magnifying glass, the cuts on the stem can be seen. The poppy has been sliced and then pushed together again. The spaces between these cuts are still in evidence, however, and it is the space between these two, as it is the space between the stories in Chapter Two, that reveals something else. Di Bello picks up on a sense of dissatisfaction with collage when she remarks that the urge to arrange is symptomatic of the urge to make whole again. Through her collaged albums, Atkins, like Filmer and Milles, was creating visual harmony and making imagined connections with familial archetypes. Atkins, Filmer and Milles were not only attempting to re-edit their personal familial situations, but they were also expressing dissatisfaction with the limited social horizons available for women in the nineteenth century.

Annette Messager's *Album Collections* (1973) also demonstrates aspects of cutting and arranging as a way of relocating the dissatisfied narrator. It is a collection of 56 photograph albums housed in glass vitrines. Messager cuts and places images of her own face onto the unknown brides and writes her own name underneath. Other albums in the collection document fictional events in her life using illustrations from magazines. In pasting herself into pre-existing narratives, she uses the collage process to assimilate the lives of others.

Touching a collaged photograph would alert the person experiencing the album that it had been changed, re-arranged and re-written. The coding is more overt. Atkins' cyanotypes, however, were one step away from this because while she had cut and sutured the actual plant specimen, the print itself was smooth and unblemished. This sleight of hand left no trace of her editorial command. Atkins had created a vision of perfection and harmony by destroying and fictionalising the original plant specimen. Carol Mavor notes a similar morbid action in Lewis Carroll's photographs of young girls:

> Carroll's little girls, pasted into his albums, were flattened flower buds – some from last spring, others from many springtimes ago – all pressed, pasted, preserved, and arranged into Victorian albums... Carroll wanted his child-friends to be forever little, to remain as Persephone was before she plucked the tender, sweet-smelling narcissus that metaphorically stood for her own breakage, loss, and marked change.
>
> (Mavor, 1995: 25-6)

Atkins' plants too are like fresh maidens suspended between life and death. There is a paradox in creating a direct impression, a visual truth, a remnant and a witness, when the witness has been doctored, the moment already obliterated. As with many other crafts popular in the Victorian era, such as taxidermy, the *Naturselsdruck* and the petrifying of bird's nests, the urge to capture something forever caused its death.

Petrified bird's nest, Derby Museum (1851)

Like Audubon's birds who were killed to be made immortal in his album, Mavor describes Lewis Carroll 'collecting' little girls. Carroll, she says, hoped to keep the little girls in stasis, by collecting them as photographs in his album. Destruction before construction is also inherent in collage. In the case of *Papaver Orientale*, the focus is on the destruction of one reality to create a new one that can be understood as harmonious and soothing. Di Bello, recalling the work of the Marxist literary critic Pierre Macherey and his call to investigate the cracks and contradictions in a text, comments on the need to examine the cuts in the album (Di Bello, 2007: 3). It is in this light that Atkins' subtle cuts and embellishments can be seen as a positive act of recombination which aims not only to serve the actual family, genetic and scientific, around her, but also to create something else – or just to *create.* In addition, the very act of collage, its process of selection, excision and re-assemblage, is key to understanding the nature of Atkins' albums and discovering her voice. The same processes are employed in Chapter Two. The stories are gatherings drawn from many different places and times and assembled anew to create new chimerical associations and voices.

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Left: Detail from Anna Atkins, *Cyanotypes of British Algae* (1843); Centre: Seaweed Herbarium (1852), Natural History Museum; Right: John James Audubon, *American Flamingo* (1832)

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) stands as an early example of collage and albumisation directly connected to the idea of female creativity. Not only is the monster a collaged cypher standing for the dangers of male scientific creativity, but it also represents the daring of female artistic creativity. The monster first appears not on Victor's slab, but in

the dream of Mary Shelley herself, where his 'yellow, watery but speculative eyes' are described in her introduction (Shelley et al., 1988: 264). The monster, as well as being a literal collage, also reveals himself to be an album. He is a book of blank pages, written on by the experiences and people he encounters. In some senses, the creation and structure of *Frankenstein* (1818) the novel can also be seen in terms of collage and albumisation. Rather than being made up of a single narrative stream, it is a collection of various narratives brought together in one place. Shelley pastes in her own story with that of Victor, the ship's captain, and the monster himself. Shelley's introduction is used both to explain the genesis of her creation and to validate it as a genuine piece of female creativity. It is written to answer the question: 'How I, then a young girl, came to think of and dilate upon so very hideous an idea?' (Shelley et al., 1988: 259).

A woman creates something new from a collection of bits of gatherings and puts them together to create a new whole in the form of an album that has the traces of the cuts and history of the past relationships. Each of Atkins' 'gatherings' has been arranged quite differently by the institutions that she donated them to. Atkins, donating the albums in an unarranged state as loose leaves with unnumbered pages, paradoxically gave up the acceptable female role of arranger in an act of refusal. The eventual structure of the albums depended, therefore, on the individual acting on behalf of each institution. Serge Tisseron writes that the album collector has a desire to unify: 'These characteristics are confirmed by albums that often respond to the desire to gather up the scattered pieces of a family puzzle' (Tisseron, 2013: 84). In *Florilegia*, I, like Atkins, leave the prints loose and unbound. By contrasting our two albums, I return in a temporal disjuncture to the moment of their donation. The person experiencing my donated *Florilegia* is left to gather the scattered pieces in their imagination. This is an act that also opens up my narratives to new relationships with the internal narratives of the reader/handler.

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Detail from Atkins, *Papaver Orientale*, cyanotype (1852-4)

The cyanotype albums and Chapter Two suture that which has been cut from Atkins and her albums: her stories, her voice. Ellie Ragland develops Lacan's writing on cutting and suturing as an attempt to counteract loss. Here she notes that the urge to speak is inspired by the pain that the suturing object does not manage to compensate:

> In feminine sexuation the sexual difference opens onto the void itself – the empty places in the Other who is only 'supposed' to be full of knowledge and being. Thus, the void-located on the feminine side of sexuation becomes the referent of all meaning. Language refers to the losses of the object *a* underlying our quest to fill up loss. This is precisely what moves us to speak. Objects, things of the world, 'suture' the cuts and compensate for losses; people try to deny the losses by grasping at things, beliefs, love, and sex, but these substitute objects never yield the gratification hoped for from the substitutes for the object *a*.
>
> (Freidlander & Malone 2012: 260)

This process of cutting and suturing is then a mechanism for giving the object voice. After her parents' divorce, sociologist Annette Kuhn describes in *Family Secrets* (2002) how her mother cuts her father out of all the family photographs and changes the family story, reassembling the photographs in a different chronological and narrative order, to create a new album and a new family. Here, the process of cutting and re-arrangement within the album fictionalises the photograph, releasing its voice as object-witness to a new narrative.

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Paris and London Fashions, Lady's Newspaper British Library (1847)

Following from Angela Carter's characterisation of 'narrative [as] an argument stated in fictional terms', we can see that the album forms a creative ground for debate. Susan Pearce notes a similar urge in the creation of collections: 'Collections can be used to construct a world which is closer to things as we would like them to be' (Pearce, 1993: 61). In this speculative fictionalising of objects, the album is a gathering of stories that gives voice to its silent creator. The Album's acts of gathering, cutting and arranging are the methods by which the new narratives are constructed. The appreciation of the album in Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre* is a performative act of storytelling. The character of Blanche Ingram is introduced, standing alone at the table, bending gracefully over an album as Rochester enters (Brönte, 1985: 205). This performance, no doubt a commentary on the real life social etiquette of the time, was a demonstration of a woman's eligibility and ability to grasp the finer, more delicate aspects of life: nature, painting, calligraphy, pressing flowers, appreciation of nature, sketching, embroidery. But more than this, it introduces the idea of the album, the storyteller and the viewer-handler as participants in narrative production. Similarly, my *Florilegia* album is to be touched and looked at by the people who use the library at the Royal Society,

the V&A print room and the Linnean Society – it is intended to elicit an act that will involve them in the ritual corroboration of the stories.

Charlotte Saloman, *Life or Theatre?* series of gouaches on paper (1941-3)

The 1998 Royal Academy show of Charlotte Saloman's work, *Life or Theatre?*, displayed 784 of Saloman's uniformly sized rectangular paintings on a wall. This overwhelming spectacle presented the highly personal description of a traumatic experience as an exploded album. The title *Life or Theatre?* prompts the viewer to question the veracity of this autobiographical account. Writing about Saloman's work, Griselda Pollock uses the notion of the Matrixial Gaze to suggest that *Life or Theatre?* can be understood in a way that goes beyond thinking terms of logic, structure and separations (Pollock, 2016). Instead, she called

for an approach which extends beyond the visual to include touch, sound and movement. Bracha Ettinger, writing about the matrixial, states:

> The place of art is for me the transport-station of trauma: a transport-station that more than a place is rather a space, that allows for certain occasions of occurrence and encounter, which will become the realization of what I call borderlinking and borderspacing in a matrixial trans-subjective space by way of experiencing with an object of a process of creation.
>
> (Lichtenberg-Ettinger et al., 2000: 91)

Ettinger's Matrixial Gaze attempts to move the female to the foreground and to emphasise the value of an empathic multi-sensory appreciation of objects and of the unconscious response that this produces. By offering the cyanotype to be touched, Atkins and *Florilegia* are also involving the viewer in a matrixial exchange.

Daguerreotype case holding a daguerreotype with the case depicted.

Geoffrey Batchen describes a similar process at work in the convention of portraits in which the same daguerreotype case held by the sitter is used to hold the daguerreotype itself. This

results in a confusing physical connection between the viewer/handler and the subject of the image. Similarly, with Atkins' albums and with my *Florilegia*, not only does the viewer look, he or she also touches the paper that we touched, the paper that proves that the botanical sample we photogrammed is also present. The audience is also invited to become involved haptically in Chapter Two through the multiple descriptions of objects in terms of touch, smell, sight and sound. This introduces the idea of fiction as an album form that creates a nexus of matrixial appreciation.

> The framework of the amateur album serves the artist's album as a pretext (a container or a disguise) for the discourse embedded in its contents. The exegesis is thus performative: the shared story, a meta-story about the ideal album, is a starting point for re-creation.
>
> (Langford, 2008: 29)

Here, Langford establishes a connection between the album and the amateur. She notes that this alliance colludes with the idea of the album as marginal and acroamatic codebook, a cover for storytelling.

Susan Hiller, installation in the Freud Museum, (1991-6)

Susan Hiller, talking about her residency at the Freud museum, also expresses this idea. She noted the creation of a coded connection between storyteller and the audience and collaborator.

> If you think of Freud's notion of the dream as a narrative that had both a manifest and a hidden content, this might have something to do with the relationship between the story told by the storyteller and the story that was being heard.
>
> (Einzig, 42: 1996)

With *Florilegia* and Chapter Two, I move beyond Hiller's personal but rigid taxonomy of the archivist. Instead I present an open ground for narrative entanglement between manifest and hidden stories. In this way, Atkins' cyanotypes and Chapter Two can also be seen to relate to Freud's fort-da game of absence and presence. Freud describes the game a child plays where he lets the object disappear and return to alleviate the pain of uncontrolled absence. The

viewers-handlers of *Florilegia* and readers of Chapter Two become active players in a similar performance of touch, presence and absence.

By extending the fort-da game idea, the Victorian family photograph album can be regarded as a perfect, crystallised example of Freud's paper on 'Family Romance' (Freud, 1909: 238-239) where the heroine of the story imagines herself as part of a more glamorous family. This process simultaneously presents an image that is smoothed out into a seamless narrative and shows the scars and disjunctures of its incisions. Indeed, Atkins engaged in this fantasy of discarding and gathering as social improvement in *The Perils of Fashion*:

> the desolate Greek girl woke up to find herself the distinguished and respected favourite of an illustrious monarch and his family, the wife of a wealthy Englishman, the mother, – and it was the happiest realization, – of a beautiful affectionate child.
>
> (Atkins, 1852: 112)

In a parallel with women, such as Lady Filmer and Lady Milles, who created fictional families in the album of the nineteenth century, the child of Freud's 'Family Romance' is powerless to change their life and so does so in the imagination. Using their available resources, Filmer, Milles and Atkins collage together an ideal world, recreating a new narrative in which they are heroines.

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Autobiographical Stories (The Fake Marriage), gelatin silver print, Sophie Calle (1992)

Sophie Calle's photograph *The Fake Marriage*, from the series *Les Autobiographies* (1992), presents both a pretend wedding day and a family romance. Calle places herself as the protagonist in a familiar biographical narrative: the wedding. She recreates a ritual that never happened, collaging herself physically into an imagined situation. Barbara Myerhoff (1992) says of Calle's *The Fake Wedding:*

> Those present when such transformations occur are filled with wonder and gratitude, and are likely to experience the intense camaraderie Turner has called 'communitas'. So we, the spectators, are actually active in our role in Calle's work, part of her family, and her ritual.
>
> (Myerhoff, 1992: 37)

Wedding photography is designed to be viewed and to enable a moment to be relived again and again. Calle involves us in this repetition and we become a player in the drama of her

created autobiography. We are invited into this intimate space of fantasy and to help corroborate/commemorate her story.

Transformations 2, Jo Spence (1985)

The artists Jo Spence and Rosy Martin re-enact the image of Spence as a young girl, to connect with the power of her former self and describe the re-enactment as being akin to creating a family album: 'Jo and I characterized our practice as an extension of domestic photography. Most of us have a collection of old photographs that constitutes the "family album"' (Holland and Spence, 1991: 8). They consider Freud's 'Screen Memories' to displace in time traumatic memories and to rewrite these as stories no longer of shame and fear but of powerful statements of self:

> Exploring the self as a series of fiction, as a web of inter-related stories told to us and about us, we used therapeutic techniques to look behind the 'screen memories', the simplifications and myths of others, too long accepted as our own histories. We began to tell our stories through our therapeutic relationship and together we explored ways of making visible the complexity and contradictions of our own stories from our points of view.

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(Holland and Spence, 1991: 3)

Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* ('afterwardsness') describes a deferred action to right a traumatic past event. In her film *Why I Never Became a Dancer* (1995), Tracey Emin relives past events in the present as the victor: dancing now as a sophisticated, rich successful adult, she recalls the humiliation caused by people who laughed at her when she participated in a dancing competition in Margate as a teenager. Emin's re-narration of herself as the victor is similar to the way that Atkins' albums have meaning, however hidden, and embody a profound relationship with their creator similar to a form of *Nachträglichkeit* (Benjamin, 1999: 248). Chapter Two and *Florilegia* re-narrate woman into positions of power by revealing the conversations between objects and people within their own private worlds. Unlike Spence and Martin's albums and Emin's film, Chapter Two and the cyanotype album are fictional. Where Spence and Martin set their narratives within a stable family album format, Chapter Two is presented as if the photographs and labels have fallen out of an album and then have been put back in the wrong order. This process ensures that these 'snapshots' open the voices of Chapter Two to wider interpretation.

Why I Never Became a Dancer, Stills, Tracey Emin (1995)

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Although accepted as a gathering of real events, the only free and effective way an album communicates is via fiction. My *Florilegia* is a phenomenological dialogue with Atkins' albums and the kernel of an impulse to tell fairy tales. The French author Madame d'Aulnoy (1850-1705) invented the term 'fairy tale' to describe her popular stories, using the name as a cover for gossip about figures of society. At once *truth* and *fiction*, her pseudo-biographies were described as fraudulent but were nonetheless consumed voraciously by educated Europeans (Ness et al., 2017). The fairy tale often sublimates the unpalatable in a story. This is a process I engage with in Chapter Two, where I communicate subliminally by intertwining objects, places and people that could have their origins in fantasy or reality. Chapter Two addresses taboo subjects with the innocence of a childlike narrator whose naïve persona allows more to be said. This, like the album format, allows me to eschew responsibility for what is written. Atkins adopts a similarly naïve persona when donating her albums, allowing them, and Atkins herself, to enter the libraries of great institutions unexamined.

In Chapter Two and *Florilegia*, the format of the album is used to create haptic stories. The viewer/handler makes connections without any key to assembling the gatherings in a cohesive reading or order. Chapter Two and the *Florilegia* album present an open collection of tactile and visual gatherings that act as conduits for further exploration of Atkins and her cyanotypes.

