

Treasures of the Brotherton

Collections Highlights

Large Print Guide

From hand to print

Illuminating manuscripts

Introduction

The four manuscripts displayed here were collected by one of the University's greatest benefactors, Lord Edward Allen Brotherton of Wakefield (1856–1930). They are part of the remarkable library he amassed during the last eight years of his life, and which came to the University after his death.

Lord Brotherton was in his late sixties when he first encountered the world of rare books. In February 1922, the fifteenth-century manuscript of the

Wakefield Mystery Plays was offered for sale at Sotheby's in London.

Brotherton was MP for Wakefield from 1902 to 1910 and again from 1918 to 1922, and matters to do with the city were close to his heart. He went to London, accompanied by his niece-in-law Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, and had the manuscript valued, but at the auction he was outbid by A.S.W. Rosenbach, an American dealer acting on behalf of the Californian millionaire Henry Huntington.

On seeing Dorothy's disappointment, Lord Brotherton took her to the bookseller Quaritch to choose another book. They selected a fine copy of Andrew Marvell's "Miscellaneous

Poems”, a first edition from 1681, and caught the collecting bug.

In 1923 Lord Brotherton engaged the help of J. Alexander Symington, the son of a local second-hand bookseller, as his personal librarian. The pace at which he acquired material was staggering. By 1930 the collection contained over 35,000 books and pamphlets, 4,000 deeds, 30,000 letters and 400 other manuscripts, which means he was buying, on average, about 30 items every day for 8 years!

Lord Brotherton’s last public appearance was on 24 June 1930 when he laid the foundation stone of the library that bears his name.

1 [Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis], France, [c.1420s]

Lord Brotherton was determined that his personal library should contain fine examples of medieval illuminated manuscripts. This fragmentary book of hours produced in Paris contains exceptionally beautiful decoration. The illuminations are typical of the Gothic style in fashion at the turn of the fifteenth century in Paris, Milan, Prague, and every important court in Europe.

One large miniature representing King David (fol. 21r) is painted in the characteristically soft brushwork of the Bedford Master (possibly Haincelin of Hagenau). The illuminator used fine

tonal transitions of colour for modelling, with an almost complete absence of lines.

There is no evidence to suggest who might be the patron, but the manuscript can be dated to the 1420s, during the later stages of the Hundred Years War when the English occupied Paris. While local illuminators continued to work for their French patrons, they also acquired new masters from the English camp, most notably the English Regent of France, John, Duke of Bedford, after whom this illuminator has been named.

A skilled associate seems to have painted the surrounding medallions that narrate the story of David and Bathsheba, as well as the small

miniatures of the occupations of the months and the signs of the zodiac in the calendar at the front of the manuscript. One or more assistants are likely to have been responsible for the borders that decorate the outer margins throughout.

Lord Brotherton amassed his personal library during a concerted collecting spree between 1922 and 1930. When the London bookseller Charles Sawyer sent an advance listing of the latest medieval manuscripts he had for sale, Brotherton bought the whole lot in one audacious move.

The original Sawyer list survives in the collections at Leeds, dismantled, pasted onto new leaves and rebound as one of the Brotherton Collection

catalogues. In one swoop Brotherton had added fine examples of medieval manuscripts from England, France, the Low Countries and Italy to his collection.

Brotherton Collection MS 1

2 [Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis], [Netherlands], [c.1500]

This richly illuminated book of hours is written in Dutch. It was most probably made for a couple from the van Cuyck family, who are portrayed in a miniature of the Coronation of the Virgin. The feast days in the Calendar indicate that the manuscript was

prepared for use in the diocese of Utrecht, while the order of the texts suggests it was written in the city of Delft.

During the fifteenth century the van Cuyck family owned significant amounts of land in Culemborg, where they pursued successful careers as mayors, alderman and land agents. The patron of the manuscript might have been Anthonis, whose marriage to a girl from Utrecht in 1497 enabled the van Cuyck family to join the city's elite

One miniature may hold another clue to the identity of the patrons. An elf holding a coat of arms is a “moss person”, a sacred child-size creature from Germanic folklore who is clad in

moss and intimately connected to trees. In Dutch such a moss person was called “Trintje”, which is also a pet name for Katherine. Perhaps its inclusion and deliberate gaze toward the patroness is an allusion to her identity as a Katherine.

The manuscript was painted around 1500 by two different illuminators. The Coronation (fol. 17v). and seven further full-page miniatures are painted on single leaves and inserted before the main text sections and are in the distinct style of one of the Masters of the Dark Eyes. This was the most prolific group of Dutch illuminators at the time, who also enjoyed the patronage of Margaret of Austria. However, the most innovative and

accomplished images in the manuscript are the 48 small and very detailed historiated initials and column miniatures attributed to the so-called Master of the Adair Hours

Brotherton Collection MS 7

3 [Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis], [Italy], [ca.1480–1500]

The most beautiful Italian manuscript purchased by Lord Brotherton is a book of hours made for Niccolò Brogioni, a nobleman of Siena. We can identify the patron from his coat of arms on the frontispiece and by his given name, included in the

personalised prayers at the end of the manuscript. These are the most frequently handled and worn pages.

