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Amanda Watson

Book History, Volume 18, 2015, pp. 103-133 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: [10.1353/bh.2015.0006](https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2015.0006)



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SHARED READING AT A DISTANCE



The Commonplace Books of the Stockton Family, 1812–40

Amanda Watson

On November 1, 1864, 74-year-old Mary Stockton Harrison took out her handwritten commonplace book of poetry and wrote a dedication to her nephew Robert F. Stockton, Jr., on its flyleaf, bequeathing it to him after her death “in token of my affection and gratitude to him & his for their unvariable kindness and tenderness to me.” She had begun copying poems into the volume, a bulky gilt-edged blank book, as a young bride in 1812; she and her family and friends had continued to do so into the 1850s. The book’s 200 leaves were mostly full by the time she bequeathed it to her nephew Robert, more than fifty years after she began it. As Mary Harrison turned the pages of her collection, she held the record not only of decades’ worth of her own reading, but of a web of family relationships that her commonplace book both commemorated and helped to keep alive. It contained a trove of published poems selected, shared, and re-copied by Mary and her sisters, including several poems about or by members of the Stockton family (including, in a few cases, Mary herself). The volume that Robert Stockton inherited from his aunt was more than a collection of favorite quotations; it was a repository of strong family attachments, expressed through an engagement with poetry.

Mary Harrison was not the only member of her family to compile a commonplace book. Two of her younger sisters, Caroline Stockton Rotch and Annis Stockton Thomson, followed her example with collections of their own, as did Caroline’s son Horatio Rotch.¹ The five surviving commonplace books of the Stockton family include large shared clusters of favorite poems, which the compilers evidently read together, copied again and again, and handed on to later generations. Together, they reveal an under-examined function of commonplacing in antebellum America: that of maintaining family ties by extending the communal reading that typically took place at home—one person reading aloud as other family members listened while working at domestic tasks—across the dimensions of space and time.² The Stockton sisters began their reading lives together in one household, where

the influence of their grandmother, the poet Annis Boudinot Stockton, may well have predisposed them to take an interest in poetry. After marriage and relocation separated them, commonplace gave them a physical reminder of their shared reading and an opportunity to continue reading together during their visits to each other.

The Stockton family's commonplace books call into question several common assumptions about the format and its uses. First, commonplace books have often been described as tools for shaping the individual self. For the Stockton sisters, however, the practice of transcribing extracts highlighted their connection to their family of origin; their compiling habits were as much collective as individual, relying on each other's selection principles as much as their own. Second, commonplace books of the specific type compiled by the Stockton family—miscellaneous, haphazardly organized collections of mostly literary quotations, with contributions from loved ones—tend to be interpreted as monuments to the past, commemorating never-to-be-seen-again friends and dead relatives. But Mary Stockton Harrison and her sisters, though they participated in this type of memorialization, all spent years copying poems from and into each other's collections. During the years in which all three sisters were actively compiling, their commonplace books were very much part of their lives in the present tense.

This study of the Stocktons is part of a larger project analyzing the contents of more than forty American commonplace books of poetry, compiled primarily in New England and spanning the length of the nineteenth century. Not all of the compilers of these collections can be identified, but many were young women. Their contents overlap but also vary widely, revealing oscillations between shared reading and individual taste. Sentimental and religious lyrics predominate, with many poems focusing on love, death, and mourning. And while now-canonical poets make regular appearances, many of the poems in the commonplace books I have examined either were written by forgotten poets or appeared anonymously in the periodical press. In some ways, the Stocktons' commonplace books are typical of their time, but they are highly unusual in that they present an extensive record of a group of compilers working together. A close analysis of these collections as a group suggests that the practice of shared reading and transcription within families may have been more extensive than the often-anonymous archival record suggests. In this article, I examine the Stockton commonplace books as a group, focusing on their shared collecting practices; I end by suggesting how this group of documents can change our understanding of the many other nineteenth-century commonplace books that survive in libraries and archives.

These poetry commonplace books, also referred to as “extract books,” are part of a late branch of a long tradition—a tradition to which scholars of the history of reading have paid significant attention in recent years. In early modern Europe, a commonplace book was a handwritten notebook of short quotations from many authors, compiled from a person’s reading and organized under topical headings. With antecedents reaching back to classical rhetoric (particularly the branch of classical rhetoric that dealt with memory), the commonplace book was often used as a study aid, an extension of the compiler’s memory, or a source of ornamentation for the compiler’s own writing.³ Commonplace books were tools for students, scholars, authors, clergymen, and lawyers, among others.⁴ Early modern readers also compiled less organized, more miscellaneous commonplace books, many containing poetry; Arthur Marotti observes that this type of commonplace book was “the main ancestor of those sixteenth- and seventeenth-century miscellanies and anthologies in which we find lyric poems.”⁵ Readers continued making commonplace books through the eighteenth century, thanks in part to the very popular system introduced in John Locke’s *A New Method of a Common-Place-Book* (1706), which allowed the compiler to maximize page space by placing the organizational apparatus into an alphabetical index, using the rest of the book to collect extracts.⁶

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the term “commonplace book” was also being used in England to describe a collection of extracts, selected by one or several readers and copied without any formal organizational scheme. William St Clair notes that during the Romantic period, both men and women created commonplace books, with men tending to compile “notebooks of useful information, often with more prose than verse,” while women focused more exclusively on literary quotations.⁷ Although these literary commonplace books, the successors of the early modern miscellany manuscripts described by Marotti, should be distinguished from the traditional commonplace book because they lack its headings and alphabetical organization, they still retain many of the features that Adam Smyth describes as characteristic of early modern “commonplace book culture,” including “the appropriation of materials as the compiler’s own,” “the collection and deployment of fragments, not wholes,” and evidence of multiple compilers.⁸ Compilers referred to these collections not only as commonplace books but with a variety of titles suggesting their miscellaneousness, including “‘Beauties’, ‘Rhymes’, . . . ‘Gleanings’, ‘Extracts’, ‘Excerpta’, ‘Miscellanies’ and ‘Scraps’.”⁹

The history of the commonplace book in early America parallels its history in England. What began as an information-retrieval system for learned

men developed into a looser, less organized way for less learned male and female readers to record favorite passages. Commonplace books formed a regular part of the education of future clergymen in seventeenth-century New England.¹⁰ Early American colonists such as Massachusetts schoolmaster and preacher Thomas Weld and Pennsylvanian settler Daniel Pastorius kept organized commonplace books, compiled along traditional lines, as information retrieval systems and tools for their scholarship; so did politicians like Thomas Jefferson.¹¹ Commonplacing also helped ordinary readers supplement their reading in rural or remote areas where books were scarce, expensive, or otherwise hard to come by. By transcribing passages from borrowed books and periodicals, readers could retain their own copies for rereading after the borrowed materials were returned.¹²

By the early nineteenth century, commonplace books had become part of the education of young women in the United States, as well as a popular domestic pastime.¹³ In Enos Hitchcock's 1790 didactic novel *Memoirs of the Blooms Grove Family*, both the son and the daughter of the family are "directed to keep a common place book, to note the material occurrences, the books they read, . . . and to transcribe some of the most remarkable passages they contained."¹⁴ Preacher and author John Todd recommended that young women augment their education by using a traditional type of commonplace book, "a kind of Index Rerum, in which you may note down the book and the page which treat on a particular subject."¹⁵ Todd also produced a printed *Index Rerum* to help readers with his first recommendation. His *Index Rerum* is organized along the lines of John Locke's method, but uses short citations instead of copied extracts. Todd considered this method easier than the traditional commonplace book, because "Making extracts with the pen is so tedious, that the very name of a Common-place Book is associated with drudgery, and wearisomeness."¹⁶ Like Hitchcock, Todd viewed commonplace books primarily as records of a young person's reading, but still saw a use for transcription; he also recommended that young women keep "a book of extracts from such books as you cannot own, or which are rare and curious," even as he cautioned that copying too much would "injure . . . and nearly destroy" the memory.¹⁷ The poet Lydia Sigourney also advised against too heavy reliance on copying extracts in *Letters to Young Ladies* (1833), on the grounds that it weakened the memory. Nonetheless, she published her own collection of extracts in 1863, noting in the preface that she drew from "a voluminous mass of manuscripts which owe their existence to the ancient adage of reading with a pen or pencil in the hand."¹⁸

This type of nineteenth-century commonplace book has much in common with its kindred genres, the friendship or autograph album and the scrapbook. The friendship album was designed to collect contributions from friends, and tended to include short quotations and original verses, along with drawings, mementoes, and the signatures of the friends in question. Such albums were often compiled by young women either in school or on the verge of leaving it.¹⁹ The scrapbook, which gained in popularity as the nineteenth century went on and printed materials became cheaper, grew out of the commonplace book and album traditions but replaced the tedious task of hand-copying with the more efficient method of cutting and pasting.²⁰ The boundaries between these formats frequently blurred. Pasted or pinned newspaper clippings appear in some of the commonplace books in my larger sample, and many include contributions and signatures from friends of the compiler.