> Women's albums operated as tactile as much as visual objects. They juxtapose photographic images and other mnemonic traces, always pointing to something that no longer is – as it was when photographed – with the here-and-now of tactile culture of the period.
>
> (Di Bello, 2007: 3)

There is also a connection here between the nature of touch, the female and the photographic object. Constance Classen writes in 'Touch in the Museum', an essay in her edited volume *The Book of Touch* (2005), that touching artefacts, handling the objects in drawers and holding albums was part of the experience of the Wunderkammer before they became assimilated into the modern museum's system of looking but not touching. Chapter Two and the *Florilegia* album invite touch and participation in the form of the handler's physical

interaction with the cyanotype prints and the reader's interior interaction with Chapter Two. 'The interiority of the enclosed world tends to reify the interiority of the viewer' (Stewart, 2007:68). The album, too, works through the creation of interiority. Chapter Two evokes this interiority, allowing the interior worlds of the reader and the narrators to enter a dialogue. Atkins also uses this process of interiorisation and the tools of bastardisation, snipping and cutting to assemble her own album of 'tribes or families'. Her albums take gatherings from outside the close environment of her domestic interior to create a miniature world in an album, and by inference they create her own interior world.

The gathering, cutting and assembling of the album is a chimeric process and its narrative is offered to the reader like a fantastical beast. With an undefined relation to truth, the album holds both *naturalia* and *artificialia* at once.

Chimera, Natural History Museum Venice (c. 1600)

These female voices speak as chimeras to communicate their own fairy tales (and the chimera is a female beast). Italo Calvino describes the directness and almost pre-literary nature of the fairy tale as 'quickness', since it burns into the reader's unconscious (Bartoloni, 2003: 79). This is what the chimeric album can do. Discussing Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber' (1990), Marina Warner considers the bloody chamber itself to become a Wunderkammer and an image of the unconscious. Warner notes its chimeric status, and describes Carter's short story as 'a capriccio about the freedom of fiction compared with science, the limits of

investigation, and, ultimately, the misalignment of artistic fantasy and scientific experiment' (Malbert, Dillon & Warner, 2013: 29). As in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the interior descriptions in 'The Bloody Chamber' echo the interior thoughts of the heroine and conjure the chimeras of the Wunderkammer, the fantasy specimens created by grafting several taxidermy specimens together. After the Enlightenment, *Naturalia* and *Artificialia*, objective and subjective analysis, became the binary modes of modern science. Atkins exploits this pre-Enlightenment crossover, hiding her *artificialia/naturalia* chimeras as *naturalia* in public institutions. In doing this, Atkins' album contains aspects of what Allan Sekula terms 'the truth of magic' and 'the truth of science' (Sekula, 1975: 84-109). By analysing Atkins' work objectively, her hidden stories and her subversive acts of storytelling have been missed. I argue with my *Florilegia* and Chapter Two that to appreciate Atkins' work fully and effectively, a fictional response is required. In creating her cyanotype albums, Atkins spliced seductive chimeras and concealed the form of their construction through the cyanotype process. By making a print facsimile of the counterfeit plant specimen, she smoothed out the cut surface of the collage and concealed its adulterated nature.

> Thing-making is not bricolage; chimeras are not mere composites. However disparate, fragmentary, and even contradictory their parts may appear to be to the analytically minded historian, things worthy of the name must have a physiognomy. It is precisely the tension between their chimerical composition and their unified gestalt that distinguishes the talkative thing from the speechless sort.
>
> (Daston, 2004: 24)

By appreciating Atkins' works not as albums of vegetal specimens or as visual supports to her father's scientific works but as albums of storytelling chimeras, the albums and Atkins can speak. By returning to the methodology of the amateur and using the material of the album, I suggest a new fictive and multi-sensory reading of Atkins' work. Between the collaged stories of *Florilegia* and Chapter Two, shifting incipient narratives offer themselves up. Trying to locate these stories is like attempting to grasp an object underwater: they are neither *artficialia* nor *naturalia*, but chimeras of both.

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Florilegia

Chapter 3

Susannah got out her *Flower Fairies* folder. 'I've got really nice paper for this week's SOS. Granny Eavis gave it to me and I thought we could add a pressed flower. Maybe some vetch from Wales.'

We wrote the same thing as we always wrote. Susannah had the nicest handwriting and she was good at organising things, she and Esther were both head girls at their school later, my mother had been too. That's why it was bad that my mother got pregnant by the English teacher at 17 and why she had to move to Uganda. My sister had her hair done like Princess Anne for the head girl photo and the silk shirt she wore matched the peach-lemon roses (*Peace Rosa*) on the table next to her folded hands.

'Please help us.' It said.

Overstrand,
The Esplanade,
Cressington Park,
Liverpool.

'Please only talk to any young girl if you come. No adults.'

We signed our names in a circle like the Quakers did, and it formed a garland of hope. Esther got out the pile of library books, we found the best bit in each book. The bit where they put daisies in their pubic hair was a good bit we decided for *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and we put the note in there. The writing was miniature, like the note that the mice leave for the *Tailor of Gloucester*, to ask for more cherry silk twist.

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Sister, hair & purse, Annabel Dover, (2014)

It was freezing cold the morning my sister was born and I could see my breath while I sat up in bed. Later when she grew, she had thick heavy hair that felt like a horse's mane. Her skin was smooth and freckle-less. Her legs, when tanned, had blonde down on them that grew in circular patches like wind swirls on a sand dune. Her teeth were square and healthy and her nails short and clean. She never wore shoes unless made to and would float in the bath for hours in a trance like, she said, the Lady of Shallot. She meant Ophelia.

She was 11 when he came to stay. He wrote about us in his diaries. He said he dreamt about her when she was born. He had a photo mother gave him of us doing Eurhythmics in the orchard. From boyhood, he had been in tune with nature; he made drawings and described to us the sound of rain on leaves in the rainforests and the glitter sparkle of snowy mountains. He discovered new species of bats and birds, he knew all about bird lice too and how sometimes the lice make the birds go crazy. He was a chairman of important societies and there was a room that had been named after him in the Natural History Museum. He was a war hero and a spy. He killed and stuffed a giant African forest hog and sent it back to

England, where it was named after him, *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni*. Later, he discovered the Afghan Snowfinch. It lives in the northern parts of the Hindu Kush and makes its nest on the ground, lining it with hair. He named it after my sister*, Montifringilla theresae*. Then he named a bird he found in Morocco after her too *Riparia rupestris theresa* , and ten others after that.

The Collector, dir. William Wyler, (1965)

They said his second wife shot herself in the head in the highlands in a terrible accident. My sister stayed living at home at Kensington Gardens. He paid for a tunnel to be built between their houses. My mother never spoke to him directly after that, always through someone else, even if he was in the room. He wrote his diary on loose leafed paper and they found the paper was different on the entry when he had written about making fun of Hitler to his face. The diaries are still in the Bodleian Library. He rediscovered a Forest Owlet (Athene Blewitti) after it had been extinct for 70 years. In 1995, the Natural History Museum experts at Tring analysed all the specimens that he'd donated and discovered they were stuffed with the same cotton as the specimens that had been stolen from the museum in 1952.

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In 1850 Florence Nightingale saved a baby owl from some boys who were tormenting it in Athens, smuggled it home, and christened it Athena. To be persuaded to enter a cage, the owl had to be mesmerised, but she soon became a devoted companion. She would perch on her mistress's finger for feeds as well as bow and curtsy on a table. On hearing of Florence's imminent departure for the Crimea, the family left Athena shut in an attic. Starved of the attention she craved, the owl, it seems, died of a fit, leaving her owner heartbroken.

The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, keeps a tall owl punchbowl in its basement. It was cracked in the San Francisco earthquake of 1922. Later, on the day of the earthquake, my grandmother bought my grandfather some pyjamas. She liked the word 'pyjamas' both Urdu and Persian and she felt that though he would dislike them, they would help her feel more in control in the bedroom.

The Marie Rose was being pulled from her seabed in Portsmouth and I was lying in my pyjamas under the cat, getting hot. I was off school because it was PE that day and because my mother was lonely. I was colouring in a scene in my Gideon's bible, my father said we could defile that book and no other because it had religious mush in it and it was free. I was adding red pencil to one of the nuns in high heels, smoking cigarettes and drinking out of champagne saucers, when my mother called me urgently. I wondered if she had cut herself. Often, she would faint and we would have to cover her eyes quickly with something, a jumper or a hanky. Once I placed a black tulip petal over each eye so she couldn't see the wound. Oddly if she cut herself on a rose or doing something in the garden and hadn't seen it, she would merely say 'oh have I?' Like you had offended her by pointing out she had a huge glistening ruby streak on her hands or face. She'd absent mindedly take the (blue) silk scarf off her head and wind it around her earthy fingers; frowning as she talked about supper and what food we had in the house. Usually there was an ugly potato left in the muddy paper sack, sometimes the water would be boiling and I'd wash the potato to find it was only a lump of soil. Then there was just Ryvita and margarine and sometimes cress. My sister grew cress on an old soft nappy we used to have for comfort, it was called Terry the nap. Sometimes there was my father's *patum peperium* if it was near Christmas and we were careful how we

took off a layer with the knife. My eldest sister showed us a technique that involved patting the edges down with a cotton wool bud and building a false wall.

Churchill Life Magazine (1946)

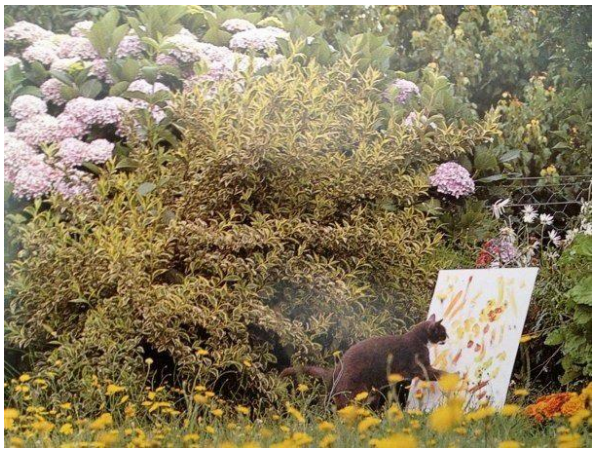

Image from *Cat Painters* (1985)

My mother yelped with excitement and the dog gulped and wagged her tail and ran towards her, the cat jumped off my bed. I saw her sandy tail aloft and her pink anus disappear downstairs. There was a little boy on the esplanade on the patch of grass where I played with my Indian squaw play people. He was in a blue cardigan and a *Star Wars* t-shirt, the kind my boyfriend Philip had worn at my birthday party and my mother had called cheap. Later she said that his whole family had square heads and my sister agreed. The little boy was wet all over and was strapped into a mud filled pram. His shoes must have been ruined. His mother and his sister had been rescued at Birkenhead. He had been pulled down by the weight of the pram. The police put a tent up on the Navajo Plains. It looked like it was made of bin bags and was like the ones the electricity people put up but a different shape and not striped. It reminded me of the black uniforms SS guards wore in films, and the door flapped open like a large leather lapel. People crouched down and went in and out of it wearing the same suits the Rentokil people wore when they killed the rats. Each rat was inflated except one that was in perfect condition. She had dried out like a kestrel in an Egyptian tomb and I kept her for several years under a Tiny Tears pillow, her whiskers stuck out behind Baby Louise's blonde plait, in the wicker pram with the seersucker curtains. I never told my friends when they pushed the dolls around. The rat only got discovered when I hid a quarter of a packet of custard creams. I don't like the taste of the biscuits but I like the embossed fern croziers that pattern them.

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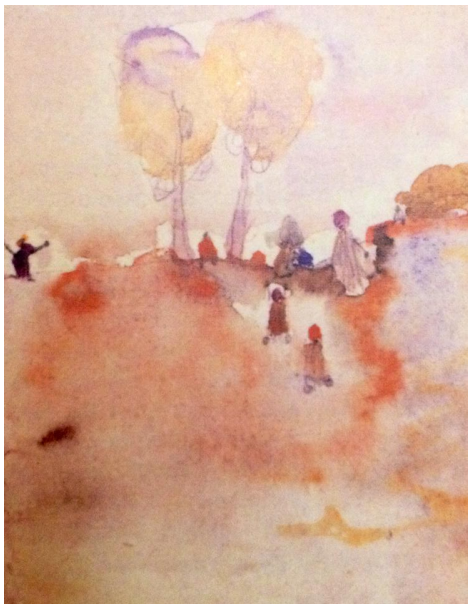

Figures in Pink Landscape, Peggy Sommerville, aged three (1921)

At night, I lay on my mother, her heartbeat was so much slower than mine, she told me that the body got copied like a drawing with carbon paper every few years and each time the drawing gets weaker and weaker, humans come from the stars and return to the stars. She'd stroke my ears and leave a nightlight candle burning. All the different organs had to work together and if one gave up it could be patched up with another person's and then Guardian reading vegetarians suddenly woke up wanting a beef burger and with a love of Margaret Thatcher's ankles. My father was a Guardian reading vegetarian. I woke up in total blackness and she'd gone.

The sound of gunshot often came at about 5 am. It only happened when Biscuit was on heat and her blonde thighs turned pink. My father would be sitting naked by the upstairs sitting room window. That's when he shot Rufous, the Red Setter that belonged to the Nightingales. We weren't allowed to say this when we went for a dinner party at their house. The chocolate mousse was delicious just like the one in *Rosemary's Baby* and I was scared to eat it. Then I thought about it and realised I didn't care. I knew about things like that and I'd prefer to be unconscious when it happened anyway. The Nightingale father was a surgeon and he had tried quickly to save Rufous he said by sewing him up. 'What does Rufous mean?' I said, knowing because it was one of the crossword questions my father had written.

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He'd cut out squared paper at night and lay it on the floor when he made the concise crossword. In the morning, the curtains would be closed and there'd be the leftovers of a drum of rollmops. Coins from his pocket would have fallen down the side of the sofa and lots of screwed up paper lay in piles on the rug. It was like an angry otter had been dwelling there. He was furious if we guessed any of his answers. In the end the man at *The Times* sacked him anyway because he'd said the Anglo-Saxon word to his wife. I shared my father's guilt because I'd kicked the Nightingale's tortoise Balthazar, to see what he'd do. 'It means red, like your hair, Mr. Rufous had hair just as glorious as yours.'

Nutshell Series of Unexplained Death, Frances Lee Glesner (1940s)

Leopold Blaschka and son Rudolph Blaschka are making 847 life-size glass plants for Harvard University. More lifelike and more painstaking than a Dutch still life, these glass botanical specimens feature decaying leaves and blossoms, visiting bees and fungal infections. These plants are neither scientific, too singularly perfect to study; nor art, too much like copies to be anything other than kitsch. These objects, designed to aid classification of species, are themselves hard to classify. Originally called 'scientific models', now referred to as 'the glass flowers' their role has subtly changed since conception. The models have rarely left Harvard, when they do they are transported by hearse.

The Blaschkas counterfeited botanical forms and modelled jellied delights: ruby petals, sapphire stamens and the crosier of an emerald fern. When visitors such as the Queen of

Sweden came to visit Rudolph in his workshop, she was amazed that he worked in temperatures of 95 degrees with the windows and doors sealed so that no flicker of air could disturb the flame used to manipulate the glass. Many others tried to visit and commission plants for themselves, or to discover the 'secret' method of making these objects.

In 1941, a professor at Harvard heard of the bombing of Pearl Harbour and made the glass plant cases bombproof. Pilgrims still visit the glass flowers and are instructed to walk softly, to breathe gently and to stay, as with the reptile house at London Zoo, away from the glass. The glass plants of South America, the Royal gardens of Pillnitz and of the Blaschkas' own garden at Hosterwitz are still growing in cabinets at the Botanical Museum of Harvard.

Before she leaves for London Anna flattens the Mullein leaf. She had tried sleeping with some under her pillow but it did nothing to reduce her dreams. As a child, she and Anne knew it brought back a child kidnapped by the fairies and they kept a sticky wick rolled from the hairs on its leaves by each of their beds in case the other was taken. A necromancer's plant, it had been mentioned in the recent Bridget Cleary case. Beautiful, educated and childless, Bridget Cleary's neighbours realised she was a changeling and that they must retrieve her soul from the fairies of Kylnagranagh ringfort by dosing her with Mullein. She died the next day and the Unionist newspapers called the villagers, 'savages'. Anna wraps the prints in brown paper, wondering if this was how a nursemaid dresses a baby in a nappy. Her hands are smudged with Prussian Blue. Unseen until morning, developing in the daylight before she woke. The dirty secret is locked into her hands, Lady Macbeth-like for days; a blue midwife in the night.