Niccolò Brogioni came from Pistoia, a city under Florentine rule at the end of the fifteenth century. He married Antonia di Guicciardo Forteguerri in 1473, and the couple had two sons, Francesco and Deifebo. Niccolò and his family became citizens of Siena in 1480, soon after the papal reign of Pius II Piccolomini (1458–1464).

The miniatures and decorated initials have retained their remarkable original vibrancy. The illuminator responsible is an assistant and follower of the so-called Master of the della Rovere Missals, possibly Jacopo Ravaldi, an

artist documented as working for the papal court in Rome.

The Brogioni Master appears to have been Ravaldi's assistant until about 1485, after which he continued to develop the style in his own commissions. In addition to the Brogioni Hours, this illuminator painted a book of hours for Giovanni Stefano Ferrero of Piedmont, bishop of Vercelli in 1493–1502, bishop of Bologna in 1502–1510, and cardinal in 1500.

The binding of this manuscript retains its decorative silver clasps and corners, but the blue velvet pile has almost completely worn away with use.

Brotherton Collection MS 10

4 [Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis], [England], [c.1470–1480]

The book of hours known as the Braddyll Hours was named after its sixteenth-century owners from Whalley Abbey in Lancashire. It was probably painted in London in the 1470s by an English illuminator. A different artist painted the borders, including a scene on the first page of the Hours of the Virgin in which a green parrot is used to symbolise the Virgin Mary

Parrots were exotic birds and highly prized in princely courts in Europe, but only rarely depicted by artists. Because of the parrot's ability,

according to contemporary encyclopaedia, to utter the word “Ave” in greeting (the word with which the archangel Gabriel greeted Mary at the Annunciation) they were also associated with the Virgin as an allegorical symbol.

All the main miniatures in this manuscript have been excised, except one funeral scene, which is badly smudged. References to various popes and Saint Thomas Becket, as well as rubrics and entire sections of texts, are scrubbed or struck out.

The deletions were carried out in accordance with royal injunctions of 1535–1538, seemingly by the Braddyll family. It should not be assumed that these excisions were made in order to

ensure the book could remain in devotional use as texts in books of hours were often deconsecrated in this manner, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England and France. They were turned into secular heirlooms in which family history could be recorded. Births and deaths of several Braddyll family members were recorded in this copy.

Brotherton Collection MS 15

Between pen and press

Introduction

In the 1450s in Mainz, Germany, Johannes Gutenberg developed a

system of printing which used individual letters cast from metal and then arranged in a “forme”. The forme was then placed in a “press”. The text was transferred to paper using sticky ink and by applying pressure evenly. This system of book production was revolutionary. Many copies of the same work could now be produced relatively quickly and cheaply.

Print technology spread across Europe rapidly from the 1460s. In England the first press was established by William Caxton in Westminster in 1476. Unlike many other early printers, Caxton produced popular non-religious books including fiction and encyclopaedias.

Books printed between 1450 and 1480 such as the two displayed here looked

a lot like medieval manuscripts. The typographers tried to copy the style and shape of the letters produced by the scribes who wrote out the text by hand. The first printed books were large and not very portable. By the sixteenth century, books were produced in smaller sizes, driven by demand from the growing network of universities and schools in Europe.

5 Stephan Fridolin, Schatzbehalter der wahren Reichtümer des Heils und ewiger Seligkeit, Nuremberg, 1491

The Schatzbehalter, or “Treasury of the true riches of salvation and eternal bliss” is a devotional text by Stephan Fridolin. Fridolin was an Observant Franciscan friar and confessor to the Poor Clares in Nuremberg. It was probably written at the behest of the nuns and their abbess, Caritas Pirckheimer.

This book was printed in Nuremberg by Anton Koberger and is illustrated

with 96 woodcuts by the engraver, Michael Wolgemut. Wolgemut also designed the woodcuts for the *Liber Chronicarum*, known colloquially as “The Nuremberg Chronicle”, a copy of which was also owned by Lord Brotherton.

The text narrates one hundred events in the life of Christ. In the preface, Fridolin states that the accompanying illustrations were intended to impress the story more firmly on the mind of the audience, especially those who could not read the text for themselves. He also gives instructions on how the illustrations should be coloured.

The original binding of white, blind-tooled pigskin and decorated metal clasps survives, and is typical of the

German style of bookbinding in the late fifteenth century.

Lord Brotherton's collection of incunabula – the name given to books printed in Europe before 1501 – numbers nearly 300 volumes. He made sure he acquired the most important examples of early illustrated printed books.

As well as the *Schatzbehalter* and the *Liber Chronicarum*, Lord Brotherton's library contains a copy of Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* (Mainz, 1486).

This medieval travel guide for pilgrims to the Holy Land includes remarkable fold-out panoramas of significant

locations along the way, with one of Venice measuring 1.6 metres.