Ann Moss sees the commonplace book's shift from an organized scholarly tool to a miscellaneous collection of extracts as evidence of its decline and fall into triviality, "foreshadowed in the seventeenth century, accelerated in the eighteenth century, and . . . irreversible by the nineteenth." For Moss, "the last of its several metamorphoses, as an album of favourite lines of poetry put together haphazardly," marks its ultimate irrelevance.²¹ My project contests this claim. Nineteenth-century commonplace books still performed important cultural work: they helped numerous readers, including many women, interact with literary texts in an intimate but distinctly social way. Moreover, they offer literary historians and historians of reading a compelling set of evidence for the everyday interactions between ordinary, non-scholarly readers and the texts these readers considered important enough to record.

Scholars have tended to emphasize the commonplace book's role in what Stephen Greenblatt calls "self-fashioning," whether the self being fashioned is a student, an eloquent writer, a cultivated person who can perform membership in his or her social class, a clever and cynical man, or a marriageable young lady.²² In this view, commonplace books become (in the words of Thomas Koenigs in a recent article on Henry David Thoreau's relationship to the commonplace tradition) "reflections of the self, defined in relation to printed materials."²³ I argue here that the antebellum American commonplace book reflects not only the self in relation to printed texts (which it undoubtedly does), but also the self in relation to other people and their reading. Like the friendship album, the commonplace book could and did preserve quotations rendered significant by their association with (or their

selection by) the compiler's friends and relatives. While we cannot always know what prompted a compiler to choose one passage over another, I would suggest that one strong motivation for nineteenth-century readers' transcription of extracts was the simple fact of their having appealed to a close friend or a relative. Commonplace book compilers may have made their selections on the basis of their association with loved ones' tastes in literature. Reading could thus reawaken and continue those connections, even when readers were separated from each other.

The Stockton family's collections of poetry allow us to see shared reading practices far more clearly than most surviving American commonplace books from this period. A number of scholars have discussed the nineteenth-century commonplace book as evidence of reading practices in both Great Britain and North America. However, with a few exceptions, such as Stephen Colclough's discussion of British "reading communities" that transcribed poems together, there has been little exploration of commonplace books by readers who knew each other.²⁴ Relationships between compilers can be difficult to prove: numerous commonplace books survive in special collections and archives, but unless the compiler was a historically significant figure, we cannot always determine a commonplace book's origins. Many of the examples I have examined are either anonymous or bear the name of a person whose life is unrecorded outside of census records. The appearance of the same poem in more than one commonplace book from approximately the same time and place may indicate a shared reading network, or it may simply reflect a poem's overall popularity or the extent of the circulation of a periodical or a printed book in which the poem appeared.

The Stockton family's commonplace books provide a notable exception. Because of the family's political prominence in New Jersey, their papers have been preserved in several archives, and they and their Princeton home have been the subjects of more than one history. From the Stockton family's correspondence and the internal evidence of these commonplace books (particularly Mary's), we can reconstruct the place of the sisters' poetry collections in their lives. I turn now to an outline of the Stockton sisters' biography as reflected through their commonplace books; I will then discuss the contents of their commonplace books in greater detail. As we will see, collecting, transcribing, and sharing poetry was a lifelong activity for at least one of the Stockton sisters, and it helped bring the three of them together literally and figuratively.

The Stockton Family and Their Commonplace Books

Mary, Caroline, and Annis Stockton were born into a family with a literary bent. They were the granddaughters of Richard Stockton (1730–81), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Annis Boudinot Stockton (1736–1801), a noted coterie poet who established an intellectual and cultural center around Morven, their home in Princeton, New Jersey.²⁵ Annis Boudinot Stockton belonged to a group of intellectual Philadelphia-area women, some of whom kept commonplace books and many of whom wrote and exchanged poetry.²⁶ A few poems and a journal entry by Annis Stockton's friend Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, for example, were collected in the commonplace book of the Quaker author Milcah Martha Moore.²⁷ Annis Stockton also avidly read the British poets of her time. She admired the Ossian poems of James Macpherson, from which she took the name "Morven" for the Stockton family's house, as well as the poems of Alexander Pope, James Beattie, and Edward Young. The grotto at Morven may have been inspired by Pope's grotto at Twickenham, which her husband Richard Stockton visited.²⁸ Richard and Annis Stockton's son, the younger Richard Stockton (1764–1828), became a lawyer and served in the Senate and the House of Representatives. He and his wife Mary Field Stockton had nine children. Mary, the eldest, was born in 1790, Caroline in 1799, and Annis, evidently named after her grandmother, in 1804. To judge by the collections of poetry the Stockton sisters left behind, Annis Boudinot Stockton's literary interests carried over into her granddaughters' lives.

The story of the Stockton family's commonplacing begins with Mary's marriage in 1812 to William Harrison of New York. She began her commonplace book in that year and signed her married name on its first page. Around the time of her marriage she wrote a poem, "Farewell to Morven," bidding goodbye to her childhood home and attesting to her ongoing ties to her family of origin:

Tho' far from all I hold most dear,
I go new joys, new friends to find,
Yet oft shall memory linger here,
And dwell on all I've left behind.
No change of place or change of name,
Can make my heart one instant stray.²⁹

When Mary copied this poem into her commonplace book around 1815, several years into her married life, her childhood home and family were evidently still much on her mind. Her commonplace book would also comfort her after more permanent separations. In December 1815, the Stockton family suffered an unexpected loss: the death of Mary's younger brother Horatio, an eighteen-year-old midshipman in the United States Navy, after an injury received at sea. According to one family history, it was Mary who nursed him during his last hours.³⁰ In the first shock of grief for Horatio's death, Mary returned to a poem she had previously copied into her commonplace book, Hugh Kelly's "The Mourning Mother." This poem, which appeared in Kelly's posthumous collected works in 1788 and was reprinted in several American periodicals, is in the voice of a mother lamenting her daughter's death. Mary had transcribed a longer version of the poem near the beginning of her commonplace book. But a week after Horatio died, she selected two non-consecutive stanzas from "The Mourning Mother" and copied them again, adding (unusually for her) the full date, one week after Horatio's death:

Pardon just heaven! but where the heart is torn
 The human drop of bitterness will steal
 Nor can we lose the privilege to *mourn*
 Till we have lost the faculty to *feel*,
 O make me then all seeing power resign'd,
 Thy awful fiat humbly to receive;
 And O forgive the weakness of a mind
 That *feels* as mortal and as such must *grieve*
 Dec 10th 1815³¹

Mary omitted all the parts of this poem that specify the speaker as a bereaved mother and the deceased as a young girl. Instead, she chose more general lines about loss and heartache, and while she included the poem's final prayer for resignation, she made sure to include its acknowledgement of "the human drop of bitterness" which cannot be denied. Out of a poem about a grieving mother, she selected the lines most applicable to her own situation as a newly bereaved sister.

Nor was this Mary's only response to her brother's tragic death. She herself wrote two elegies for him, which appear in her commonplace book a few pages after the extract from "The Mourning Mother." The first poem speaks directly of her sense of unexpected loss:

Horatio, Horatio! when last on my veiw [sic],
Thy vigourous form slowly faded,

. . .

How far was I then from forboding this storm,
Nor dreamt, bou'd with hopes balmy breath
My roof shou'd receive thy pale trembling form,
And my hand smooth thy pillow of death.

Like Mary's extract from "The Mourning Mother"—indeed, like much of the elegiac poetry that Mary and her sisters copied—this poem begins by lamenting a death, and moves toward a sense of resignation to the inevitable and hope for the lost loved one's place in heaven: "Thou hast gone to thy father I do not repine," the poem concludes, "Horatio my Brother farewell!" In the second of these two elegies, entitled "The Dying Sailor," Horatio himself speaks, asking his loved ones not to grieve for his impending death:

O weep not for me, tho' the winter winds piping,
A requiem sound o'er my newly made grave,
Nor more from thy eyelid the salt tear be wiping,
I have liv'd with the virtuous and die like the brave.

By assuming Horatio's voice, Mary offers direct reassurance to herself and to the rest of her family, stepping back from her own grief to imagine Horatio's consoling response to it.