Anna knows how to get to the Linnaean Society, the Royal Society and Albertopolis. She has waited outside to meet her father at all the institutions she will visit today, placing her arm in his when they walked away. A Milkwood seed is sucked into the train carriage from the marsh outside. She goes to grab it to make a wish but it dodges her and floats through the open sliding door, deeper down the train corridor. A damsel fly buzzes in and out of the window. Rose Bay Willowherb, Buddleia from China and thistles swing in the wind outside. A vixen is curled around itself like a cat in the sun on the railway sidings. Her eyes cautiously

looking out from behind her feather duster-like brush as the train passes her noisily. Anna's string bag, wicker basket, portmanteau and card portfolio rest on the velvet seat opposite her.

Linnaeus Statue, Linnean Society (2010)

The train arrives at London Bridge. Anna's face is grey from the smoke and she wipes it with spit and a hanky in the convenience glass. She hands the parcels over, they are covered in the basket with a cloth in case of rain, and look like fresh bread for the poor. At each institution, she goes through the ritual and describes why her donation would mean so much to her father. She waits outside as they nod their heads and take the packages, usually a librarian she has never met before. At the Royal Institute, there is speckle of sleet and she is invited in to the hall where she stands on the black and white chequered floor tiles. Wondering whether to remove her gloves or not and wishing she had put powder on her face to counteract the cold flush of carmine she felt spreading across her cheeks and moistening nose. She tries to explain to the assistant Mr. Soames why she is giving him these prints. He reassures her that her father's letter had explained her desire to present a gift in the future and that Herschel had taken her under his wing. They ask after her husband at the Linnaean society. She wondered what they would do with the prints and how long they would keep them, if they kept them at all. They enjoyed the memoirs of her father and were glad she had written it. Did she enjoy it? Yes, she said as she enjoyed writing her novels too. He seemed not to hear or if he did understand this comment, perhaps he knew not of her other books.

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In 2012, the librarian in the Linnaean Society said the highlight of her job was collecting the Mallow, the Scarlet Pimpernel and the Speedwell on her walk from her garden to the Swiss Cottage tube station. Wrapped in kitchen foil with a soggy plug of cotton wool at its base, she wound it with thread whilst sitting on the train. She filled the glass tumbler with water from the library kitchen, snipping and arranging the flowers before she had taken her handbag off. Placing them at Linnaeus' feet, she said reminded her of Sunday School and the jobs she and her sisters were given by the Church Warden. Among postcards from fellow librarians, bookmarks and a list of how staff liked their tea, Sylvia found my pile of Anna Atkins' volumes. She wheeled them out on a trolley and left me to sit down and look at them, resting them on a sapphire-blue, velvet cushion.

Darwin's Drawing Room, Down House (2012)

London did smell today, Anna thought, but not as bad as the Great Stink of 1858. Joseph Bazalgette father of eleven children, who suffered a nervous breakdown when designing the railways has been called upon to design sewers that would solve the problem identified by Jon Snow. Joseph Bazalgette is the Great grandfather of Ian Willoughby Bazalgette, known as Baz. Baz recovered from tuberculosis at the Royal Sea-Bathing Hospital, Margate before

going on to train as a Pilot Officer in 1940. The Victoria Cross he won posthumously is on display in the RAF museum, Hendon beside the goggles of a kamikaze pilot. His aunt Maureen heard of his death when she had recovered. She'd been taken on a stretcher to St. Thomas' Hospital during the Blitz. The stretcher along with many others was made into a fence outside Rockingham council flats, Southwark, twenty years later. Maureen walks past the stretcher on her way to the library but doesn't see it.

Minou the Monkey, Annabel Dover (2006)

The pipes Joseph Bazalgette designs are laid by navvies from Co. Carshall and don't have to be repaired until 2013, the morning that Margaret Thatcher dies in her bed at the Ritz. Soon after Michael Winner dies on the loo after eating bad oysters and Esther Williams dies in her sleep, in LA. Her ashes are scattered in the Pacific Ocean. Fatberg, 15 tonnes of human waste, lard and wet wipes grows so big that it cracks the pipes and threatens to push out of the manholes in Kingston.

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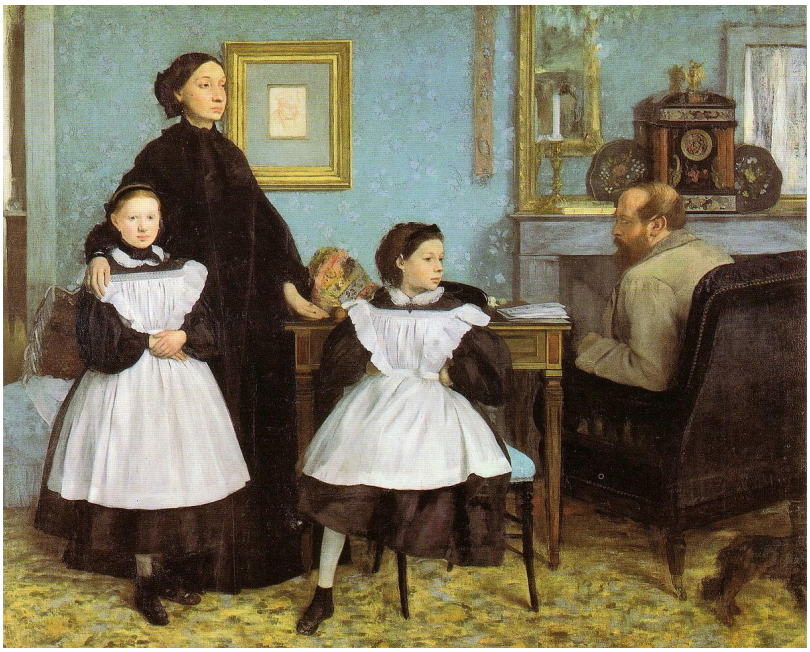
On the 15th April 1912 survivors of RMS *Titanic* describe the band playing *Abide with Me* as they sank into the North Atlantic Ocean. The first instrument discovered in 1985 is the piano 24-year-old Theodore Ronald Brailey, from Walthamstow played. His body was never discovered and remains on the seabed with the rest of the Titanic. Edith Cavell sings *Abide with Me* in her cell the evening before she is shot by the Germans in 1915.



The Bellilli Family, Degas (1858-1867)

When he gets off the plane at LaGuardia airport in Queens, Nixon takes a taxi into Manhattan. At a red light, the driver of another taxi shouts, 'Hey did you hear that Kennedy's been assassinated?' Later he sees the coffin like a fish kettle being wheeled from the plane.

Richard Nixon sits down at the end of the dining table with the unnecessary slippery cloth. He looks at the ham, new potatoes and sliced watery green beans. He picks up the fork but can't feel it. He can't feel anything apart from the warm flood of urine in his pants. After a stroke his brain shuts down and he slithers into a coma. He dies at 9:08 p.m. on April 22, 1994. *Abide with Me* is played at his funeral.

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Gravy Browning was in the garden being raped by the huge black and white cat we called Ernest Hemingway the Fairground Toy. He was named after a huge panda teddy my sister Susannah had tried to win me at Otterspool. My sister was brilliant at shooting and she hit the box of smarties 5 times and still it wouldn't fall over. 'It's made of concrete' my sister Hannah said and my sister Ruth did a jump like you would onto an inflatable bed in a swimming pool and tried to grab it. 'It's nailed on!' she shouted victoriously. The boy behind the range came out and punched her in the eye and told her to fuck off. My sister's ran off apart from Esther because she had me on her shoulders. 'You're a cretin', Esther said to the boy, it was the worst thing we were called. He looked mystified. I had finished gnawing off the string that held the giant red sugar dummy from the ceiling by then and we went to find my sister with the black eye. She sucked the dummy silently till we'd walked the 8 miles home. It was the size of a baby's dummy by the time we reached the Esplanade. We walked up the steps and opened the door, she put a finger in her mouth and pulled out a bright red glassy nipple. She put it in my mouth and I swallowed it.

After delivering the final volume of cyanotypes Anna Atkins walks past Fortnum and Mason, she sees a young girl with hair tied back in golden ringlet cocoons. They bounce with a high sheen and sensuality that belongs in a seraglio. Atkins thinks of the triangle of hair at the base of John's back. Like a mermaid, when wet, it forms a single pattern that would be called a shingle in the 1930s when Eva Braun had one and a Marcel Wave when Veronica Lake shook her golden waterfall. Later, by the time Andy Warhol was drawing the osculatory waves of hair on his lover’s feet, it was called a Finger Perm. The pattern looks like marks made by a rake through snow, fingers drawn through cream, a fork on a linen table cloth. It is this thought; of the hair at the base of his back that makes her write 'Abide with Me' in her letter to John Pelly. It is this letter, received three months later at the plantation in Honduras, that makes him return to Kent.

When I was almost thirteen years old my mother moved to Vatican City Rome to mend Papal robes. My father disappeared. My sisters were at university. My mother left me a copy of her signature so that I could fake school letters and I moved into Canon Sherlock’s house. The Canon had died two weeks previously. The shape of his body was still imprinted on the ticking sheet upstairs, a well like the dip made for water in flour for pastry, in the mattress.

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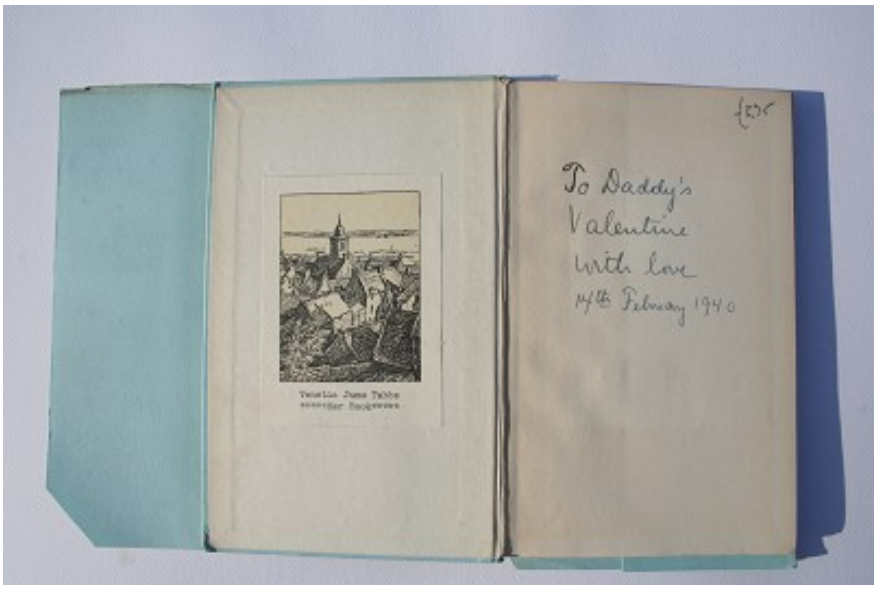
His rubbish was still in the bin, mostly paper and pelargonium heads, maybe he had given up eating. Radio 4 was turned down but on. And so, I adopted his habits. From a very strict upbringing to no rules at all I started to live like the ninety-one-year-old Canon who had just died. The ship was waiting for a new captain and I was it. Tinned peaches in syrup next to Birds powdered custard. I made the obvious connection, tried them together and liked them. Post war treats for a child born in 1975. I turned the radio up and enjoyed Humphrey Lyttelton on *Sorry I haven't a clue* and several other radio programmes. *The Times* that came through the door for a while I read over several days. As I did with: *Lolita*, *Pnin* and the poems of Robert Graves. The cat seemed to accept me as the new master. There were drawers and drawers of things, even a table that I thought had false pockets opened and yielded a silver dinner service asleep on cobalt velvet beds.



Daddy's Valentine, Annabel Dover (2001)

Wine stains on the wall
The rope by the stairs shiny with grease
A carved fireplace that had belonged in the first Lloyds bank
Bulbs in the spring

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The threadbare cat used to pee by the fireplace and I guessed its name began with E, ‘Worm E” it said in a seven-year-old engagement diary and he was known by me as ‘Epuss and Mr E’ ever after. I found out that Epuss was called Edgeware several years after he died. Epuss had brought a copper pipe slowworm in from the compost heap he briefly returned to kitten before the excitement killed him. Along the corridor there were portraits of past Sherlocks, dark etchings with Spaniel sideburn wigs. A statue of Christ hung on the wall at the end of the landing and gave the impression that you were having an out of body experience as you mounted the stairs. The dark diamond leaded windows peered out from under the spiders’ webs, slugs, snails, caterpillars and moths that lived in the overhanging thatch. I never knew what nationality, sex or person I was until I lived here and became a recently deceased Canon.

'Irish!' He says. 'No, more boring than that, but my grandmother was Danish.' 'Where were you born?' 'Liverpool.' 'I love Liverpool.' He sings ‘You'll Never Walk Alone’. He straps my arms down flat to the gurney and my waist too. He picks up a green cloth apron 'this goes over your kolpos.' 'vagina!' the nurse corrects him. He wraps the Masonic shroud around me like a nappy. He's still singing. 'Yassas' I say to the nurse. 'You speak Greek?' 'Only a few words in Greek.' I say, but I realise I'm already dreaming and the ice cold anaesthetic turns into the cream of an eclair in the fridge.

I dream of my father driving and I'm behind him in the Peugeot. He's been invited to my nephew's Bar Mitzvah. ‘He's a paedophile’, I try to shout but my mouth is as dry as autumn leaves and it whispers out and sounds like 'Bon Bon', the first French word I learnt.

There are bright lights and I'm wearing a seatbelt strapped very firmly to my stomach. I scratch the cannula. 'There is something wrong, we need an English speaker to explain.' Says the nurse, her huge eyelashes cast shadows on her cheeks. There's a mint green jockstrap on my blanket. The nurse picks it up and I realise it's a surgeon's mask. She looks at me and laughs. 'You told us you loved children when you were asleep.' 'Oh, did I? When my mother had me, I was so big she had a haemorrhage and she had a conversation with the surgeon about gardening.' 'Paidiá filia, you whispered as we cut your womb; you said it in Greek.

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Crown Street, Annabel Dover, (2006)

In October 1976, asked to name three books he had been reading, Nabakov listed: a translation of Dante's *Inferno*, an illustrated guide to North American butterflies and a book of his own, "The not-quite-finished manuscript of a novel". Recovering from illness he had, in his febrile state been reading his not-quite-finished book aloud to an audience of: "peacocks, pigeons, my long dead parents, two cypresses, several young nurses crouching around, and a family doctor so old as to be almost invisible".

I drive past *Kettle's Yard*. The Artist in residence recently made a squid for the bath, wild flowers on the bed, toadstools in the cupboard. Jim Ede's aesthetic needed, she felt, to be thwarted by nature. His latent homosexuality, so closely protected by the current volunteers is sublimated throughout the house. Now like Ophelia's bitter end, his bed is a resting place. She placed a small pornographic image of a vigorous youth, TE Lawrence, the object of his heart, resting between the webbing of the bed base, to be found, and no doubt concealed, by conservators later.

Later I find a garden with weeds at least as high as 6ft. There is a man in underpants thrashing them down. It's 5am in a village near Cambridge, famous for Moses the giant, who was rumoured to cut off the heads of bad children and replace them with a cabbage. The underpants are white and worn and have a rip down the back, he is wearing flip flops too. It's misty and I planned only to take the rubbish and check it, to see if he was still alive. There is

a crossword and our initials are written in a circle on the side, in his Parker pen calligraphic script. He must be in his 70s. He has a paunch and a huge fuzz of white hair and beard. He looks as though his face has been shaved out in the middle. He has a low stoop and walks into the house with the bandy gait of a baboon. He opens the door and I introduce myself, 'Your daughter.' He knows which one because of my hair colour he says. He is religious now, he talks about Venice; it is his spiritual home. I sit on a pouffe with a gash in its side. It always was too pumped up, like a swollen sheep belly. Gabriel Oak must have come along and stabbed it in the stomach I thought.

