



Scraps and Sketches: Miscellaneity, Commodity Culture and Comic Prints, 1820-40

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This essay considers the emergent significance in the 1820s and 1830s of the market for engraved or lithographed images intended for use in albums and scrapbooks. Part of a wider development of the consumer culture for prints, scraps were a characteristic product in publishers' attempts to find a more varied and profitable market for their products. Largely derided by scholarly historians as trivial representatives of the debased and vulgar tastes consequent upon the democratization of the print market in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the market in scraps nonetheless offers an important insight into the ways in which visual culture adapted to change in this period. In particular, scraps drew women more extensively into the marketplace for prints, and were crucial in the development of an illustrated periodical literature. After offering a brief overview of the scraps trade and some description of the ways in which images were assembled and deployed in albums, this essay goes on to consider the reasons for the lowly critical reputation of scraps in an attempt to reinsert this genre more adequately into the historical narrative of print culture.

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