Her poems found an audience in at least one of her sisters. Annis Stockton was still a child when her brother Horatio died, but Caroline, then in her teens, began her first commonplace book between 1816 and 1818. Among the first entries, she copied part of "The Mourning Mother" and, a few pages later, Mary's two elegies for Horatio, titling the first one "On the Death of a Brother."³² She would, as we will see, copy all of these poems again when she compiled a second commonplace book as a young married woman. In a tribute that perhaps deliberately paralleled her sister's elegiac poems, Caroline was to name her son Horatio seven years later.

In 1819, Annis Stockton followed in her sisters' footsteps and began assembling her own collection of poems. Caroline finished her first commonplace book around 1819, to judge by the date on one of the final entries. Later in the same year, Caroline and Annis apparently both received matching leather-bound albums with their owners' names stamped on the front. Annis's book also has the year, 1819, stamped on the cover, and Caroline's begins with her signature and the date November 16, 1819. The gift may

have been prompted by Caroline's approaching marriage to William Rodman Rotch of New Bedford, as the first few pages in her album are taken up by an affectionate letter from her father, offering advice and wishing her happiness in her married life. Caroline divided her new album into two sections: "Fugitive Pieces," in which she transcribed many of the poems from her first commonplace book and then continued to add new ones, and "Original," a section begun at the back of the book. The "Original" sequence contains ten poems, including three by Annis Boudinot Stockton and five by Mary Stockton Harrison, plus one attributed to the Stockton sisters' cousin John Rush and one anonymous poem entitled "Lines address'd to Mrs Caroline S. Rotch." The poems by Mary Harrison in this second collection again include "The Dying Sailor" and the first elegy for Horatio, this time entitled "On the Death of H. Stockton who died Dec. 3d 1815."³³

Annis seems to have spent less time on her commonplace book than her sisters did on theirs. All of the dates on her entries fall between 1819 and 1821, and she left more than half the pages of her book empty. Although Annis transcribed fewer poems than her sisters, her collection provides an important piece of evidence about the Stockton sisters' commonplacing practices: she sometimes noted where particular entries were copied, and the place names indicate that the sisters brought their commonplace books when they visited each other. Various pages in Annis's commonplace book are headed "N. Bedford" or "N.B.," "Princeton," and "N. York," reflecting both time spent at home and trips to see her married sisters.³⁴ None of the surviving letters among the Stockton sisters seem to indicate that they exchanged poems through the mail; their sharing of favorite poems likely took place in person, as one sister brought out her commonplace book for another to copy from (or into).

Meanwhile, all was not well with Mary's marriage to William Harrison. In 1827, Mary took the decisive (though not unprecedented) step of leaving her husband and returning to Princeton.³⁵ John Pintard, a friend of the Stockton family, blamed the failure of the marriage on William Harrison, calling him "a bankrupt & a sot" and "incapable of sustaining himself in adversity," but also hinting that Harrison could not match his wife's intellectual and social stature: "Mr H. had neither mind nor education . . . Intemperance his resource, to wh he is falling a martyr. Mrs H. cd not elevate a man in society, below her rank & attainments, her mortification has long been extreme."³⁶ Pintard's description of Harrison as having "neither mind nor education" suggests a further incompatibility between him and a wife who evidently devoted time and effort to her literary reading and who was

admired for her intellect and sophistication. (In an 1820 letter to Caroline Stockton, whom he was soon to marry, William Rotch praised Mary for “her conversation, . . . strength of mind and uncommon cultivation.”³⁷) The cracks in the Harrisons’ marriage may have started appearing years earlier, if two prose aphorisms that Mary copied in 1821 are any indication: “The Land of Marriage has this peculiarity; that those who are on the outside wish to get in; and those who are within wish to get out,” and “A wife shou’d submit to her husband but her husband shou’d submit to reason.”³⁸ Whether or not these quotations indicate an underlying ambivalence or cynicism about marriage is unclear, but they are suggestive.

Mary lived at Morven for the next ten years, during which time her commonplacings tapered off. Her immediate family seems to have supported her after the separation. As she wrote to Caroline, “indeed everybody is considerate and affectionate to me and I sh[oul]d be an ingrate if I was not satisfied with such a host of *Comforters* as I have in my beloved sisters *alone*.”³⁹ Unable to remarry, however, Mary must still have led a circumscribed life, and the family circle she relied on for support shrank over the years. After her mother’s death in 1837, Mary seems to have moved in with her sister Annis and brother-in-law John Thomson. Annis’s declining health may have been the reason; she died in 1842, at the age of 38. Mary was updating her commonplace book infrequently by that point. But at the top of a page headed “1842,” she copied Charles Wolfe’s elegiac poem “To Mary,” which begins

If I had thought thou couldst have died,
 I might not weep for thee;
 But I forgot, when by thy side,
 That thou couldst mortal be.

That Mary copied this poem in response to Annis’s death is clear from her alteration of one line: where Wolfe’s poem reads “And now I feel, as well I may / Sweet Mary, thou art dead!”, Mary Harrison wrote “Sweet *Nanny* Thou art dead.”⁴⁰ As when Mary re-copied the stanzas from “The Mourning Mother,” her selection of this poem comments directly on the death of a sibling. She must have felt profoundly alone after Annis’s death, with her parents gone and her surviving sisters, her “*Comforters*,” married and far away. A diary of Mary’s from 1843 attests to her lingering grief and sense of isolation: the day after the first anniversary of Annis’s death, she wrote “I am alone—no one cares *here* for me—O for the wings of the Dove to fly away & be at rest to fly to thee beloved Sister—child—friend!”⁴¹ Later

that year, according to this diary, she relocated to live with her sister and brother-in-law Julia and John Rhineland on Long Island. She remained at their home until at least 1864, when she dedicated her commonplace book to her nephew, and died two years later in 1866.

While Mary resettled in Princeton, Caroline, the only Stockton sister to have children, was raising her son Horatio and daughter Mary in New Bedford; at least one of them carried on the family tradition of commonplaceing. Caroline seems to have added to her commonplace book until at least the early 1830s, given the publication dates of some of the poems in it. She may have read to her children from it; at any rate, her teenage son followed her example. Horatio Rotch did not put a date on his own commonplace book, but it seems likely that he compiled it at Harvard University, which, according to his niece Kate Hunter Dunn, he attended between 1838 and 1841.⁴² He used the 1837 third edition of John Todd's *Index Rerum* for his collection.⁴³ Like many users of the *Index Rerum*, Horatio ignored Todd's instructions for indexing his reading and simply copied entire poems.⁴⁴ He signed the front flyleaf "Mr. Horatio S. Rotch, comp." Several pages of notes on the French Revolution, a poem about a college prank entitled "Harvard. University. College. Justice," and a section headed "Professor H. W. Longfellow's. Poems" all seem to reflect Horatio's study at Harvard.⁴⁵ But seven of the poems in Horatio's collection also appear in his mother's commonplace book, suggesting that he used her collection as a source. The final entries in Horatio's collection are two extracts from Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, first published in 1842; he likely finished his collection around this time, at the age of twenty.

Horatio Rotch's subsequent life was a short one. He studied medicine at Columbia University for several years after leaving Harvard, then made several long sea voyages for the sake of his fragile health,⁴⁶ though a letter he wrote to his mother from San Francisco suggests that he was also hoping to find work as a physician in California. Disappointed in this hope—"I cannot see any use in remaining," he wrote, because "[t]here are but few Physicians that get much practise"⁴⁷—he returned home to New Bedford, where by June of 1850 he was gravely ill. Captain Charles W. Morgan of New Bedford made several entries in his diary mentioning Horatio's illness, his "constitution . . . all broken down by excessive drinking in California from whence he lately returned," and his death and funeral in New Bedford.⁴⁸ His loss was a severe blow to Caroline Rotch; it must have reminded her of the death of the other Horatio, her brother, thirty-five years before. "I saw Aunt Caroline a few days ago," one of her nephews wrote to his sister

several months after Horatio died. “She looks altered and seems very sad indeed. She talked about Horatio.”⁴⁹ Caroline herself did not outlive her son by many years; she died in 1856. By the time Mary Stockton Harrison died ten years later, she had outlived all three of her sisters.

Shared Poems in the Stockton Commonplace Books

The most striking feature of the Stockton sisters’ commonplace books is the large number of poems they copied from each other. Their commonplace books all testify to a family network that their marriages did not sever, a network that the activity of commonplacing helped them maintain. Twenty-eight of the same poems or plays are quoted in all three sisters’ commonplace books.⁵⁰ Mary’s and Caroline’s collections share an additional 37 poems, Caroline’s and Annis’s share an additional 16, and Annis’s and Mary’s share an additional 33. If we include Horatio Rotch’s commonplace book, the total number of poems shared by at least two members of the family comes to 118. Over half of the quotations in Annis’s and Caroline’s commonplace books (58% and 65% respectively, counting both of Caroline’s collections) are from poems also copied by at least one other family member. In Mary’s collection, the most extensive and the first begun, 41% of the nearly three hundred identifiable quotations are from the shared poems.⁵¹ Mary’s commonplace book contains all but twenty of the shared poems, suggesting that her sisters each copied their extracts from her. The fact that she lived in New York, between Annis’s home in Princeton and Caroline’s home in New Bedford, possibly accounts for the fact that Annis’s and Caroline’s collections have fewer extracts in common with each other than they do with Mary’s commonplace book.