The only recognition I could feel was with the objects in his house. The Moroccan leather pouffe that I sat on puffed out sawdust and extruded shreds of French newspaper from the 1950s, felt instantly familiar to me and I connected with the physical memory of my five-year-old self. The photograph of me sitting on it, a flat croissant of leather, my red hair; the fact that makes me sure it is me. The corner cupboard that had never been attached to the wall remains on the floor. It had belonged to Ellen Terry, grandmother of his second wife; the pastel peony drawing made by my father's mythical first wife, Iris; the cycle he fell off on the ice; the huge Liver bird urn that our lodger, Professor Zibbert received when he retired. My mother used to put black tulips in the urn. I found an inchworm in there once. I took it with me to see the Pope, it got stuck in the gap of my smocked dress and I squashed it trying to get it out. My mother thought I was crying because I was overcome by seeing the Pope, this reinforced her belief that I was a changeling, over-secretive and psychic. The urn is empty now bar two bamboo sticks. I saw the tea caddy that my sister brought back from Valencia and his velour wing back chair that still smelt of cigars fifteen years after he'd given them up.

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Greenfinch Nest with Confetti, Norwich Castle Museum (1865)

The Victorian Schoolhouse he lives in is composed of years of remnants shoring up upon one another. It has rising damp and 'Jews Ear' growing in it. It has four shaved corners to prevent children hurting themselves on the sharp red brick that provides home for masonry bees. The sulphur yellow of the walls shows through from the 1960s, the Beryl blue of the 1950s beneath that. Darwin described the shadows of the glaciers he saw in Tierra del Fuego as Beryl Blue; a reference to *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours* a visual taxonomy of colours, which he had on board the Beagle. This colour was divided into animal, vegetable and mineral with a colour that corresponded to each of these categories: the same colour as the beauty spot on wing of a Teal Drake, Celandine, Magaritaria and the mineral Beryl.

It reminded me of the catacombs of Paris in there, with its walls of compact skulls. There was just enough space for my father to walk through the newspapers that filled every room of the house. Like a badger's set he had carved out compartments. One compartment housed his chair. It was on the dais of a textured rug, maybe a rag-rug, I couldn't work it out. I couldn't get close enough because the pouf was in another cell-like compartment and I couldn't see easily around the corner. The geological strata of the newspapers that surrounded me must have covered at least thirty years. The Vitruvian dimensions of this habitat were fitted to my father alone. I was shorter and when I walked through the tunnels there was a gap above me, my head was in a coffin. 'Enough space for the skull not to make a sound during the service', an undertaker had told me.

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On April 8, 1947, workman Artie Matthews found the body of Langley Collyer just 10 feet from where Homer died. His partially decomposed body was being eaten by rats. A suitcase and three huge bundles of newspapers covered his body. Langley had been crawling through their newspaper tunnel to bring food to his paralysed brother when one of his own booby traps fell and crushed him. Homer, blind and paralysed, starved to death several days later. The stench detected on the street had been emanating from Langley, the younger brother.

Stamford School May Queen, (1968)

From the pouf I see a postcard of Versailles. I look at it while he talks. When Versailles was built, this ridiculously grand palace, with acres of looking-glass, gold and malachite had no water closet and King and servant alike often shat on the Pavonazza marble stairs. Next to it is an engraving of Venice propped on a pile of squash racquets. Venice is a chimera, a city of over two hundred 15th century palaces, aching with glittering, cut-glass chandeliers, floating on a milky lagoon that percolates with rotting vegetal matter. In a Venetian carnival, the fool is king for the day and the king is a fool. Literature has acknowledged the disquieting beauty of Venice; the liquorice slug that trickles down the forehead of Gustav von Aschenbach, dying as lust devours him amid the stench of cholera; the red anorak of the longed-for daughter, and murderous dwarf; the bloodthirsty Shylock. My father looks to see what I am looking at and says he has a house in Venice now. He talks in Italian now too, with a rococo rolling of his ‘r’s; a decorative trifle on the putrefying past he has constructed, submerged again now, a ghost in the narrow stone walls of the city. Thomas Mann was staying at the *Grand Hotel des Bains*

on the Lido when he espied Baron Władysław Moes, so his wife tells interviewers in the 1970s and he let his imagination consume him to near destruction on this island. It is within the atmosphere of this overwhelming and supernatural island shimmering in the ozone, above the lagoon at the *Grand Hotel des Bains* that he writes of his longing for the boy in a Sailor-suit, Paris.

Before I leave, I look closer at the rug under the chair. It is the only item I don't recognise. I realise the rug is composed of hundreds of apple cores entwined and fluffy. A rat king of discarded fruit that had become a living breathing organism, a unique interior addition. 'I like your rug. Is it Axminster?' I ask as I leave and shake his hand.

At school, whenever I fell over and skinned my knee in the car park or cut my chin on the concrete steps outside the woodwork room, other pupils thought I was crying because it hurt. I tried a few different things to cover up the wounds: calamine, talc, powdered mustard, the blood just absorbed Max Factor face powder again and again, and the wound came into focus as soon as you blotted it out. Poster paint mixed with PVA was good if you could keep totally still but cracked as soon as you moved. A group of people from the theatre came to school once and showed us pan stick, and that was good too but the woman saw me studying it intently and whipped it away. 'Want to cover your freckles, do you?' 'No' I said, mentally adding another thing to the list of things to feel neurotic about. My father had only just told me that Medieval people thought redheads were born due to sex during menstruation.

It would happen on Sundays. Ruth and I would have wrestled on the spare bed, she would be Big Daddy and I'd be some lacklustre opponent like Davey Boy Smith or Gentleman Chris Adams. We would pull the blanket straight afterwards like surgeons straightening the operation area up. I would look at the forbidden *Reader's Digest Atlas* in my father's study, 'Wonders of the World' was my favourite page and showed close-up photographs of rocks and minerals. We would listen out for the Peugeot on the gravel and wait in the sitting room doing some stunt homework or pretend to read. Then my mother would come in and say whose turn it was first. We had to go in separately.

Years later I bought a copy of the same Atlas on Ebay

> :-) Never done it before, but I've just been into PayPal and requested a payment of £13.50 which (apparently) they will request from you. Once you've paid it let me know (they may – I'm not sure) & I'll mark it as paid and post to you. I hope you get a lot of use from the book, it was my sons, he was killed in an accident 9½ years ago aged 24. :-(

My father would be sitting on the bed. Sometimes he'd say. 'You're too early.' This was the worst thing because instead of being allowed to go, you had to wait while he took his sweaty squash tracksuit off and go upstairs in his ludicrously short towelling robe. Then he'd come down naked. My mother would bring him in some dandelion root coffee (she would dig the dandelions up from the lawn to make it). He'd make us sit at her once plush 1970s vanity unit. It had dressing room lights but only one of them worked now, and a unit for a shaver, but my father had a beard. I didn't see a man shave until I got the overnight train from Carlisle to the New Forest a few years later and a man in the carriage shaved with a big electric razor that looked like a bar of black soap.

He'd get the Swann Morton (established, 1932) box out of his bedside cupboard while we had to silently get down to our pants. Next, he'd put a knew blade in the scalpel holder and starting from our head look for scabs. I presume it was the same for each of us. We never actually said. My sister still has Krakatoa as we used to call it on the top of her foot, a sort of Tumulus left from my father's excavations. He'd wanted to be a doctor but left school at 13.

I was the only real blood daughter of my father. Their real father, Francis, was a man that my father wanted to be: cultured, wealthy, with a First from Trinity College and a famous father, relations that were in *Burke's Peerage*, and a great uncle with a colour named after him, Lovett Green. Most importantly they were eminent Victorians. A Victorian man was my father's natural blueprint he felt. When we visited the V&A he related to the Victorian chairs, the wallpaper, the literature and the moral codex. It was, he felt, the beginning of logic and the appreciation of its inherent value in all things. It was the beginning too of symbolism and the flourishing of forbidden love. Each Christmas my father borrowed the TV and VHS player from the children's home that he ran. There were three videos we could watch. *Tess* (of the d'Urbervilles) (1979), *French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981) and my father on *The Pyramid*

Game (1985) with Duncan Goodhew and Sally James, who he said was a thick, stupid woman with synthetic fluff for brains.

My father had a dream to go on *Mastermind* with a specialist subject of Darwin, or second choice Thomas Hardy. We were in the room with the borrowed television when we heard Magnus Magnusson announce that the contestant Robert Hughes, a retired policeman from London was to do Darwin, and then John Moorhouse, a GP from Surrey was to do Thomas Hardy. We all left the room gradually, knowing that a violent rage would ensue, not least because my father had always wanted to be a GP often putting Dr. illegally before his name. He also despised policeman, and said they were all cretins (his estranged brother Nigel was a detective, and this, he said was proof above all else that they took any idiot). My father thought that I was 'educationally subnormal' as I wrote his name in mirror writing, on his leg cast. He had broken his kneecap chasing one of the borstal boys over a brick wall.

A hot day in Liverpool meant that my dark-skinned sisters would bake on top of the tarmac and felt roof of the garage. They were not allowed up there but my father couldn't see them. They would make ice-lollies out of the vermouth that the Polish lodger had left in the larder and take a radio and diaries onto the roof along with a hairbrush and some Canadian Ginger Ale lip-gloss. If it was June I would take a Quality Street jar Ramona gave me, in the hope I could lasso a swarm of bees into it.

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay.
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.

Esther would draw dresses and dress patterns, which she would cut out. Hannah would write secretly and so would Susannah. I would draw and paint and have Plasticine. Esther would make us lunch out of Smash and Angel Delight and anything powdered that we could buy from the shop where Ramona worked. We were jealous of Ramona, as her father gave her so

much freedom and were shocked by our neighbour who said that Indian men were autocratic. One summer I picked some of the weeds that had crept through the felt on the roof. I pressed them and made a card for my botanist grandmother. I kept it for months, ready for her visit. My father had grapefruit for breakfast and my mother let me keep the pips and grow them in the airing cupboard under my sisters' knickers. I did the same with an avocado pip from my father's lunch. We weren't allowed avocados or grapefruits, as they were too expensive. We weren't allowed trout either and I was glad as its popped fizzy white eyes looked disgusting. I was also given a black tulip bulb and any weeds, which were pretty like Scarlet Pimpernel, Bindweed, Vetch, and Saxifrage.

'If we pushed him off a ladder he'd survive like Rasputin and then he'd be paralysed and we'd have to look after him till he died.' 'You'd have to breastfeed him' said Ruth to Hannah and she said 'mmm' and nodded. 'You'd have to cut his toenails', she said to me and I thought of his long yellow toenails that looked like his father's nicotine-stained fingernails.

'I tried digging holes in the ground so that he might fall down one' I said. Esther rolled over onto her stomach and rested her head on her folded hands like a girl on TV.

'I heard that Prince Albert died of Saturnism' said Hannah, 'From the pipes at Osborne House'. 'I heard on the radio if you boil frozen peas and then you reheat them it can poison you. But he doesn't eat peas.' 'We need to get bread from the bakery of Roch Briand, and then we can give him Ergot poisoning' 'I don't think they still sell that bread though' said Esther.

'Grace of Monaco had some wires cut in her car. By Rosicrucians. And they made her have sex with a hairbrush.'

Biscuit yawned and let out a whimper. Her black rubber jaws wobbled, she put a paw on her soggy baby shoe. Gravy Browning looks alert and we all turn to look, to see what she sees. 'She's just seen the ghost of Fuzzy-bear the Royal Turbot, that's all' says Ruth. Gravy Browning reverses the arch of her tired back onto Biscuit's blonde tummy and closes her furry eyelids. When we came back from holiday in Gairloch, Gravy Browning heard the

burglar who crept up each storey of the house ahead of us. When he got to the top she followed him down the fire escape. She was hoping he had food, she has ESP of all sorts. Fuzzy Bear had her kittens in a box on the garage roof. They were born in a caul. I remembered this years later watching the film *The Conversation*, Harry Caul wears an embryonic jelly mac, and the description he makes about slipping down into the bath and regaining consciousness greased all over in holy water, are indications of his ability to resist drowning. Cauls were sold for high prices to sailors who would be immune from drowning if they wore it on them always and it was a perk of a Medieval midwife, to steal a caul. One in a thousand are now born with a caul and most parents don't realise as the doctor/midwife usually punctures and bins the evidence. Liberace, King Zog, Freud and Freud's *Wolfman* were all born with cauls.

'Ornithologists from Oxford have found a 2,500-year-old bird's nest on a cliff in Greenland.' I say. Everyone ignores this. It took me ages to work out how to say the number.

Esther loved telling the story of Jane Maria Clouson. 'Murdered by the man who got her pregnant. She said his name before she died but the judge called it hearsay. Local people paid for her tomb, a kneeling girl on its own in the trees. She still appeared. Her face a waterfall of blood. Until they built over the alley where it happened.' 'What if they build over the garage?' Hannah said.

It never occurred to us to not turn the engine of the Peugeot off as my father had shut himself in there with a hosepipe leading to the exhaust.

It was on one of these occasions that my father resurfaced from unconsciousness to perceive a weed growing through the garage roof. Our 'garden' had been revealed, as had the rope ladder to the roof and my sister's strongbox with magazines and diaries in. My father cut the padlock off with an axe and read them aloud at dinner, scoffing particularly at descriptions of period pain and a joint crush on a boy, and how my sisters had saved up to buy his wellies from Oxfam because they had his name written inside, in marker pen. As we sat silently listening I felt a pleasure and a red-hot fear that we were sitting at the table where my sisters

wrote the names of the boys they liked underneath and where we all made drawings, mine mostly, of our pets. I was too young to be allowed crushes.

We weren't permitted on the roof anymore and Garston docks, next door, put up barbed wire. My sister Esther started hiding her diary under the quilt of her doll's cot, along with a birthday card she got from her friend Miranda. It was a naked man and he looked nothing like my father, on the front it said: ‘in case you haven’t seen one of these in a while’. I kept my seeds and snail box inside my piano. Later when I got a stick insect from school he climbed up the green velvet curtains that Scarlet O' Hara would have easily turned into a dress and lived at the top, coming down only for privet.

We would be separated by my father, we sisters could not be so rotten on our own, we had chickpea tin and string 'telephones' that rarely worked, we tried bird call, ringing the servant’s bells a certain number of times and playing different songs on the record player. In the end, we all listened to the radio on the same channel in Solidarnosc. My mother loathed this, called us the village of the damned children. I was blamed because of my psychic Welsh grandmother.

I found a long-eared bat electrocuted by a pylon and I sealed it in one of my mother’s Swiss Air envelopes. Hoping it would mummify, I put it in the airing cupboard where it stank and oozed onto my father's Viyella shirt in a perfect bat shape at the back. He wore it at work until one of the children told him they could see his bat. I like the feel of the central cord of gristle of a rat dusted by a fine down of velvet, like Johnny Town mouse, in his fine gabardine mac. Like Samuel Whiskers in his three-piece suit, these Victorian gents were plopped into my wheelbarrow along with black tulip petals, rolled up earwigs and daddy long legs. Once when she was telling me off my mother dropped a Georgian silver spoon into the food disposal unit. This rendered the set a third of its value and wrecked the grinding knives. In the future, the house details declared: ‘Waste disposal unit (defunct).’

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

Waster of 34 dishes fused together Delft, Netherlands, V&A (1640-60)

This morning, Margaret told Anna that the prayer *Abide with Me* had been set to music. She thinks of telling John, but it is hardly worth writing in a letter about such trivia. She imagines him telling the other men about his wife's letters bringing news of a hymnal set to music. It smells of honey and carpet beating day in the room. The parquet had been recently polished with beeswax from the Norbert's hives, they had got aggressive and needed a new queen. Rebecca had been stung twice on her arm, but said it improved the arthritis in her wrist so could not complain, despite it looking like a Christmas ham. There are other smells in there too, of the morning Kedgeree and of an ox tongue, sitting in hot salted water in the kitchen. She lifts the jasper vase up and it leaves a ring on the teapoy. Anna knew Margaret would be cross, she blots it with a handkerchief, bringing out two from her sleeve by mistake, one lands on the floor. She pulls a maidenhair fern frond from the vase and places it on the table.