What led the sisters to select the poems they did? Not all of the poems in the “core” group shared by all of the sisters are similar in tone, style, or content. However, examining this group of poems together reveals several recurring themes, most notably the need to cope with loss and the strong bonds between family members. A strong elegaic current runs through this cluster of poems, from an extract from Byron’s “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers” describing the death of the poet Henry Kirke White (several of whose poems also appear in Mary’s and Annis’s commonplace books) to James Montgomery’s elegy for the stillborn child of England’s Princess Charlotte, Robert Southey’s elegy “The Dead Friend,” and Amelia Opie’s “The Mourner” and Hugh Kelly’s “The Mourning Mother,” which both

portray grief-stricken women. The parent-child bond, and the mother-daughter bond in particular, also surfaces as a prominent theme in the core group of poems. It appears not only in “The Mourning Mother,” but also in Mary Mitford’s “The Voice of Praise,” which eulogizes a mother’s “voice of magic power”; an anonymous poem called “The Babe,” in which a mother rescues her child from a near fall from a cliff; and a poem about filial piety called “Lines to a daughter (who devoted herself wholly to the care of a sick mother),” accompanied by an excerpt from Pope’s “Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,” which declares Pope’s resolution to “rock the cradle of reposing Age, / With lenient arts extend a Mother’s breath.” The sisters’ favorite poems celebrate the strength of family ties and offer models for coping with the inevitable feelings of loss when these ties are severed by death. Perhaps the Stockton sisters were drawn to these poems in particular after the tragic loss of their brother, or perhaps they were also reflecting on their separation from their parents’ home after their marriages.

But the poems embody family ties in more than a thematic way. As I have already noted, Mary and Caroline both collected clusters of poems by or about members of the family, including several poems by their grandmother, Annis Boudinot Stockton. Mary, who was eleven years old when Annis Boudinot Stockton died in 1801, would have been the only one of the Stockton sisters old enough to know her literary grandmother. Her memory may well have encouraged her oldest granddaughter to write poetry herself. At least one of Mary’s poems (“A Farewell to Morven”) appeared in print during her lifetime.⁵² In another poem appearing in both Mary’s and Caroline’s collections, “To Robert F. Stockton on his departure for the Coast of Africa,” Mary wishes her brother Robert (later a commodore in the United States Navy) a safe passage on a sea voyage he undertook in 1820.⁵³

Another “family” poem, written not by but about a member of the Stockton family, is “The Bald Eagle and the Whip-Poor-Will,” one of the few poems copied by all three sisters and Horatio Rotch. This poem appears in Mary’s commonplace book with the title “Impromptu. Written in the gallery of the House of Representatives during Mr Richard Stockton’s reply to Mr Charles Ingersol’s satirical speech.”⁵⁴ This incident took place in Congress in 1814; a transcription of the poem can be found in an article on Richard Stockton from the *Northern Monthly Magazine* in 1867, but the sisters must have had access to the poem much earlier.⁵⁵ “The Bald Eagle and the Whip-poor-will” allegorizes Richard Stockton as “a bold bald eagle” and his oratorical opponent as a mocking and “irksome” “whip-poor-will.” In the poem, Stockton’s speech in Congress becomes the eagle’s lethal attack on the smaller, less worthy bird. All three Stockton sisters included this hu-

morous mock-heroic portrait of their father in their collections of extracts; like Mary's "Farewell to Morven," it must have been a reminder of the home they had left behind.

The order and dating of the poems in these commonplace books casts a further light on the sisters' reading habits, showing when and where they copied each other's selections as well as which selections they shared. Although not all of the Stockton sisters dated their entries consistently, sequences of transcription can still be determined. It appears that Mary established some of the family favorites first, between 1812 and 1818. Caroline then copied some of these poems into her first commonplace book, subsequently transcribing them into the second commonplace book that accompanied her to New Bedford, which begins with a series of poems that also appear in her earlier book. Toward the middle of Caroline's second book are thirty poems that also appear in Mary's book but not in Caroline's first collection. Many, though not all, of these poems appear in Mary's commonplace book between 1819 and the early 1820s, at around the same time Annis was also copying poems. The period from 1819 through 1821 seems to have been a time when all three sisters were compiling their collections simultaneously.

Occasionally we can guess which sister copied a poem first. The poem entitled "Lines to a daughter (who devoted herself wholly to the care of a sick mother)" appears in Mary's commonplace book in a section dated 1821; in Annis's commonplace book around the same time; and in Caroline's New Bedford commonplace book.⁵⁶ The first part, which begins "Thine is the fate of many a lonely flower, / That wastes on deserts wild its youthful bloom," is an adaptation of a poem that appeared anonymously in a short-lived miscellany magazine called *The Omnium Gatherum*, published in Charleston in 1821. The second part is adapted from Alexander Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." In the *Omnium Gatherum*'s printing of this poem, the quotation from Pope appears immediately after it, prefaced by a note indicating that the first poem is a translation from a now-lost French poem. The lines from Pope follow.⁵⁷ Annis Stockton and Caroline Stockton Rotch transcribed the two extracts as a single poem; Mary Harrison transcribed them as two sections, separated by a horizontal line. It is impossible to establish exactly when these extracts were copied in each commonplace book, but it seems likely that Mary copied the two extracts together first, and her sisters, in re-copying them, assumed they were continuous.

In a few cases, we can use the sisters' transcription patterns to reconstruct where they were when they copied from each other. From the dates and place names in Annis's book, we can see that several of the poems and

extracts that she shared only with Mary were copied in New York in April 1821. By September of the same year Annis was in New Bedford, copying at least one of the poems she shared only with Caroline. A month later, both Mary and Annis seem to have been visiting Caroline. A poem written by Mary appears in Caroline's commonplace book, dated "Oct. 20, 1821," and Annis copied a series of prose extracts from Mary's commonplace book into her own during the same month. The October 1821 dates in Annis's and Caroline's commonplace books for poems evidently transcribed from Mary's collection suggest that all three sisters were in the same place at the same time, reading the poems that the others had selected and picking out the ones they wanted to preserve for themselves. At least a few poems seem to have been copied by one sister into another's collection; the transcript of "The Bald Eagle and the Whip-Poor-Will" in Mary's commonplace book, for example, appears to be in Caroline's hand.⁵⁸ For all three of the sisters, then, in-person visits formed a significant part of their commonplacing practices.

Horatio Rotch's collection offers a chance to see how the family's favorite poems were transmitted to another generation. His *Index Rerum* contains seven "family" poems: the anonymous "The Bald Eagle and the Whip-Poor-Will," "The Outlaw," and "A Tale"; Thomas Moore's "To Sigh, Yet Feel No Pain" (evidently a favorite with his mother, as it appears three times in her two commonplace books); George Canning's "Inscription for the Tomb Erected to the Memory of the Marquis of Anglesea's Leg"; Edward Everett's "Alaric, the Visigoth"; Nathaniel Parker Willis's "On a Picture of Children Playing"; and Edward Coote Pinkney's "A Health."⁵⁹ The latter three poems and "The Outlaw" appear only in Horatio's and his mother Caroline's collections. Horatio appears to have had a pronounced taste for lighter poetry, favoring the humorous poems of contemporary poets like Oliver Wendell Holmes and Thomas Hood and selecting comic poems like "A Tale" and Canning's "Inscription for the Tomb" from his mother's collection. But he also made sure to include the "Bald Eagle" poem about his grandfather. There is no internal evidence that Horatio copied from any family commonplace book other than his mother's; if he was at Harvard when he compiled it, he may have consulted Caroline's book during visits home to New Bedford.

The most frequently occurring poets in each commonplace book can give us an idea of the shared and diverging literary tastes of the family. Lord Byron, Thomas Moore, and William Shakespeare are the poets most frequently quoted by all three sisters; Moore is quoted a total of 62 times across all three sisters' collections, Byron 53 times, and Shakespeare 32

times. Sir Walter Scott was also clearly a favorite, to judge by the extracts from *Rokeby* that appear in all of the commonplace books, the extracts from “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” in Mary’s and Annis’s books, and the sequence of extracts from *The Lady of the Lake* in Annis’s collection.⁶⁰ The core poems look backward to the poets of the eighteenth century (Pope, Cowper, Montgomery) as well as forward to the Romanticism that was becoming established in America. Annis and Mary transcribed nearly all of the family’s extracts from Shakespeare’s plays (a taste which Caroline did not seem to share, aside from a lone quotation from *Measure for Measure* in her first collection). Both of them also mined Alexander Pope’s “An Essay on Man” for quotable passages.

In many ways, the Stockton sisters’ commonplacing habits are in line with their contemporaries, both British and American. Many others shared their fondness for Byron and Moore, who are by far the most frequently quoted identifiable poets in my sample of 46 commonplace books: half of the collections I have examined contain poems by Byron, and an even greater number (25) contain poems by Moore. Nearly every commonplace book in my sample from the first half of the nineteenth century contains at least a poem or two by one or both of these poets. The Stockton sisters’ fellow American commonplacers also frequently transcribed Shakespeare, Scott, and Burns. In addition, the sisters selected well-known poems of their day by less prominent poets. Caroline and Mary, for example, both selected Charles Wolfe’s “The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna,” whose popularity as a recitation piece Catherine Robson has traced and which William St Clair has found in a large number of British commonplace books.⁶¹ In his study of British commonplace books from the same period, David Allan finds that compilers showed a predilection for short quotations from Shakespeare and Pope, much as Mary and Annis Stockton did; he also notes the rapid rise of Byron as a favorite poet for commonplacers.⁶²

Finally, in Horatio Rotch’s commonplace book, a younger and more predominantly American set of poets appears: Oliver Wendell Holmes (nine poems), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (seven), Nathaniel Parker Willis (five), William Cullen Bryant (four), and Hartley Coleridge and John Greenleaf Whittier (three each). With the exception of Coleridge, all of Horatio’s favorite poets are Americans, and several are from the so-called “Fireside” or “Schoolroom” group of New England poets that included Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, and James Russell Lowell. Moore and Byron each appear twice in Horatio’s book, and Cowper once. While his mother and aunts favored a very British canon, heavy on poets of the eighteenth century and the early Romantic era (with Shakespeare as the one repeatedly quoted poet

from before the eighteenth century), a majority of the 45 identifiable poets Horatio transcribed were born in 1790 or later, and most of the poems were published after 1800. Twenty-nine of the identifiable poets in Horatio's book are American, as opposed to only eleven English or Irish poets. (An additional three poets are of unknown nationality.) In Horatio's commonplace book we can see, in one generation, the emergence of a cohort of American poets, and specifically a New England cohort of poets.

Horatio's interest in American poets marks a shift in the family "canon." Even in Mary's commonplace book, to which she continued to add poems off and on for decades, only a handful of American poets appear, and poets born after 1790 make up less than a third of the total. The older generation of the Stockton family doubtless favored British poets in part because of the smaller number of American poets active during the 1810s and 1820s and the prevalence of British literature in the American book market during this period.⁶³ But their preference may also be due to already-established family literary tastes; Annis Boudinot Stockton's fondness for the British poets of her own time may well have affected her granddaughters' choices of poetry for their own collections. Of the three Stockton sisters, Caroline included the largest number of American poets (17 between her two commonplace books), suggesting a degree of continuity between her taste and her son's, or their shared access to the same sources.

What emerges from the evidence of the Stocktons' reading habits is a portrait of a family of readers who read the most popular poets of their day—Byron, Moore, and Scott in the 1820s, Longfellow and his fellow New England poets in the 1840s—but who were also deeply aware of what their relatives were reading (and, in a few instances, writing). They participated with varying degrees of enthusiasm in the popular activity of commonplacing, but each of them used his or her book of extracts as a space to preserve and renew the family connections that bound them together. For Mary in particular, and probably for her sisters as well, collecting poems associated with the family and poems about loss and grief also provided consolation in the face of the inevitable deaths of family members.

Sources of the Poems

The Stockton commonplace books can also help us see where antebellum American readers were likely to encounter poetry in print. In addition to copying from each other's collections, the members of the Stockton family

probably gathered extracts from a variety of printed sources. All three of the sisters tended to provide attributions to poets, and sometimes to a source. British periodicals—available to American audiences via reprints, whether piecemeal in “eclectic” magazines or reprinted in their entirety⁶⁴—appear to have provided the sisters with numerous poems for their collections. Attributions to “Blackwood[’s] Mag[azine]” (or “Black W Mag,” or “B W Mag”) appear after a number of poems in Mary’s and Annis’s commonplace books, and a few extracts are also attributed to “Edinburg R[evue]” or “Edin Review.” Mary also gives “Portfolio,” “the Aberdeen Journal,” “Quarterly Review,” “Monthly Mag,” “the Hudson Northern Whig,” and “Mo. Rev.” as sources.⁶⁵ Of these, the *Port Folio* (a Philadelphia magazine published from 1801 to 1827) and the *Northern Whig* (a newspaper published in Hudson, New York between 1809 and 1827) appear to be the only American publications. “Monthly Mag” apparently refers to the *New Monthly Magazine*, the source of a prose quotation that appears in Mary’s collection around 1821; “Mo. Rev.” is the *Monthly Review or Literary Journal*, from which Mary quoted a sentence from a review that appeared in September 1762. Mary may have drawn more extensively on the *Port Folio* than her occasional references to it indicate. Over thirty of the poems in her commonplace book appeared in the *Port Folio* between 1803 and 1825, including the extract from Byron’s *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Horatio Rotch seems to have drawn on periodicals to a much lesser degree: one poem in his collection is attributed to the “New-Haven Advertiser,” which may have been the *New Haven Journal and Religious Intelligencer*.⁶⁶ This appears to be the only poem he identifiably copied from a periodical.

Not all of the quotations in the Stocktons’ collections may have actually been copied from the sources they indicate. As Meredith McGill has shown, the antebellum American literary marketplace was marked by a “culture of reprinting” in which poetry and fiction were frequently excerpted and reprinted in the periodical press, often without authorization or attribution, or only with attribution to another periodical.⁶⁷ Book reviews, which frequently included lengthy quotations, formed another channel for the re-circulation of extracts from longer works by allowing readers to transcribe passages pre-selected by the reviewer.⁶⁸ Poems that circulated in this way, through the poetry pages or book reviews of newspapers and magazines, could also turn up in the pages of commonplace books and, later, scrapbooks.⁶⁹ An attribution to a particular periodical in a commonplace book can indicate that the compiler transcribed it directly from that periodical, but it can also indicate that she transcribed it from a reprint with an attribution to that periodical.

Occasionally, we can trace quotations in the Stockton commonplace books to a particular printed book. The series of extracts that Mary transcribed from Frances Arabella Rowden's *A Poetical Introduction to the Study of Botany* around 1816 begin with the heading "Description of the Jasmine from Rowdens Botany," suggesting that she transcribed these poems from a copy of the book; in 1820, she labeled two extracts "Warings travels in Switzerland," referring to Samuel Miller Waring's 1819 *The traveller's fire-side: a series of papers on Switzerland, the Alps, &c.*⁷⁰ A generation later, Horatio Rotch relied heavily on a single anthology to fill the pages of his own commonplace book. Thirty-two of the poems that he copied appear in the second and third volumes of Samuel Kettell's anthology *Specimens of American Poetry: with Critical and Biographical Notices* (1829). He misattributed one poem, "Anne Bullen" by Rufus Dawes, ascribing its authorship to Richard P. Smith—a mistake that becomes understandable when one realizes that this poem appears in the third volume of Kettell's anthology on a page with Smith's name in a running title.⁷¹ This was not the only book of poems Horatio seems to have consulted: a cluster of poems by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow near the beginning of Horatio's collection begins with "Extracts from the Voices of the Night," likely transcribed from Longfellow's 1839 collection *Voices of the Night*.

Each member of the Stockton family, then, drew on his or her own set of sources for the poems that he or she did not copy from other family members. Mary and Annis seem to have relied most heavily on periodicals, and Horatio on Kettell's *Specimens of American Poetry*. (Caroline may also have had access to this anthology, since one of the poems that she and Horatio both copied, Edward Coote Pinckney's "A Health," appears in it, as do four or five other poems that she copied.) Each family member intermingled individual selections with shared family favorites, producing distinct but strongly connected collections. Horatio's *Index Rerum*, a generation removed from his mother and aunts' commonplace books, has the smallest number of poems in common with them, but still clearly shows that he read and drew on his mother's collection. While he did not transcribe any of the poems written by his aunt Mary or his great-grandmother Annis Boudinot Stockton, his preservation of "The Bald Eagle and the Whip-Poor-Will" demonstrates that the poems in the family collections could still communicate a sense of familial identity and history.