Walking over to her father’s desk, she sees the green paper at the window casts a ghoulish shadow on the dog's pale ears. She finds the knife in her father's drawer, rolled up in grey suede with his pencil holder and an ivory letter opener. The chesty sound of a wood pigeon echoes down the chimney and makes her heartbeat louder. She pushes her hand into the darker parts of the desk and sees it is the unfinished Scorched Carpet moth specimen lying

unpinned on a cotton cushion, a sort of open coffin. The flat back model of a shepherd and his wife fall face forward onto her father's blotting pad. She picks the thick blotting paper up and thinks of the queen's black blotting paper. Her father told her about that. 'What does the queen eat for breakfast?' she used to ask. 'Maybe a pineapple?' he would say and she would squeal.

She gets hot and frustrated, she doesn't know where anything is. She takes her thick Bombazine matinee off and slings it on the nursery chair. She peels the mousseline off the blue prints she has left in a pile on the piano. She sees the light zephyr fabric has been eaten by moths exposing the prints to the sun again. She looks down at the cat. As it yawns it turns its head inside out like an umbrella in the wind. The labels, too, are written on very fine paper like rice paper. But rice paper would not come to England for another twenty years, so it was another man's recent invention that she uses: glass paper, created by engraver Mr. Quenedy in 15 Rue Neves des Petites Champs, Paris in the 1820s.

Women couldn't be surgeons and a knife wasn't meant for her hands. She takes off her bracelet and her ring and rolls the water silk sleeves beyond her elbows. The billiard table has a soft surface and she knows that Darwin used his for dissection. The low gas lights are buzzing, and she goes to turn them off. She pulls the Marveilleux curtains back and dust rises in the daylight. A bluebottle crashes and buzzes at the window and Margot jumps and clatters her claws on the window pane. Stretching like a dancing bear in Berlin, she shows her eight nipples to the light and her still pregnant looking belly swings on the back of the damask sofa. Grimacing, she closes one eye to chew the fly.

Her coral bracelet clinks on the glass that she uses to press her specimens, ready for printing. She pushes it up her arm past the burn she got from the hissing willow log that lurched out of the grate, close to Sammy's tail. She is beginning to get white freckles now that look like the specks of fat in meat sausage. Anna picks the poppy up with the dry pads of the forefingers of her left hand. She reverts to these when she is in private, she has more confidence in her left-hand side. She wiggles her finger and thumb tips into the chalk cube, wipes them on her skirt, leaving a white streak of crumbled shells that Kent is made of. Her mother's seed pearl ring

will be worn by a stranger; Erica Lucy Jacobs, because Anna doesn't have any children. She submerges it in the water of the well so many times she feels it revert to its former oceanic home.

She lets the cat out through the glass door. The poppy gangles and the head looks like a Madame de Pompadour coiffure and the stalk looks long and unhealthy. Anna cuts the stalk and cuts the leaf. She sees a marigold leaf and she cuts and sutures it onto the poppy stalk. The sun develops her mistakes, a patch of cyanotype dye that is blue and turns a black bruise on the rug back of the sofa, floor. This blue oval becomes, many years later, a pond for a dolls house for Eliza Morten as she plays on the floor in this room. A gang of Long Tailed Tits arrive in the willow tree and began to shout at the cat. The cat waits at the door, with her body low and her ears pulled back, wailing.

'Algae,' it says in Anna Atkins' near complete album in the British Library, 'has an unknown etymology. It may come from *alliga*, meaning binding and intertwining. Atkins, following Linnaeus' binomial nomenclature, which presents plants as belonging to various branches of a family tree, with a 'mother'(genus) and a 'father' (family) arranges her algae into groups of siblings.

Unknown Family, photograph, Annabel Dover, (2015)

Clef 3

> Contemporary feminist debates over the meaning of gender lead time and again to a certain sense of trouble, as if the indeterminacy of gender might eventually culminate in the failure of feminism. Perhaps trouble need not carry such a negative valence. To make trouble was, within the reigning discourse of my childhood, something one should never do, precisely because that would get one *in* trouble. The rebellion and its reprimand seemed to be caught up in the same terms, a phenomenon that gave rise to my first critical insight into the subtle ruse of power: the prevailing law threatened one with trouble, even put one in trouble, all to keep one out of trouble. (Butler, 1990: vii)

> I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a good deal – having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition. (Gilman, 1892: 17)

The final clef and Chapter Three consider the idea of causing 'trouble'. The epigraphs to this clef, from Judith Butler's preface to *Gender Trouble* (1990) and the words of the protagonist in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), introduce this notion of 'trouble'. Butler suggests a way in which 'trouble', a method of control, can be co-opted as a subversive mode in undermining the social construction of gender identity. The protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper* seeks similar methods of subversion in her attempts to express herself. As the quote from Gilman suggests, the written word was not available to the protagonist: she was forbidden this narrative tool on the grounds that it affected her health. This notion of health is used throughout *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a method of control over the protagonist; her supposedly *naturally* constructed gender is continually discussed as creating the limits of her activity. In the end, it is only through the socially safe interior decoration and objects that she can find a voice. In using the handmaid, a persona that is deeply embedded in societal control of the woman, I am also creating trouble. The handmaid becomes a troublemaker who uses her innocent supportive nature as a cover for the introduction of her own narratives.

In both cases this subversion can be understood as a response to the hegemony of the victor, as introduced by Benjamin in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940):

> According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.
>
> (Benjamin, 1999, 257)

In this passage, Benjamin introduces the idea of reading against the grain, an approach that recognises history as presenting us with a narrative that acts as a barrier. This narrative muffles the alternatives or, in the case of the productions of women, labels them as mere chattel, decorative possibly, but unimportant except in their support of the male 'victor'. In the context of Anna Atkins' albums, the only context left to read them is either that of a dutiful daughter's support of her father and the wider scientific community or as a woman dabbling in a decorative craft. The troublemaking handmaid accepts this situation and continues her work. But at the same time, she uses the album format as a codebook to introduce the multiple voices of the object-as-witness. In doing so, she does not engage in the modes of communication favoured by the dominant narratives of science and history; instead, she slips in little fictions. In Chapter Three, the content is expressed via the chatter of many naïve narrators in their interaction with the objects surrounding them. These voices overlap and avoid the evidential and analytical structures of scientific research. It is only via this undercover act that our voices can be heard.

Martha Langford describes the album as the métier of the amateur and states that the creation of new narratives is particularly emphasised by the amateur photographer compiling an

album (Langford, 2008:39). The handmaid is the consummate amateur. She is a non-professional assistant working in support of her husband or father for neither recompense nor recognition. It is Anna Atkins' role as a handmaid that gives rise to her unusual peripheral status as neither scientist nor artist. The rise of the middle classes was in part signalled through the ability of the wife or daughter to have time to perform tasks wholly connected to their husband's or father's status (Di Bello, 2016: 70). Di Bello quotes Cuthbert Bede's *Photographic Pleasures* (1854) to explain the accepted relationship that women could form with photography:

> Photography is, of all others, the science for amateurs. it is equally adapted for ladies and gentlemen, which cannot be said of the generality of sciences... if a young lady should take up chemistry... it is all over with her! she must either end up... a vestal virgin, or else finish herself up with a Philosopher. No. The only way a young lady amateur can take up Chemistry, is, when it has been married to Mr Photography.
>
> (Bede, 1859: 47-49)

For Bede, photography seems incapable of corruption. The overall flavour of Bede's *Photographic Pleasures* implies that a thinking woman was unattractive and that to educate a woman was to destroy her appeal. 'Mr. Photography', in Bede's matrimonial allusion, is described as dependable, honest and trustworthy: a gentleman who will treat his handmaids well as they frivolously dabble with his art. The implication is that these women will not discover anything unsettling, dangerous or powerful with the photographic medium. The cyanotype process itself became an amateur craze in the 1850s for women and children (Denlinger & Wagner, 2010: 132). Atkins used the role of the handmaid to her advantage and allowed herself creative freedom to make a collection of fictions. *Florilegia* explores this further by reading Atkins' albums and donations as subversive acts. Chapter Three investigates troublesome narratives as well as the ideas of naivety and giving, the primary traits of the handmaid, as a cover for telling the untellable.

Iris Sibirica cyanotype, Anna Atkins (1854)

Atkins donated her albums to the Royal Society, the Linnean Society, the Victoria & Albert Museum and Kew Gardens under the guise of both handmaid to her scientist father and a handmaid to the photographic process. In attempting to make a copy of Atkins' *Iris*, I realised how Atkins' role as handmaid was a cover for something more. The *Iris* was both too bulky and dense to provide the frail veiny membrane necessary for producing a good image. This led to an understanding that Atkins must have pared the plant down until it was ghostly enough to pass light through it. This process revealed something beyond a scientific analysis at work in her prints, for it was foregrounding the things that were suggestive of nineteenth-century stereotypes of her sex: frailty of body and mind, ephemeral beauty, and modesty of stature, as exemplified by Atkins herself in *On the Perils of Fashion*:

> Her feelings were as pure as the dew-drops which rest in the calix of a flower, and like them, all they owned of colour, were reflections from the bright tints which surrounded them.
>
> (Atkins, 1852: 12)

Through the cyanotype process, Atkins assists these flowers to reach this anorexic ideal. She strips away layers of strong stem and stamen, and makes the flowers delicate, beautiful, and barely there, unable to stand without the support of the paper they are printed on. She emaciates them; they repay her with refined, frail beauty. Thus, coded into their beauty and under the cover of the handmaid, the cyanotype releases a new female narrative of enforced frail perfection. Atkins made her chimerical specimens under the cover of the handmaid to science, to her father, and to photography. She then donated the albums to institutions that, had they known her methods, may have been unlikely to accept them. Institutions such as The Linnean Society and The Royal Society, the latter of which Atkins' father was for several years the secretary, would certainly not have accepted her as a member simply because she was female. However, as a conduit for the 'pencil of nature' (photography), she was merely presenting herself as a servant rather than a creator. The role of the diligent handmaid and dutiful daughter of J.G. Children allowed her to slip her work into these established patriarchal societies. Her adoption of these roles is made clear in her introduction to the biography of her father (Atkins, 1853: 3) and it is under the cover of this label that Atkins gained freedom to act. In giving up her work to these institutions, Atkins was essentially giving them a problem – not the specific problem of ordering, collating and preserving a mass of material, but rather the problem of how to cope with the handmaid. As Martha Langford has highlighted:

> A hobbyist's way of collecting and organising pictures may mimic scientific or curatorial practice. Or the amassing of metonymic images may function as an individual life history, replacing the diarist's chronological entries with an autobiographical collage.
>
> (Langford, 2001: 41)

While Langford points out that a hobbyist may take either the scientific or the personal route, Atkins took both, and by doing so she was able to successfully infiltrate the institution without giving up her handmaid status. Once in the collection, Atkins' albums, the cyanotype

itself, and the handmaid began to communicate through more than just sight; touch was central to their means of transmission. And it still is. At the Royal Society, I was left with her albums resting on a velvet cushion, only the most recent in a succession of people who had handled the prints. Atkins' donation of unbound albums ensured that they would first be handled, folded and cut in their binding and subsequently touched to be viewed. This is a process that creates a physical collusion with a subversive object. As discussed in Clef Two, this act of touch shifts Atkins' album from the realm of science to that of family and biography. Similarly, in *Florilegia* and Chapter Three, I offer 'trouble' in embracing the positive aspects of the amateur label to open up multiple voices and a dialogue with Atkins' work.

The album belonging to the handmaid is anti-professional: its blankness lacks rigour, structure, and format. It is the opposite of the ledger, the record, or even the notebook, each of which has lines, grids and columns. The album is open, it nips about, it dabbles, it classifies subjectively. The closest professional tool to the album is perhaps the artist's sketchbook, but even here there are still several important differences. The sketchbook *serves* the artist. It is a place to record observations and ideas for later use, somewhere to mull things over. The album, however, is not a tool: it is far more passive; it receives love and holds it. The handmaid can go between and beyond the boundaries of artist, scientist or craftsperson. For the handmaid, as can be seen from Thackeray's description of the album in Clef Two, her role often came with a caveat. She was not to be taken seriously; her works were weak, sham and sentimental. While, socially speaking, the role of dutiful wife or daughter was highly desirable, the label also acted as a muffle, preventing the witness from being heard or taken seriously. In her novel *The Perils of Fashion*, Atkins reveals that she was herself aware of this and was frustrated by the sham demands of society to act falsely:

> Mary did her best to benefit by the Countess's cosmology; never for an instant dreaming that she was acting about as wisely as one, who to study the formation of the soil around geologically, sets about picking up the pavement of a London street to furnish specimens. All was artificial; an artificial system got up on artificial premises, promoted by stunting all better perceptions.
>
> (Atkins, 1852: 180-1)

Atkins here contrasts the natural and the manufactured, a device she uses in her albums where she conceals 'fake' specimens behind the labelling of a scientific album.

In a discussion of the historical works of craft and art by women and the way they are categorised at the 2015 symposium on *A Woman's Place*, Rose Gibbs called for a re-evaluation of labelling, describing it as a limiting force:

> How can such works escape or re-write the rules on the debated 'feminist aesthetic' or gendered artwork, as any such label immediately puts it outside of the established contemporary art arena? Often activists, and their urgency transforms in to extremism, and extremism shuts down debate, conversation and the space in which a work of art can be at its most enigmatic and profound.
>
> (Rose Gibbs, dayandgluckman.co.uk, 10 January 2015)

Gibbs suggests that an extremist approach to re-evaluating the work of these woman can crush the nuances of their vision. She suggests a strategy of stealth to represent the work of women artists so as not to deem them as necessarily 'feminist'. Gill Park, in her research on the 'Feministing' of photography in the work of Jo Spence, also problematises the act of labelling. She argues that Jo Spence did not consider herself a feminist artist but a feminist who used photography as a tool of inquiry. This, she says, causes problems for the taxonomy of art and art history in which Spence's work is reduced through its classification as 'feminist art'.[1] Clearly, in the context of Gibbs' and Parks' concerns, the label 'handmaid' is also troublesome. However, as I have shown above, the role of the handmaid allows underhand activity that circumvents scrutiny and gives freedom. With the donation of my *Florilegia*, I also adopt the persona of the handmaid. I recreate elements of Atkins' work in the form of the *Florilegia* albums: donating them as a handmaid to Atkins, in no order, with no explanation of the cyanotypes nor of their origins. In parallel, Chapter Three presents a noisy chatter of fiction that disrupts order and subverts the passive role set out for women. The

[1] Park's argument was made at the 2017 symposium entitled *Making Women's Art Matter: New Approaches to the Careers and Legacies of Women Artists*.

soothing naïve storytellers, each a handmaid, sutures the wounds and heals the cuts of strange events.

With *Florilegia* and Chapter Three, I am subverting the dominant narratives surrounding Atkins and her work. Starting with the materiality of the photographs and the album, I use the phenomenological response I have towards her work, and the freedom that the role of handmaid allows, to engage in cross-disciplinary work and the supporting ethos of crossing patrimonial boundaries. Starting with the cyanotype albums of Atkins and re-creating the work as a means of research, I have discovered that Atkins' work is more than a hybrid of *naturalis* and *artificialis*; rather, it is an active agent of change subsumed into institutions that upheld the dominant narrative of science. Through my fictional gatherings, I have retold her story in a way that is at odds with purely academic conventions: I have crossed lines and have refused to classify my research as either truth or fiction.