Conclusion

Neither Mary Stockton Harrison nor Annis Stockton Thomson left behind children, as Caroline did. But both of their commonplace books remained in family hands. Mary, as I have noted, left hers to her nephew, while Annis's commonplace book bears the bookplate of her great-nephew Bayard Stockton. The fact that Mary kept her collection of extracts for so many years and considered it a "token of [her] affection" suggests how important these poems were to her, and perhaps to her nephew as well.⁷² Later generations of Stocktons would not have needed these commonplace books in order to read the poems of Byron, Moore, and Scott, which were still in print in the 1840s and 1860s. But the more ephemeral pieces culled from periodicals and, more importantly, the collection of poems by and about the Stockton family, would have been much harder to come by. The gift of a mother's or an aunt's cherished collection of poems ensured that the next generation could still read the family's literary legacy, and that they could retain something of the personality of the women who compiled it.

As legacies of a family's past, these commonplace books, like many others, can be read in the context of the nineteenth-century culture of literary sentimentality. If the sentimental can be defined as the mode in which emotions are expressed in conventionalized language, in which memorial keepsakes circulate, and in which bonds between people are paramount, then the commonplace book exemplifies this mode.⁷³ It recirculates familiar poems, many on themes of love and death; it preserves evidence of close ties of kinship and friendship; and it communicates feeling from one reader to another. Scholars have sometimes framed nineteenth-century albums and commonplace books as sentimental texts whose primary concern is memorializing the past and preserving mementoes of sundered relationships. Thus Catherine Kelly, examining young New England women's friendship albums from the antebellum period, argues that the friendships commemorated in these volumes rarely survived the separations caused by the end of formal schooling and the beginning of married life.⁷⁴ Albums and commonplace books, according to this account, preserved evidence of relationships that were ending. In a similar vein, Mary Louise Kete invokes "the three signal concerns of the sentimental mode . . . *lost* homes, *lost* families, and *broken* bonds," to explain the mourning poems in a commonplace book from the 1830s and 1840s, which she describes as "driven by the need to address loss."⁷⁵

The Stockton family clearly viewed commonplace books and the poems in them as vehicles for strong emotions, including loss and grief. We can see this tendency in Mary's appropriation of poems to express her sorrow at

the deaths of her siblings; in the elegies she wrote herself; and in Caroline's preservation of these poems. We can also see it in a letter from Robert Field Stockton to his sister Caroline shortly before her departure for her new married life:

A conviction of the want of ability to ornament it by beautiful and romantick expressions of thought—and not the want of an earnest desire—has prevented your Brother Robert from asking one solitary page in your Album—Though his professional pursuits has lost to him the opportunity of that cultivation of mind which renders the expression of our feelings so easy and agreeable, yet they have not destroyed his heart nor blunted his affection.⁷⁶

Robert Stockton's concern here is with his ability to summon the "beautiful and romantick" figurative language that Caroline expected for her "Album." But, he insists, the feelings are there, even if he lacks the "cultivation of mind" to express them. His disclaimer both teases at and underscores his sister's belief in poetry as a conduit for emotion.

However, although sentimentality helps to explain the Stockton family's commonplacing practices, this is not the whole story. Many of the Stockton sisters' favorite poems foreground the sentimental topoi of lost love and mournful memory. And yet, as we have seen, these collections do more than preserve evidence of sundered relationships, or dwell on the losses the family suffered. They were, at least during the 1820s, living documents that grew as the sisters read independently and then visited each other and shared their readings. Despite their separate households, the Stockton sisters' shared sets of favorite poems helped to bridge the physical distances between them, reminding them of previous time spent together and reuniting them when they visited each other. For the Stockton sisters, commonplacing was a shared activity that continued well into their lives as married women living at a distance from each other.

In an unusually philosophical letter to Caroline in November 1826, less than six months before she left her husband, Mary Stockton Harrison reflected on the human tendency toward unfulfilled desire:

in every heart there is a secret spring of bitterness wh. flows sometimes too deep for mortal sight—but is no less surely there—and I often think woud I change lots with such and such a person with much apparant happiness? and always come to the determination, not without I knew where their secret sorrows have their source . . .⁷⁷

Perhaps Mary Harrison was referring to her own “secret sorrows,” or perhaps she was consciously or unconsciously echoing some of the poems she transcribed around the same time, including an extract from Chauncy Hare Townshend’s “The Lonely Heart” beginning with the stanza “Ah, little deems the blind, dull crowd, / When gazing on a tranquil brow, / What thoughts and feelings unavow’d, / What fiery passions lurk below!” Perhaps she was also thinking of the lines from “The Mourning Mother” that came into her mind after her brother’s death, about the “human drop of bitterness” that steals into the grieving heart. She concluded her letter by drawing an explicit parallel between her sudden shift into seriousness and her own life:

So with this Composing Sentiment I close my letter wh. I think is something like my life—to first sight flippant, gay and rather pert—but the farther you investigate or read—the more grave you think it—and when you sum the whole up—know not—whether it be gay or grave or whether you shou’d laugh or cry

Her commonplace book, like her letter, reflected the blend of laughter and tears that she saw in her own experiences. Light verse and popular love lyrics mingled with didactic poetry, somber elegy, and “Composing Sentiment[s],” some of which Mary herself had written. A young woman’s seemingly inconsequential pastime (“to first sight flippant, gay and rather pert”) could contain a whole life, with its joys and sorrows and its network of relationships. The act of shared reading helped to enmesh these family members in each other’s lives.

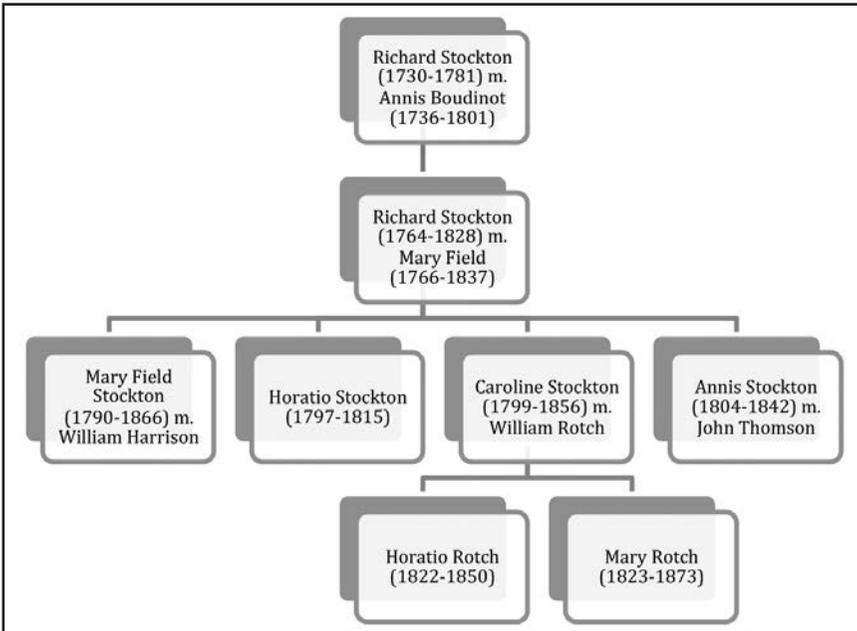
As I have mentioned, it is difficult to find surviving instances of shared commonplacing as extensive as these. But the Stockton sisters could not have been the only nineteenth-century American family who selected extracts together in a group, or copied poems that their relatives liked, or passed their commonplace books back and forth during visits. The traces of their reading habits can help us understand more about the uses of commonplacing in a family context. They can also help us see families’ domestic reading as an activity that extended far beyond the confines of a single household, to encompass family members who lived long distances from each other but who still managed to make a habit of reading together. American commonplace books from this period form a large, rich, diverse archive of evidence for the history of literary reception and everyday reading, one that deserves further study. Any number of social networks may be brought to light when we start examining the relationships that underlie their lovingly copied pages.

Appendix A: Poems transcribed by three or more members of the Stockton family

<i>Author</i>	<i>Poem title</i>	<i>Transcribed by</i>
Brooke, Arthur	Ballad Stanzas (When pain and hatred hemmed me round)	MSH, CSR, AS
Byron, George Gordon, Lord	<i>Don Juan</i>	MSH, AS, HSR
Byron, George Gordon, Lord	<i>English Bards and Scotch Reviewers</i>	MSH, CSR, AS
Byron, George Gordon, Lord	<i>The Corsair</i>	MSH, CSR, AS
Canning, George	Epitaph on the Tombstone Erected over the Marquis of Anglesey's Leg	MSH, CSR, AS, HSR
Dallas, Alexander Robert	Song (Toll not the bell of death for me)	MSH, CSR, AS
Gamage, C.G.	The Grave of the Year	MSH, CSR, AS
Goldsmith, Oliver	Song (O memory! Thou fond deceiver)	MSH, CSR, AS
Horne, George	On David Garrick's Funeral Procession	MSH, CSR, AS
Kelly, Hugh	The Mourning Mother	MSH, CSR, AS
Knowles, Herbert	Lines Written in the Churchyard of Richmond, Yorkshire	MSH, CSR, AS
Mitford, Mary Russell	The Voice of Praise	MSH, CSR, AS
Moir, David Macbeth	The Maniac's Plaint	MSH, CSR, AS
Montgomery, James	On the Royal Infant	MSH, CSR, AS
Moore, Thomas	Lines on the Death of Sheridan	MSH, CSR, AS
Moore, Thomas	To Sigh, Yet Feel No Pain	MSH, CSR, HSR
More, Hannah	Sensibility: An Epistle to the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen	MSH, CSR, AS
Opie, Amelia	The Mourner	MSH, CSR, AS
Pope, Alexander	Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot	MSH, CSR, AS
Scott, Sir Walter	<i>Rokeby</i>	MSH, CSR, AS
Shakespeare, William	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	MSH, CSR, AS
Southey, Robert	The Dead Friend	MSH, CSR, AS
Spencer, William Robert	The Emigrant's Grave	MSH, CSR, AS

Appendix A, continued

<i>Author</i>	<i>Poem title</i>	<i>Transcribed by</i>
Taylor, Jane	The Philosopher’s Scales	MSH, CSR, AS
Unknown	A Tale	MSH, CSR, AS, HSR
Unknown	In Memory of Lydia Miller	MSH, CSR, AS
Unknown	Lines to a Daughter, Who Devoted Herself Wholly to the Care of a Sick and Aged Mother	MSH, CSR, AS
Unknown	The Babe	MSH, CSR, AS
Unknown	The Bald Eagle and the Whip-Poor-Will	MSH, CSR, AS, HSR
Unknown	The Offspring of Mercy	MSH, CSR, AS



Appendix B: A partial Stockton family tree, showing persons mentioned in this article

Notes

I would like to thank the following people for their help with and comments on this article: the librarians and curators at the John Hay Library at Brown University, the Princeton University Library Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, the Newport Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Princeton; Jenny Furlong, Diana Greene, Susanmarie Harrington, Jessica McGivney, Paige Morgan, Karla Nielsen, Nina Pratt, Rachel Shaw, and Jill Smith; and two anonymous reviewers for *Book History*.

1. The five surviving commonplace books from this family are the following: Mary S. Harrison, "Commonplace book of poetry," 1864, Bound Manuscripts Collection, First Series, 1600–2000 (CO199, no. 455) Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Annis Stockton, "'Annis Stockton, 1819' (cover Title), Bound Volume," 1819–22, Stockton Family Papers, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Caroline Stockton, "Commonplace book," Undated, Bound Manuscripts Collection, First Series, 1600–2000 (CO199, no. 999) Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library; Caroline Stockton Rotch, "Commonplace Book, [ca. 1819–1821]," 1819, Hay Manuscripts, Brown University Library; Horatio Rotch, "Index Rerum: Or, Index of Subjects; Intended as a Manual to Aid the Student and the Professional Man," n.d., Hay Manuscripts, Brown University Library.

2. On communal reading in nineteenth-century American homes, see Ronald Zboray and Mary Zboray, *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 128–30, 132–38. For a later example, see Edward Mortimer Chapman, *New England Village Life* (Ann Arbor: Gryphon Books, 1971). Chapman's memoir of growing up in a Connecticut village in the later nineteenth century includes an account of his father's reading out loud to the family: "[reading] was one of this Farmer's chief avocations in the longer evenings and on occasional stormy afternoons. . . . he could be heard for hours on end without weariness" (95).

3. On the history of commonplace books up to and during the early modern period, see Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Joan Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York: Pageant Press, 1962); Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001); Peter Beal, "Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book," in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton, NY: Renaissance English Text Society, 1993), 133–47. Studies of commonplace books in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries include Lucia Dacome, "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (2004): 603–25; David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On commonplace books in early America, see Kenneth A. Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Susan Miller, *Assuming the Positions: Cultural Pedagogy and the Politics of Commonplace Writing* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998); Meredith L. McGill, "Common Places: Poetry, Illocality, and Temporal Dislocation in Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 357–74; Beth Ann Rothermel, "Prophets, Friends, Conversationalists: Quaker Rhetorical Culture, Women's Commonplace Books, and the Art of Invention, 1775–1840," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2013): 71–94.

4. For an example of a particularly massive commonplace book compiled by a lawyer in early modern England, see William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 127–48.

5. Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 19.

6. On Locke's method and its subsequent popularity, see Dacome, "Noting the Mind"; Havens, *Commonplace Books*, 55–58.

7. William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, England, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 225.

8. Adam Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture: A List of Sixteen Traits," in *Women and Writing, c. 1340–c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (Woodbridge, England: York Medieval Press, 2010), 94–95, 97, 106.

9. Stephen Colclough, *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 123. For a discussion of the looseness of the term "commonplace book" during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading*, 25–29.

10. David D. Hall, "Readers and Writers in Early New England," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, *A History of the Book in America* 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 132.

11. See Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 50–52; Patrick M. Erben, "'Honey-Combs' and 'Paper-Hives': Positioning Francis Daniel Pastorius's Manuscript Writings in Early Pennsylvania," *Early American Literature* 37, no. 2 (2002): 157–94; Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage*, 47–73.

12. See, for example, Alison M. Scott, "'The Cultivated Mind': Reading and Identity in a Nineteenth-Century Reader," in *Reading Acts: US Readers' Interaction with Literature, 1800–1950*, ed. Barbara Ryan and Amy M. Thomas (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 32.

13. On the role of commonplace books in early American education, see William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780–1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 47. For the use of commonplace books by students in colonial New England, see Samuel Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (Ithaca: Great Seal Books, 1960), 51–55.

14. Enos Hitchcock, *Memoirs of the Blooms Grove Family. In a Series of Letters to a Respectable Citizen of Philadelphia. Containing Sentiments on a Mode of Domestic Education, Suited to the Present State of Society, Government, and Manners, in the United States of America: And on the Dignity and Importance of the Female Character. Interspersed with a Variety of Interesting Anecdotes*, Early American Imprints, Series 1 22570 (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790), vol. 2, 189.

15. John Todd, *The Daughter at School*, 4th ed. (Northampton, Mass., 1854), 114, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044011418753>. I will discuss Todd's *Index Rerum* volume in more detail below.

16. John Todd, *Index Rerum, Or, Index of Subjects: Intended as a Manual, to Aid the Student and the Professional Man, in Preparing Himself for Usefulness, with an Introduction, Illustrating Its Utility and Method*, 4th ed. (Northampton: J.H. Butler, 1839), 5.

17. Todd, *The Daughter at School*, 115, 113.

18. Lydia Howard Sigourney, *Letters to Young Ladies, by a Lady* (Hartford, Conn.: P. Canfield, 1833), 70, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89098886872>; *Selections from Various Sources*, 1st ed. (Worcester, Mass.: John H. Turner, 1863), Preface (n.p.), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89098860331>.

19. Scholarship on the history of the friendship album includes W. K. McNeil, "From Advice to Laments: New York Autograph Album Verse: 1820-1850," *New York Folklore Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (June 1969): 175-94; W. K. McNeil, "From Advice to Laments Once Again: New York Autograph Album Verse: 1850-1900," *New York Folklore Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (June 1970): 163-203; Anya Jabour, "Albums of Affection: Female Friendship and Coming of Age in Antebellum Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 2 (1999): 125-58; Todd S. Gernes, "Recasting the Culture of Ephemera," in *Popular Literacy: Studies in Cultural Practices and Poetics*, ed. John Trimbur (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 120-26; Erica R. Armstrong, "A Mental and Moral Feast: Reading, Writing, and Sentimentality in Black Philadelphia," *Journal of Women's History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 78-102.

20. For a history of the nineteenth-century American scrapbook, see Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). On the tendency of commonplace books, scrapbooks, and diaries to merge into each other, see Ronald Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, "Is It a Diary, Commonplace Book, Scrapbook, or Whatchamacallit? Six Years of Exploration in New England's Manuscript Archives," *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 44, no. 1 (2009): 101-23.

21. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, 1-2.

22. For the commonplace book as self-fashioning, see, for example, Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage*, 4; Mark R. M. Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and Their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820* (Leiden, the Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2010), 185.

23. Thomas Koenigs, "The Commonplace Walden," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 59, no. 3 (2013): 459-60.

24. Colclough, *Consuming Texts*, 130-34.

25. Annis Boudinot Stockton's poems and an account of her life may be found in Annis Boudinot Stockton, *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton*, ed. Carla Mulford (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

26. On the literary circle that included Annis Boudinot Stockton (a circle which included several women who kept commonplace books), see Susan Stabile, *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 9-14, 80-82.