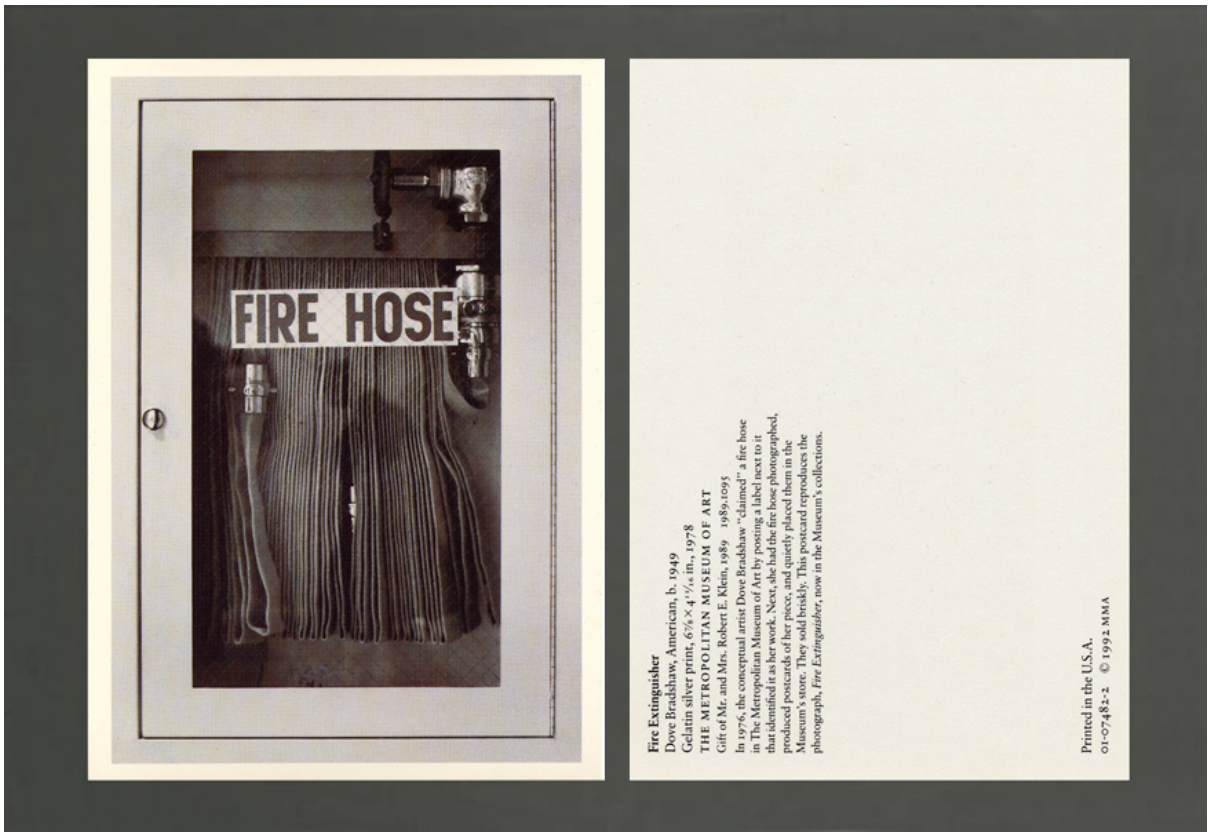
> What I want to discuss are four pressures which I believe challenge the intellectual's ingenuity and will … each of them can be countered by what I shall call amateurism, the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restriction of a profession.
>
> (Said,1994: 76)

In her role as handmaid Atkins is a true proponent of Said's 'amateurism', since she makes connections across lines and barriers and will not be either an artist or a scientist. While seeming to conform to rules of these patrimonial museums, as the handmaid Atkins unpicks them with her donations. I use a multiplicity of narrators to reveal the possible relationships with objects, thereby making connections across lines, eras and spaces in combination with a refusal to be tied down to a specialty. By doing this, I can offer a retelling of Atkins' work. Said suggests that this crossover and research, by using the methodologies of an unknown field, lead to a freedom that can create an open discourse for new and enlightening research which goes against the dominant 'master' narrative of the time. The true picture of the past

flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised, and is then never seen again (Benjamin, 1998: 255).

Metalwork 1793-1880 Fred Wilson Maryland Historical Society (1992-3)

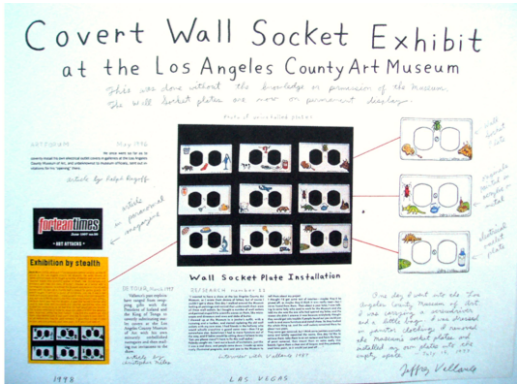
Not only is the role of handmaid a subversive cover, but her acts of giving are also subversive. Acts of donation have been adopted as a subversive method by contemporary artists in their interaction with institutions. In his *Metalwork 1793-1880*, for example, Fred Wilson, a contemporary artist and African American, undermines the dominant narrative of the Maryland Museum by placing slaves' shackles within a case of silver. The subversive act releases the untold story of the slaves who made the affluent lifestyle of the inhabitants of Maryland possible. Wilson, however, was invited to make his donation. This permission from the institution makes this an act of acceptable subversion. Atkins, on the other hand, did not have the authority of an established artist to be invited to join the narrative of the institution. Her donation therefore had to remain coded and covert alongside the dominant stories of science. While Wilson made his intervention known, performing a visible, alchemical change in the case of artefacts, my donated albums follow Anna Atkins' lead as a subversive handmaid, avoiding the institution's official narrative by slipping in alongside *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions.*



Performance Dove Bradshaw (1978)

Other contemporary artists who use subversion do so in an attempt to snatch victory from the institutions that deny them their storytelling rights. Dove Bradshaw's *Performance* (1978), for example, is a postcard in a limited edition of 1,000, featuring a photo Bradshaw took of the firehose in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Bradshaw made the postcards to be sold in the museum shop, as a statement that, as an African-American woman, this was the only way that she would enter the museum. The postcard became popular and the museum bought the original photograph for its permanent collection – a victory for Bradshaw and her donation of postcards. The title of Bradshaw's work is a statement about the performative nature of her work and also about the convoluted performance she had to make to enter the institution's collection. This, like Jeffrey Vallance's interventions, has become an accepted method for the artist. Vallance's *Covert Wall Socket Exhibit at the Los Angeles County Art Museum* (1977) was surreptitiously placed by Vallance onto the sockets in the museum. Vallance did this after receiving several rejections from the museum. He dressed as

a maintenance man in overalls and, with a toolbox and the help of his friends who stayed on watch in case any museum security guards interrupted him, installed his work. Vallance then invited people to a private view of his socket covers. The covers stayed there for two years until the museum was redecorated and the covers painted over. They still exist in the museum; they are just hidden – a victory of the rejected.



Covert Wall Socket Exhibit at the Los Angeles County Art Museum, Jeffrey Vallance (1977)

Royal Society Library
Photographs of British algae: cyanotype impressions Anna Atkins, (1842/3)
and *Florilegia* cyanotype album, (2017)

Although, by donating my *Florilegia* albums not as the output of an artist but as a handmaid to Atkins, I am engaging with the acceptable subversion of the artist (as described above), I am again causing the institution trouble. Thus, the handmaid not only gives me cover but also creates a camouflage that blurs intention. Silence is often a political action.

Atkins was not presenting an album of botanical specimens when she donated them to the museum libraries; rather, she was leaving something, hidden, intimate and personal, a part of her biography that cannot be deciphered. When she gave them, she operated under a persona. The handmaid does not speak for herself, so she leaves her object to speak for her. 'It is the intimate which seeks utterance in me, seeks to make its cry heard, confronting generality, confronting science' (Barthes, 1993: 7).

In assuming the role of handmaid, the act of donation engages with other traditions of giving outside of the artistic methods mentioned above. Patrick Geary, a historian, has written about the function of gifts in medieval society:

> In the early Middle Ages, Grierson argued, gift and theft were more important than trade in distributing commodities. Under gifts, he included all transfers that take place with the consent of the donor not for material and tangible profit but for social prestige.
> (Appadurai, 1988: 172)

Anna Atkins' donations gain a different dimension in the context of this quote. By not even daring to bind the cyanotypes, her gift was so humble that it was not rediscovered until the 1970s (Moorhead, 2017). Immediate profit cannot have been her motive; however, by embedding herself in the institutions, Atkins performed an act that ensured her story's longevity. Philip Grierson, a medieval numismatist, has maintained in *A Critique of Evidence* (1959) that the goal of gift giving was not the acquisition of commodities but the establishment of bonds between giver and receiver, bonds that had to be reaffirmed at some point by a countergift (Appadurai, 1988: 173). The emphasis here is on the social aspect of gift giving. In this light, Atkins' and my donations become a process of subversive grafting, as we attach ourselves to and change the institutions' narratives. This idea of an affective connection was further and famously explored by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* (1954), where he argued that a gift retains something of the personality of the giver, which is then transferred to its new owner as another by-product of the graft. Derrida has extended this argument, talking of the gift as a trap that ensnares the recipient in a defenceless position:

> For as always in the affair of the gift, it is a matter of taking, of taking over and bringing under control [*arraisonner*], of harpooning: of taking and before that of overtaking with surprise. As you have noticed, pleasure is taken [*pris*], measured in the sur-prise, and above all other pleasures, in that of the caused surprise. To overtake the other with surprise, be it by one's generosity and by giving too much, is to have a hold on him, as soon as he accepts the gift. The other is caught in the trap: Unable to anticipate, he is taken in, by the trap, overtaken,

> imprisoned, indeed poisoned by the very fact that something happens to him in the face of which he remains, having not been able to for are anything-defenceless, open, exposed. He is the other's catch or take [*prise*], he has given the other a hold [*prise*].
>
> (Derrida, 1994: 147)

The barbed harpoon evoked by Derrida is an apt image. The donated album enters the body of the institution cleanly, and once there it is difficult to remove. The album's barbs are created by the institutions themselves; when the albums are bound in the institutions' own livery, they are hooked into the institutions' narratives and hold firm. My *Florilegia* hopes to do the same under the cover of Atkins' new found popularity. Chapter Three also seeks to harpoon the reader. My copious, verbose text and multitude of images are a swarm of fictional hooks intended to engage with the memory and imagination of readers, pulling them into the text. To this end, the writing, like the album, is presented unsorted and undefined, a mixture of *naturalis* and *artificialis*, with no marked boundaries.

Conclusion

My research is anchored in a detailed examination of Anna Atkin's cyanotypes and their remaking. This process has revealed new knowledge about how Atkins made her prints. However, she died in 1871 and Atkins left no personal information, only her cyanotype albums, her father's biography and three little-known novels. Her only narrative is that presented by the Royal Society and the Linnean Society. *Florilegia* is an attempt to reposition her work outside of the shadows cast by these institutions and her father.

Through the making of my own cyanotype prints I discovered that Atkins had cut and arranged her supposedly scientific specimens in accordance with the nineteenth century female pastime of album making. I recognised via this discovery that there was something else to say about Atkins beyond the dominant narrative of the dutiful daughter presented by the Royal and Linnean Societies. Without any factual information, I had to search for ways in which I could construct this new narrative. In engaging with the disjuncture I encountered between Atkins' given biography and her cyanotypes, my three conversations and my cyanotype album *Florilegia* explored Atkins' persona as dutiful daughter/handmaid and the subtle subversions visible in her cyanotype albums. Through this dialogue, I sought to question the dominant narrative of Atkins as dutiful daughter and allow the subversive voice to come through. The idea of trying to find the object-as-witness led me to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892). Using the animation of objects, a methodology inspired by this short story I wrote three creative chapters that articulate the voices of Anna Atkins and her albums. I then provided each chapter with an explicatory clef that seeks to anchor the fiction in current and historical debates. Accompanied by my own cyanotype album these chapters make up *Florilegia* a retelling of Atkin's narrative.

Chapter One and its explanatory clef explore the concept of object-as-witness and seek to give voice to objects that perforce cannot speak. Research in clef one and the narratives of its corresponding chapter remind us that, like a mute object, the woman of the nineteenth

century had little voice. I have shown Atkins' revealed knowledge of this insight in her novel *The Perils of Fashion* (Atkins, 1852: 93). Clef one explores existing methodologies for the voicing of objects: the indexical, trace and the *biographeme*. I conclude that each of these methods is useful, but they are incomplete in their ability to give voice to the object-as-witness. Using Meskimmon and Sawdon's distinction between duologue and productive dialogue (2016: 23-24), I identify that the indexical trace, although providing a direct link to the lost object, creates an ultimately unfulfilling connection: a closed duologue between object and viewer. While the trace of an object, more than the indexical method, describes a process of retelling of the object, it too is a duologue: a closed and second-hand conversation. Barthes' *biographeme* is the most useful of existing methods, since it presents a story narrated through the object. However, I note that the *biographeme*, unlike fiction, presents a closed biographical retelling that occurs between object and author. In searching for an open dialogue with the object-as-witness, I identify that only through multiple fictions can its voice be set free.

Thus, Chapter One, in presenting a fictional chatter of objects, seeks to retell Atkins via a dialogue. This dialogue is presented as a nexus of varied fictions that together articulate the alternative narratives of the object-as-witness. The use of fiction as a way of voicing the voiceless is already embedded in the narrative of *The Yellow Wallpaper.* In Gilman's novel, the irrational, multiple and blurred voices of the objects surrounding the protagonist act as a counter to the authority of the dominant rational and distinct narrative of male medical science. The narratives of Chapter One are similarly confrontational in presenting fiction as a research method that avoids logic and argument in favour of chatter – the neglected sound of the object-witness.

Clef two, investigates the format of the album, identifying it as the primary creative arena of the handmaid. I argue that, in the hands of the handmaid, the album becomes a codebook. Its interior space provides a safe ground for her to explore storytelling via cutting and arranging. These approved pastimes (Ruskin, 2010: 50) were uniquely available to the nineteenth-century woman and as such provided ideal cover for coded storytelling. Through the making of my own cyanotype album, *Florilegia*, I discovered the haptic nature of the album both in its construction and reception. This led me to recruit Griselda Pollock and Bracha Ettinger's

concept of the *matrixial* to emphasise the importance of an empathic response that embraces touch, sound and movement. This multisensory *net*, I have argued, involves the viewer/handler with the album and brings about storytelling.

Having established the album format as primarily a location for storytelling, clef two went on to explore what sorts of stories they told. By examining the albums of two Victorian women, Lady Filmer and Lady Milles, I noted a process akin to Freud's family romances by which these women used the album as a way of improving and fictionalising their own families. Here, the processes of cutting and suturing were key and acted as a mechanism of fictionalisation. This mechanism is explored in detail in Chapter Two's structure and content, in which shifting incipient narratives conjure themselves before the reader. In choosing to cut and arrange multiple vignettes, and by concentrating on multisensory evocation of objects, the stories of Chapter Two employ the same processes as the album to create a safe and open ground for storytelling. Thus, the objects' voices appear not only in each story, but also in the spaces between. In clef two, I have argued that it is in this cutting and suturing of objects that they are given voice. I establish these sutured stories as being akin to talkative chimeras (Daston, 2004: 24). Thus, in this context of chimerical creation, Atkins' works become more than albums of vegetal specimens or supports for her father's scientific work. Instead the albums and Atkins' chimeras of *artficialia* and *naturalia* are given voice.

Judith Butler's notion of 'trouble' foregrounds the third clef and Chapter Three. Here, I have examined the notion of the handmaid as a subversive cover. I have shown that, like the amateur, the handmaid is overlooked as frivolous by the dominant narrative, but that she subverts via her roles of support and gift giving. The third clef reveals that, in donating her unbound albums, Atkins used the guise of handmaid to introduce 'trouble' to the institution. In investigating the use of personas by subversive artists, I separated my own role as handmaid to Atkins from the subversive acts performed by contemporary artists, showing that while the artist is now expected to be subversive, the handmaid was not. In adopting the persona of innocent amateur and handmaid to Atkins, rather than artist, I have sought to sidestep this issue, slipping my albums into the collections of the Royal Society and the Linnean Society. Drawing on the theories of Mauss and Geary, the third clef pinpointed gift giving as the central subversive act of both Atkins' practice and my own. In recognising that

giving binds the donor and receiver in a relationship of obligation, I evoked Derrida's image of a barbed harpoon as a metaphor for Atkins' act of infiltration. This act of infiltration was also central to Chapter Three, in which naïve narrators hook the reader with myriad subversive stories.

This research offers two key contributions to knowledge; gift-giving as a new artistic strategy and the use of fiction as a research method. Firstly, as discussed in clef 3, gift-giving is an approach distinct from methods used by contemporary artists that seek to disrupt institutional norms by more aggressive forms of infiltration. Current tactics such as those employed by Dove Bradshaw and Jeffrey Vallance take the form of a theft-in-reverse whereby the artist steals a place in the institution against its will. Others, such as Fred Wilson, are complicit with the institution's remit. They play along in a game of curatorial reassessment. Gift-giving however is a powerfully nebulous approach that neither aggressively attacks nor actively engages with the institution. Following Atkins's own donations this method is not an overt attack on the institution but the giving does create *trouble*. Here, the gift does not fit neatly into the institution's collection but neither is it necessarily confrontational or irritating. The gift is passive, it may be treasured, discarded or stored anonymously. Crucially it is this process and the institution itself that become a part of the gift's own narrative.

Secondly, this research develops fiction as a research method in response to the problems surrounding current knowledge of Atkins and her cyanotypes. Atkins' complete lack of voice in current research necessitates a new approach. Here fiction-as-research sounds the gap between the meagre biography of Atkins as an adjunct to her father's hagiography and the appreciation of her cyanotypes as a technical extension of John Herschel's invention. Fiction-as-research is a method that extends Benjamin's notion of "form[ing] constellations" (Benjamin 1999: 462) through the flash of past and present. Here fiction-as-research is deployed where elements of the past are not available and as such it provides a new model for examining similar subjects.

Communities of practice that will find this thesis relevant to their work include: artists working with the cyanotype process but also those engaging with other processes that might be considered archaic or the province of the amateur; curators working with Atkins'

cyanotypes; and artists seeking to engage with voiceless historical figures. These communities have been growing significantly in the last ten years. There has, for example, been a notable resurgence in the use of cyanotypes by contemporary Fine Artists such as: Christian Marclay, Walead Beshty, and Helen Barff. Similarly, Atkin's own cyanotypes have been deployed curatorially by Rosemarie Trockel (2013), Brian Dillon (2013), Allegra Pesenti (2016), Dr Hans Rooseboom (2017), and Joshua Chuang (2018). Artists such as Nadia Hebson and Tess Denman-Cleaver revisit the lives of forgotten artists to create a new vocabulary that considers what it is to be female. This thesis supports and touches the work of these artists, and the curators above, by transforming the assumption that historical female artists, craftspeople and amateurs made their work simple-mindedly and to exercise skill alone. It does this by unlocking fiction as a valid tool for encountering the voiceless.

My research has been anchored in a detailed examination of Anna Atkins' cyanotypes and their remaking. This process has revealed new knowledge about how Atkins made her prints. However, she died in 1871 – the major obstacle of my research. Atkins left no personal information, only her cyanotype albums, her father's biography and three little-known novels. Moreover, Atkins, like many dutiful daughters, has no place in the dominant narrative beyond the role of handmaid, and as such has no voice. This has proved to be both a limitation and an opportunity. Because Atkins and her objects have no voice, my fictional responses are unverifiable beyond a feeling of rightness. Nevertheless, the fictional approach I espouse is the only valid way one can respond to the voiceless in a world where only the victors are commemorated (Benjamin, 1999: 248). The openness of my fictional response goes beyond the indexical, trace and *biographeme* to create an open ground for dialogue with these voiceless object-witnesses. This is a dialogue by which we can reassess our own identities and tell our own stories.

- My method for giving voice to these subversive stories was the presentation of my albums to the institutions that had constructed the dominant narratives. The placement of my cyanotype albums in the: V&A print room, the Linnean Society Library, the Royal Society library and Kew Gardens all had to go through a committee to be accepted. I referenced Anna Atkins in my donation letter and the lineage of my action and donations emphasising my position as a handmaid. In presenting myself in the likeness of Atkins, I suggested that we are part of a

narrative of amateur women scientists. In this way my work is actively continuing this subversive voice. That my work was accepted within this context in 2017 indicates the poignancy of Atkins' subversive donation and of the need for her work to be retold. I will present my creative chapters at the next symposium, *Making Women's Art Matter: New Approaches to the Careers and Legacies of Women* at the Paul Mellon Center, 9 to 10 February 2017

in the context of reframing the master order of history and presenting new ways of retelling the work of women artists. The narrative engagement of the creative chapters of *Florilegia* has led me to consider new ways of working collaboratively. I will develop *Florilegia* in a publication with Nadia Hebson, Helena Bonett and Tess Denman-Cleaver and Susan Finlay in May 2021 Hebson is developing work that obliquely engages with the legacy of women artists through a relationship between painting, biography, persona and clothing. Bonett, a curator, will consider the legacy of Barbara Hepworth's donated works in terms of the dominant narratives hidden within them and the possibilities for the work to go against this; she will explore how Hepworth's work queers the dominant narrative while revealing multiple discursive relationships with objects and people. Denman-Cleaver, director of the performance company *Tender Buttons*, will make large-scale installations that respond to the phenomenological landscapes of Virginia Woolf and borrow from Françoise Laruelle's 'non-philosophy' as a framework for an anti-disciplinary methodology.

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?

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Practice

Cyanotypes made during this research were exhibited, published or taken into the following collections

Exhibitions:

Catalyst: Contemporary Art & War
Imperial War Museum North 2017

Santorini Biennial, 2016

Wintergarden, Sutton House, 2013

LOSS Golden Thread Gallery in collaboration with Imperial War Museum, Belfast 2012

This Me of Mine APT Gallery 2011

Publications:

Art From Contemporary Conflict, IWM, Sara Bevan, 2015

Blue Mythologies, Reaktion Books, Carol Mavor, 2013

This 'Me' of Mine: Self, Time & Context in the Digital Age, Xlibris Jane Boyer, 2011

Garageland, Nostalgia, Family Romances, Issue 8 Transition Gallery Publications, 2009

Collections:

Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast

Down House, English Heritage

Madison Museum of Contemporary Art

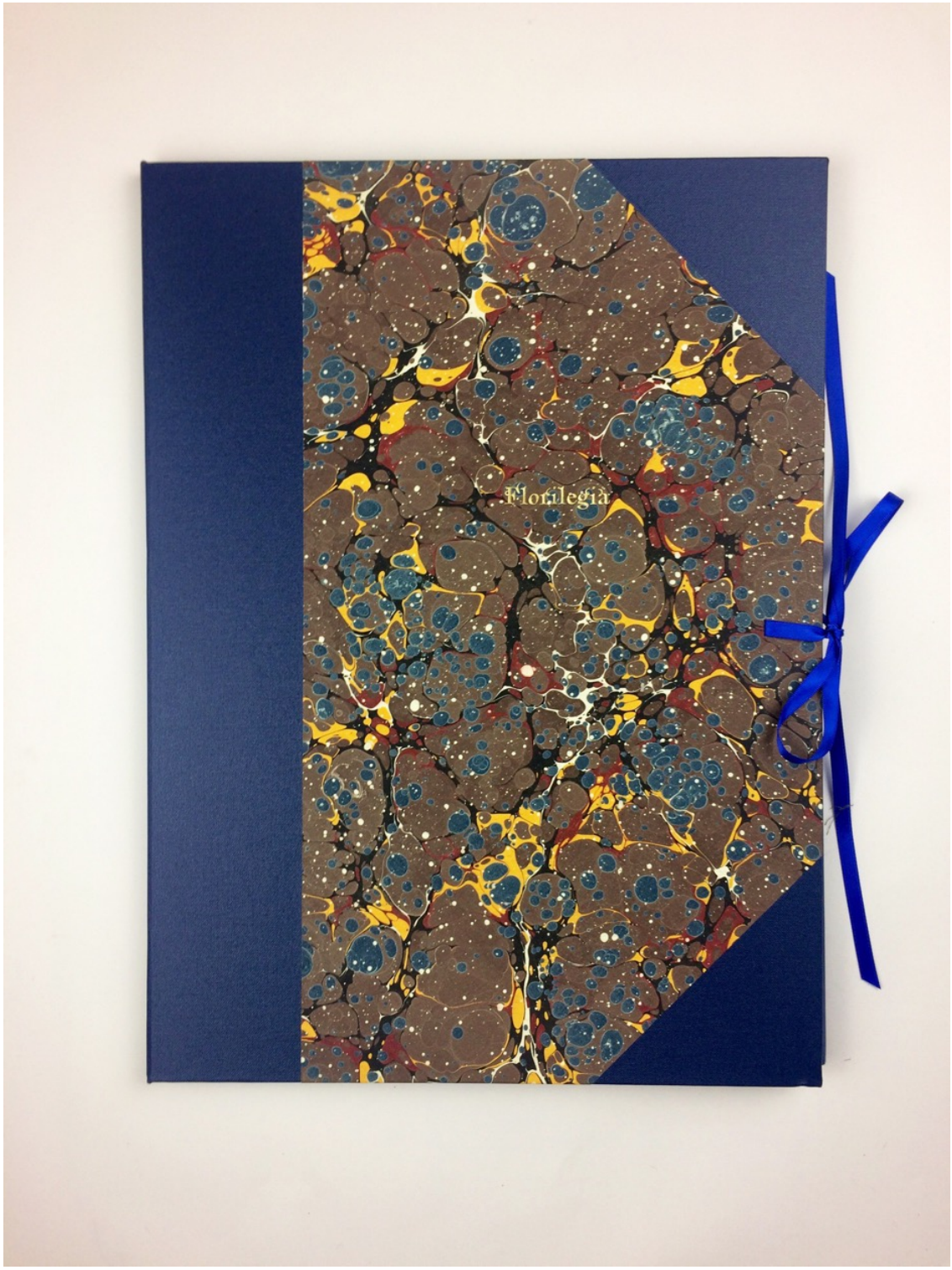
Imperial War Museum

Yale Centre for British Art

Priseman-Seabrook Collection

Florilegia, a fictional dialogue with the works of Anna Atkins:

How does a fictional response to the works of Anna Atkins provide a new retelling of her work?



Florilegia cyanotype album, bound with Venetian marbled paper.
28 x 38 cm, 2015

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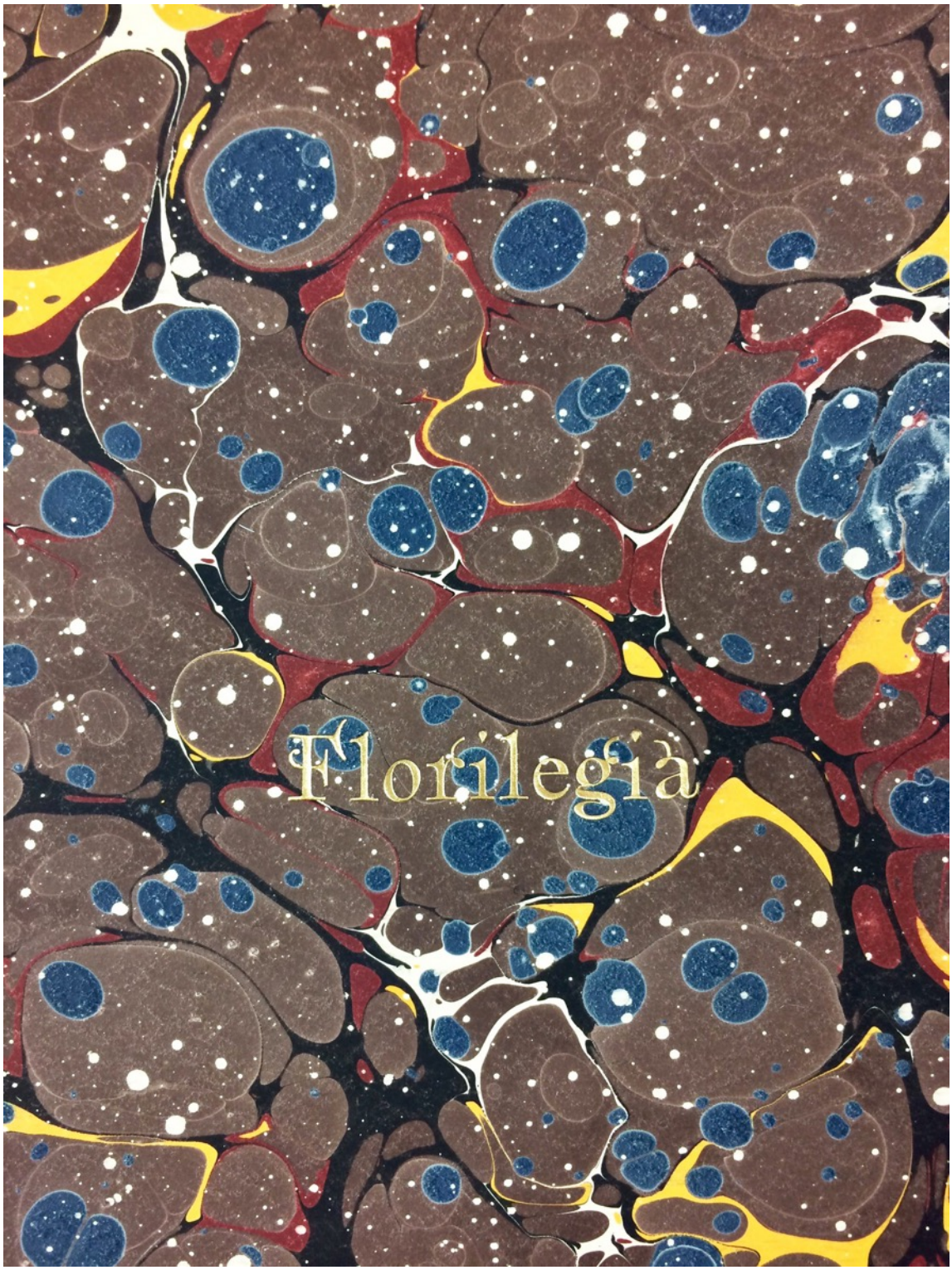

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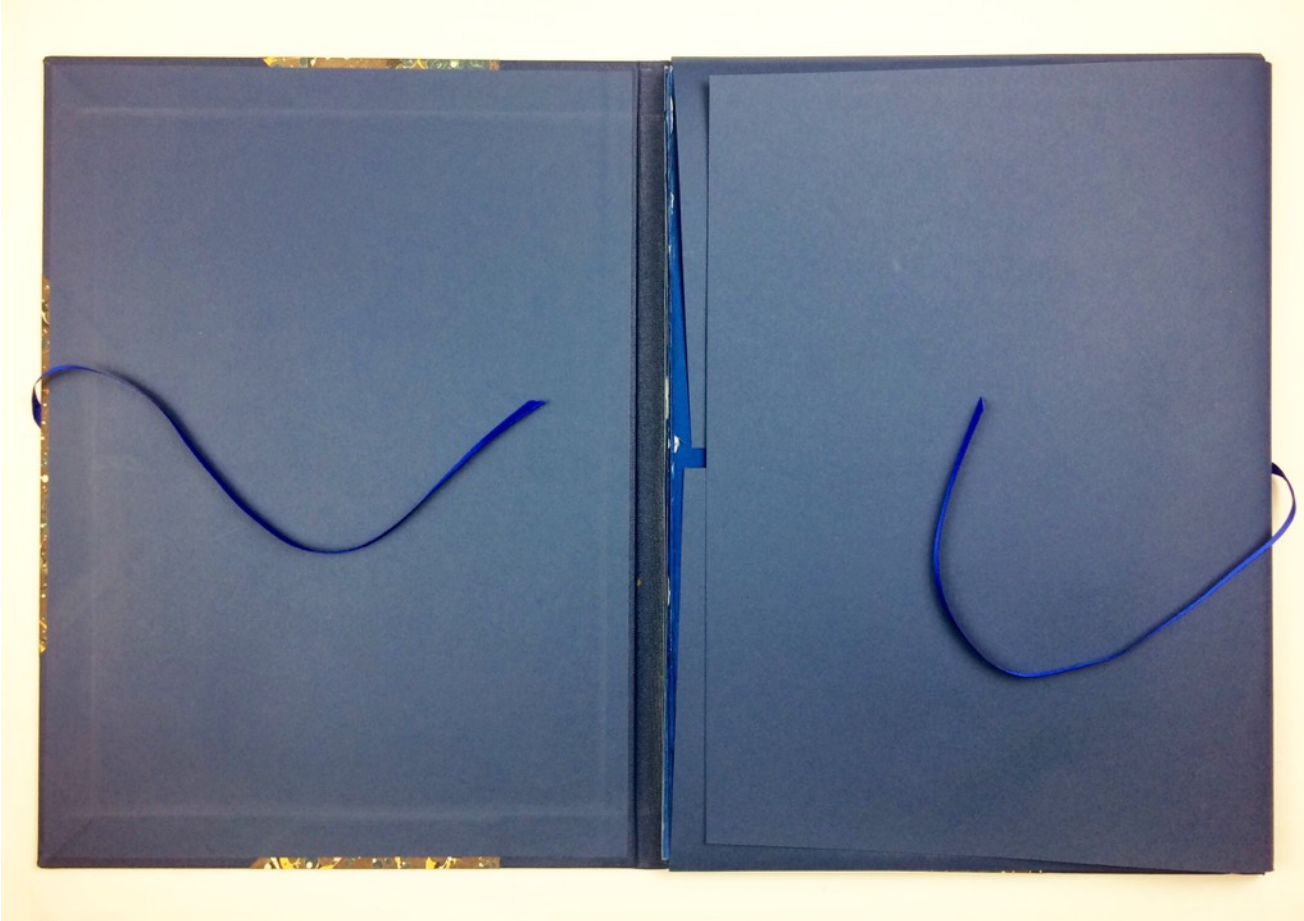