27. Milcah Martha Moore, *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America*, ed. Catherine L. Blecki and Karin A. Wulf (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 200, 259, 260. On Moore's use of the commonplace book format, see Catherine Blecki's introduction to this volume, 61-69.

28. Constance M. Greiff and Wanda S. Gunning, *Morven: Memory, Myth & Reality* (Princeton: Historic Morven, Inc., 2004), 40, 62-63.

29. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry."

30. Alfred Hoyt Bill and Constance M. Greiff, *A House Called Morven: Its Role in American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 76.

31. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry."

32. Caroline Stockton, "Commonplace Book, Undated." This commonplace book, now in the Princeton University Library, is undated, but the presence of Mary's elegies for Horatio in its opening pages suggest a start date of no earlier than the end of 1815, while an extract dated "February 3rd 1819" appears near the end of the poem sequence. The 1815-1819 date range implies that Caroline compiled this commonplace book first, then copied some of its contents into her later album dated 1819, and took the latter with her when she moved to New Bedford.

33. Stockton, “‘Annis Stockton, 1819’ (cover Title), Bound Volume”; Rotch, “Commonplace Book, [ca. 1819–1821].”
34. Stockton, “‘Annis Stockton, 1819’ (cover Title), Bound Volume.”
35. On the commonness of marital separation in nineteenth-century America, see Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 29–39. Hartog suggests that separation was considered a morally acceptable option for wives of alcoholic husbands (37).
36. John Pintard, *Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter, Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, 1816–1833*, ed. Dorothy C. Barck (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1940), v. 2, 349.
37. William R. Rotch, “Letter from William Rodman Rotch to Caroline Stockton,” March 8, 1820, Vault A, Box 35, Folder 6, Newport Historical Society.
38. The source for these quotations was a short-lived South Carolina periodical called *The Omnium Gatherum* (*The Omnium Gatherum*, n. 1 [1821], 11). The Stockton sisters also transcribed a poem entitled “Lines to a Daughter,” discussed below, from the same source. On the *Omnium Gatherum*’s brief history, see Sam G. Riley, *Magazines of the American South* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 157–59.
39. Mary Stockton Harrison, “Letter from Mary Stockton Harrison to Caroline Stockton Rotch,” June 3, 1840, Vault A, Box 35, Folder 7, Newport Historical Society.
40. Harrison, “Commonplace Book of Poetry.”
41. Mary Stockton Harrison, “Diary of Mary Stockton Harrison, 1843,” 1843, March 16, Stockton Family Papers MS 58, Box 12, folder 11, Historical Society of Princeton.
42. Kate Hunter Dunn, “Transcript of Letter to the Harvard Alumni Association,” March 11, 1910, Vault A, Box 90, Folder 8, Newport Historical Society.
43. Rotch, “Index Rerum.”
44. John McVey, “John Todd | Index Rerum,” *Jmcvey.net*, sections 3–4, accessed July 1, 2010, <http://www.jmcvey.net/rerum/essay.htm>.
45. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow held the Smith Professorship of Modern Languages at Harvard beginning in 1836. Whether or not Horatio Rotch studied with him is unclear.
46. Dunn, “Transcript of Letter to the Harvard Alumni Association.”
47. Horatio Rotch, “Letter from Horatio Rotch to Caroline Stockton Rotch,” July 29, 1849, Vault A, Box 35, Folder 7, Newport Historical Society.
48. Charles W. Morgan, “Diary, 1850 Feb 24 - 1851 Jun 7” (New Bedford, MA, 1850), 90, 95, 97, Charles W. Morgan Collection, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport, <http://library.mysticseaport.org/Manuscripts/CVollImage.cfm?BibID=35077&Volume=4>.
49. William J. Rotch, “Transcript of Letter from William J. Rotch to Joanna Rotch,” September 30, 1850, Vault A, Box 90, Folder 8, Newport Historical Society.
50. A fourth Stockton sister, Julia, was born in 1793 and married Dr. John Rhinelander of New York (Bill and Greiff, *A House Called Morven*, 82). I have only located one commonplace book belonging to her (Julia Stockton Rhinelander, “Commonplace Book of Julia Stockton Rhinelander,” n.d., Stockton Family Papers MS 58, Box 12, folder 23, Historical Society of Princeton). It contains primarily jokes, riddles, and short humorous verses. Four epigrams from Mary’s collection also appear in Julia’s commonplace book; otherwise, Julia seems not to have shared her sisters’ fondness for the family’s favorite poems.
51. This calculation includes quotations from longer works, such as Pope’s *An Essay on Man*, Byron’s *The Corsair* and *Don Juan*, and Shakespeare’s plays, from which the sisters did not always cull the same passages. Even when non-shared passages from these longer works are removed from the count, shared poems still account for 34% of Mary’s quotations, 52% of Annis’s, and 60% of Caroline’s.
52. “A Farewell to Morven” appeared in at least two periodicals in April 1829, *The Ariel* and *The Washington Whig*. (“Farewell to Morven,” *The Washington Whig*, April 18, 1829; “Farewell to Morven,” *The Ariel: A Literary Gazette*, April 18, 1829.)

53. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry"; Rotch, "Commonplace Book, [ca. 1819–1821]"; Greiff and Gunning, *Morven*, 104; Bill and Greiff, *A House Called Morven*, 88–144.
54. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry."
55. "Richard Stockton," *Northern Monthly Magazine*, September 1867, 431.
56. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry"; Stockton, "'Annis Stockton, 1819' (cover Title), Bound Volume"; Rotch, "Commonplace Book, [ca. 1819–1821]."
57. "Lines to a Daughter, Who Devoted Herself Wholly to the Care of a Sick and Aged Mother (Imitated from the French)," *The Omnium Gatherum*, 1821, 32–33.
58. This poem appears in Caroline's New Bedford commonplace book in a different hand, which bears a strong resemblance to one of the hands that appear in Mary's collection.
59. Rotch, "Index Rerum."
60. Each of the family members transcribed numerous poems whose authorship is anonymous or unknown (63 in Mary's book, 22 in Annis's, 9 and 23 in Caroline's two collections, and 13 in Horatio's).
61. Catherine Robson, *Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 191–218; St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, 226–28; Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading*, 209–10.
62. Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading*, 184–96, 196–202, 205–06. For Byron's popularity in the United States during the 1810s and 1820s, see William Ellery Leonard, *Byron and Byronism in America* (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), 19–35.
63. On the predominance of British texts in the American book market from the colonial period to the early nineteenth century, see St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, 374–83.
64. Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (New York: D. Appleton, 1930), v. 1, 130–31.
65. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry."
66. Rotch, "Index Rerum."
67. Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853*, Material Texts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1–5. On recirculation with attribution to other periodicals, see Garvey, *Writing with Scissors*, 40–41.
68. Leah Price, "George Eliot and the Production of Consumers," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 30, no. 2 (January 1, 1997): 157–58.
69. Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Anonymity, Authorship, and Recirculation: A Civil War Episode," *Book History* 9, no. 1 (2006): 159–61.
70. Harrison, "Commonplace Book of Poetry."
71. Rotch, "Index Rerum"; Samuel Kettell, *Specimens of American Poetry with Critical and Biographical Notices, in Three Volumes* (Boston: S.G. Goodrich, 1829), v. 3, 218; Rotch, "Index Rerum," 113.
72. Intergenerational transfer of commonplace books was common in Great Britain; see, for example, Smyth, "Commonplace Book Culture," 107–08. For an American example of a woman bequeathing her commonplace book to her granddaughter, see Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand & Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 181–82.
73. On sentimentality in nineteenth-century American poetry, see Joanne Dobson, "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature," *American Literature* 69, no. 2 (June 1997): 263–88; Christoph Irmscher, "Longfellow's Sentimentality," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 93, no. 3/4 (October 1, 2010): 249–80; Mary Louise Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).
74. Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 79–81. Anya Jabour has ob-

served similar tendencies in young women's friendship albums from Virginia (Jabour, "Albums of Affection"). For a counterpoint to this argument, see Armstrong, "A Mental and Moral Feast." Armstrong finds that African-American women in Philadelphia used their albums to maintain "a network of friends and acquaintances that would not be dismantled, but rather nurtured" (97).

75. Kete, *Sentimental Collaborations*, 17.

76. Robert Field Stockton, "Letter from Robert Field Stockton to Caroline Stockton," October 1, 1820, Vault A, Box 35, Folder 6, Newport Historical Society.

77. Mary Stockton Harrison, "Letter from Mary Stockton Harrison to Caroline Rotch," November 19, 1826, Vault A, Box 35, Folder 6, Newport Historical Society.