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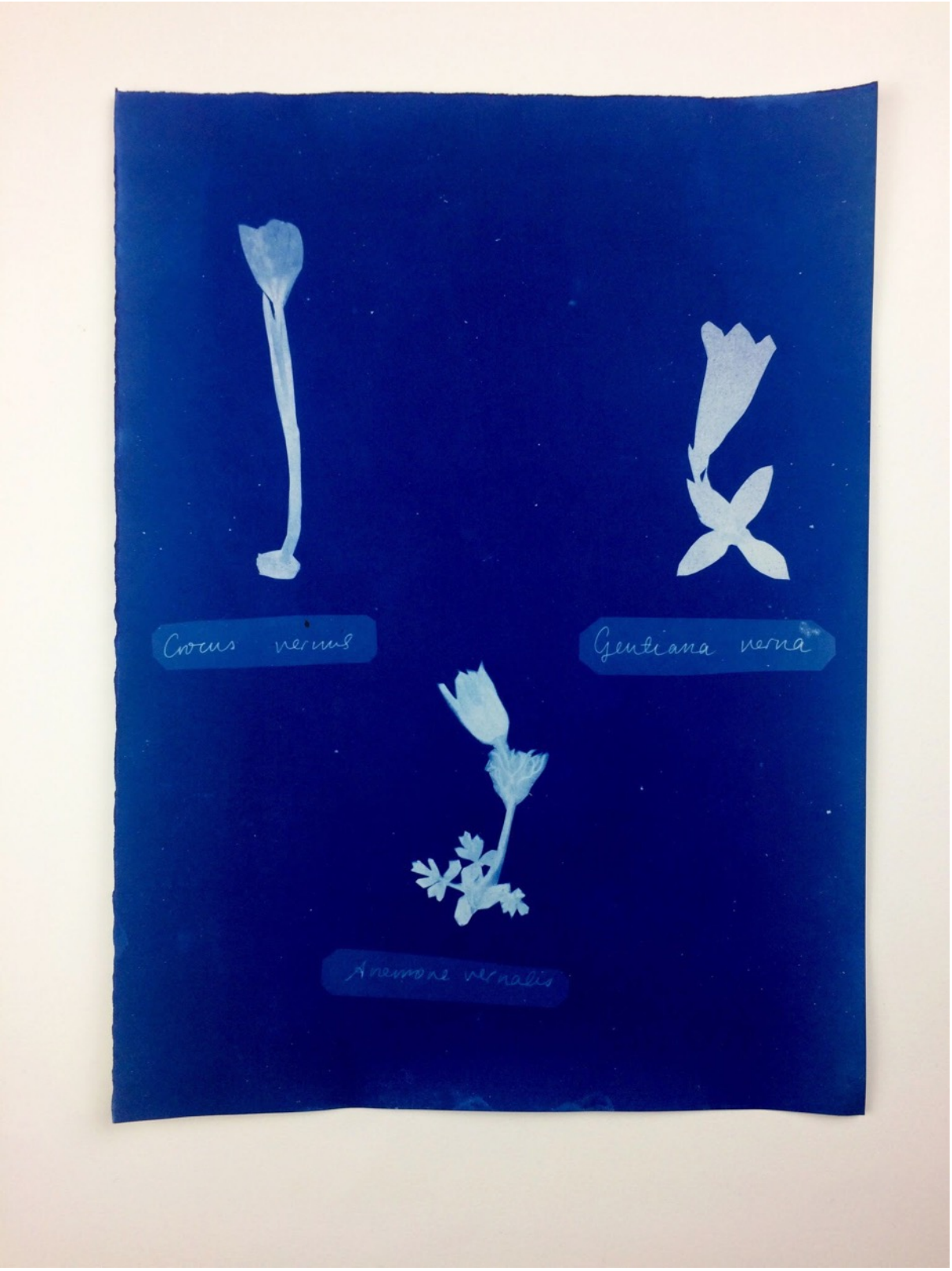

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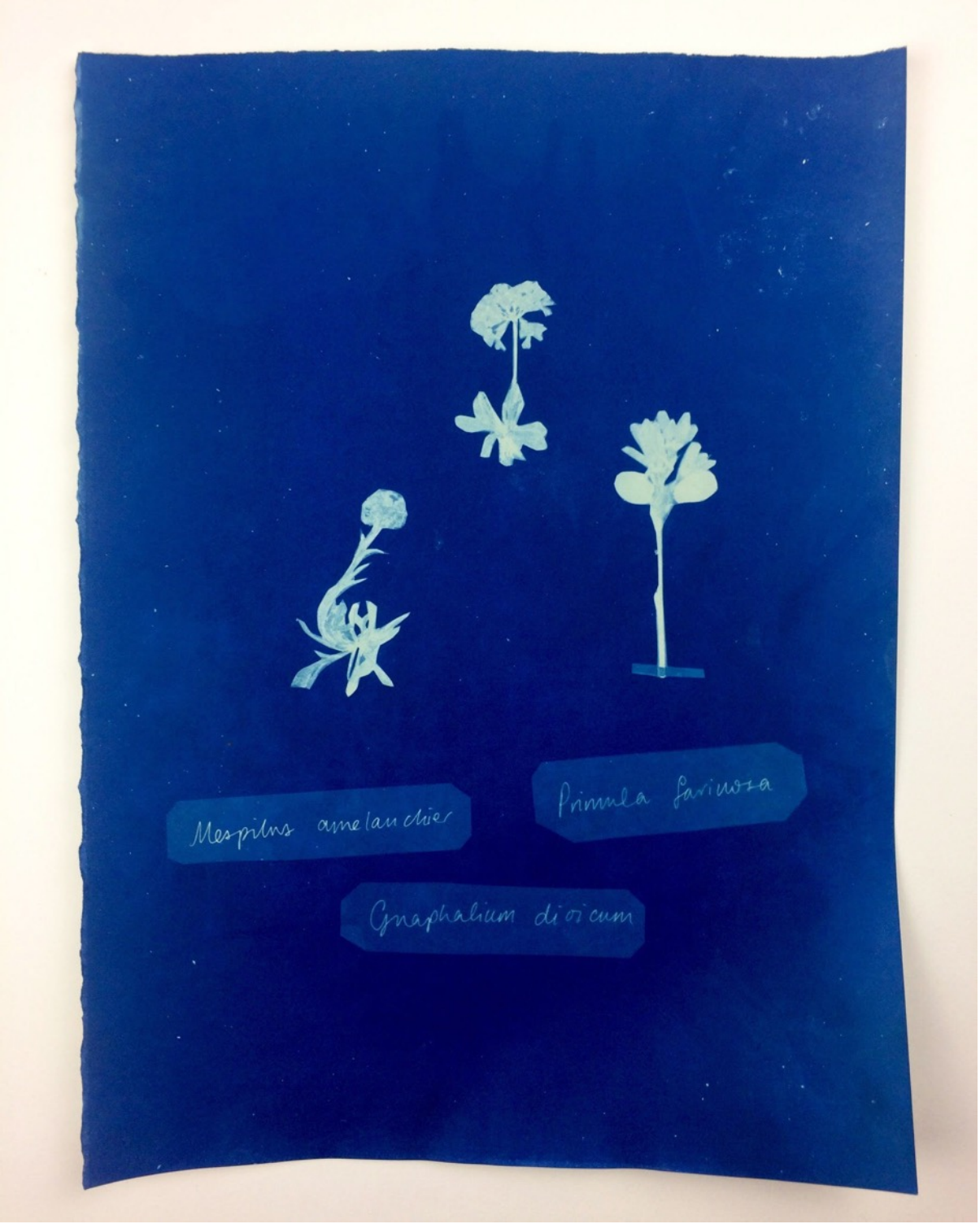

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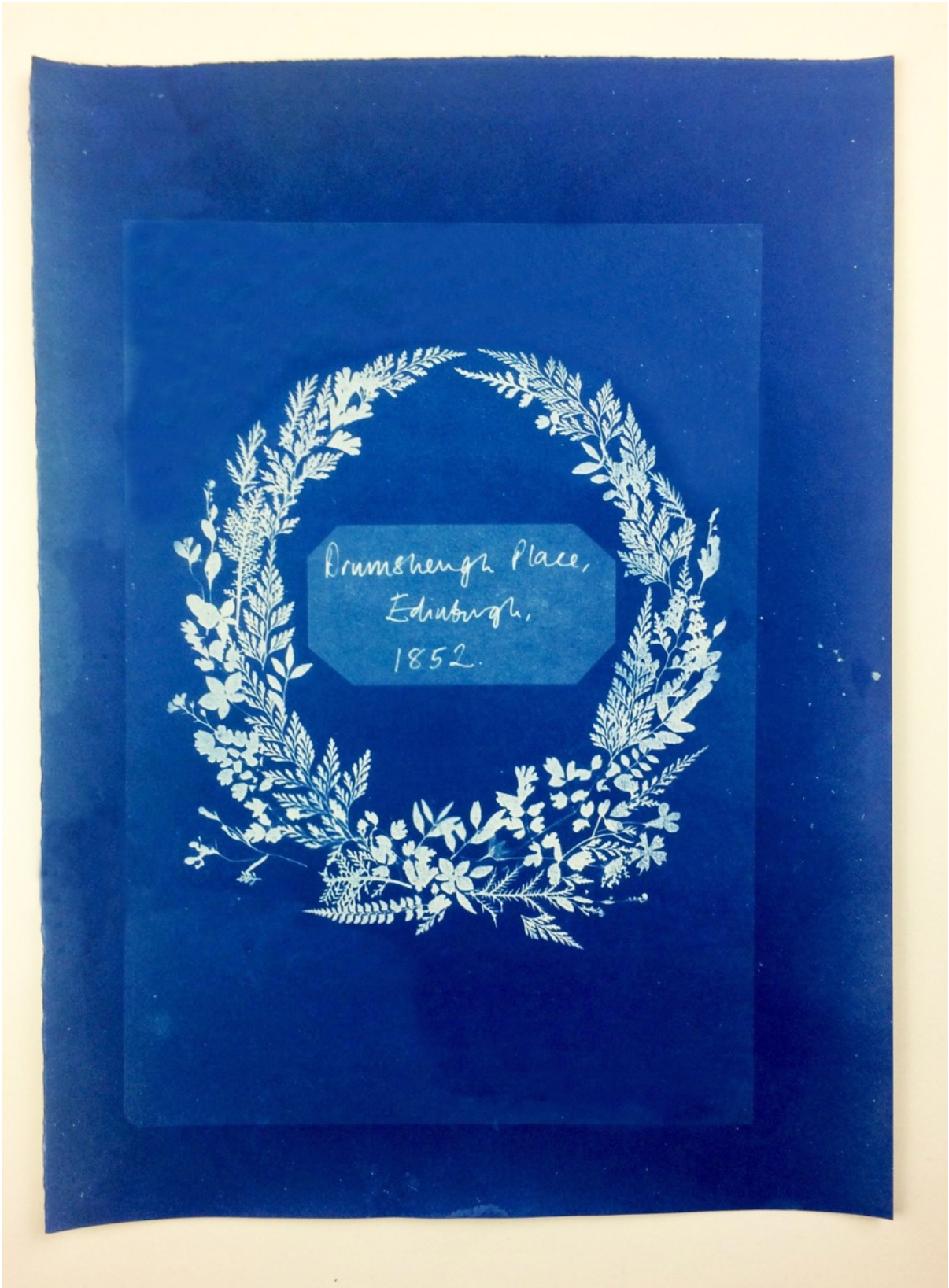

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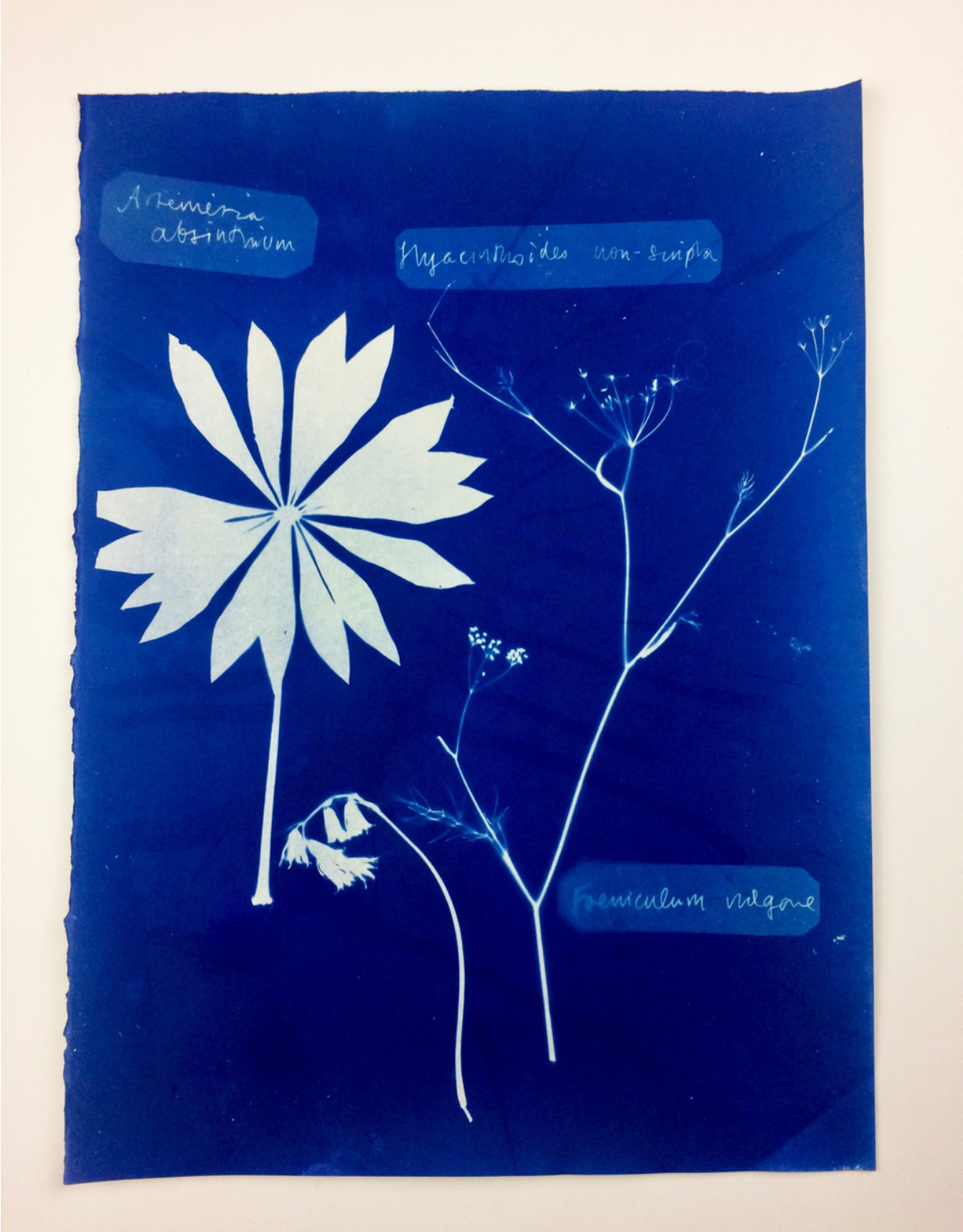

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