Brotherton Collection Incunabula/SCH

6 Euclid, *Elementa geometriae*, Venice, 1482

This is the first printed edition of Euclid's most famous work, which is still considered a masterpiece in the application of logic to mathematics. It offers a clear and logical summary of Greek mathematical thought since Pythagoras, with chapters on plane geometry, the theory of proportion, irrational quantities and the five regular solids.

In this book he included over 400 of what were probably the first geometrical diagrams and mathematical figures. He also maintained wide outer margins throughout the book for the explanatory diagrams. Ratdolt also used two sizes of ornamental woodcut initials to denote sections and subsections of the text with different typography to distinguish proposition from proof.

Our copy is unusual in that the original dark brown calfskin binding also features geometrical diagrams on both the upper and lower covers. Scholars studying the text over time have added their own notes and figures in the margins.

A book label of the University Library Leeds on the front pastedown reads: “Presented by An Anonymous Donor”. The book was given to the Library by Sir Michael Sadler, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds from 1911 to 1923.

The generous gift of artworks from his own collection, which he gave to the University in 1923, forms the basis of today's University art collection. His legacy also includes the commission of a war memorial sculpture by Eric Gill, which remains on campus. Sadler's papers held in Special Collections and the University Archive further document his time in Leeds. The papers illustrate some of the many aspects of his forward-thinking

contribution to the city's cultural life, such as his involvement with the Leeds Arts Club and his support for local artists, notably Jacob Kramer.

Brotherton Collection/EUC

Glorious technicolour

Introduction

Technologies of printing in colour evolved significantly from the nineteenth century to the present. One of the earliest methods, chromolithography, was developed in the 1830s and popularised by the mid-nineteenth century. This technique involved using multiple lithographic

stones, each inked with a different colour, to create vibrant images. Chromolithography was labour-intensive and expensive, but it enabled the mass production of colourful prints, publications and art reproductions.

As technology advanced, photomechanical printing methods emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These processes, like offset lithography, used photographic techniques to transfer images to printing plates, allowing for greater precision and speed in the production of colour prints.

The late twentieth century saw the emergence of digital printing. The introduction of giclée printing marked a significant development. Giclée, a

French term meaning “to spray”, refers to a process that uses high-resolution inkjet printers to produce archival-quality prints. Unlike earlier methods, giclée printing offers greater colour accuracy and the ability to produce prints to order.

7 Owen Jones, *The grammar of ornament*, London, 1856

This is a first edition of the influential pattern sourcebook published by the architect Owen Jones, who was a one of the most important figures in the design reform movement. The 100 chromolithographic plates, derived from historical and international

designs, were issued only once in this large folio edition. They were accompanied by 37 “Propositions” intended to establish universal principals of design.

While Jones celebrated and promoted the rich ornamental traditions of global majority cultures, his work also forms part of the British Empire’s imperial project. The design reform movement extracted motifs from their original contexts and encouraged their use by British manufacturers for economic gain. Jones’s system of analysis and classification cast the British as inherently superior and their dominance as both natural and inevitable.

Commented [RL1]: I usually go for this apostrophe placement, simply for ease of reading – if you have strong feelings we can move away from this, but just need to make sure we’re consistent across printed and digital labels.

Jones's work was known in Victorian Leeds. His illustrated book *Details and ornaments from the Alhambra* was acquired for the new Leeds School of Design in September 1847. The Leeds Institute Library Accessions Register also records that four volumes of *The grammar of ornament* were acquired later, in September 1870.

Bedford Collection K018

8 Helen Douglas, *Within the bloom*, 2022

This artist's book is composed of 114 pages in the form of a concertina, which is nineteen metres long when fully extended. It is one of only ten copies, printed using the digital giclée

method, a more sophisticated form of inkjet printing used by artists to create high-resolution, long-lasting editions. Douglas set the work in the garden of Deuchar Mill in the Scottish Borders at the height of summer.

The artist was inspired by an encounter with a butterfly on 15 July 2021, which led to a focus on the interactions between insects and flowers. The resulting panoramic scene moves in and out of focus across the hand-folded pages.

The book was published by Weproductions, founded by Telfer Stokes in 1971. Douglas joined in 1974 and together they created innovative artists' books using a variety of printing techniques. The partnership ended in

2004, with Douglas continuing to work at Deuchar Mill.

Artists' Books 282

Imagination and creativity

Ingenious industry

Introduction

Creativity is the ability to think of new ideas, to make things that are original, or find unique solutions to problems. Industry, on the other hand, is about making these ideas real.

Industrialisation saw the emergence of new manufacturing processes and the mass production of goods. Artistic principles were used to influence the

design and appearance of these products. Artists and designers began to collaborate with industrialists to create items that were not only functional but also visually appealing.

The use of art in industry led to the creation of more refined textiles, pottery, furniture, and other consumer goods, making them more desirable to a growing middle class. Innovations in materials and processes also made industrial products cheaper and more uniform. Here we see catalogues from two companies, a century apart, that show how advances in the production of ceramics changed the appearance of our built environment.

Educational institutions often collected examples of art and industry to form

teaching collections. These collections generally corresponded with the dominant industries of the local area. Leeds and wider West Yorkshire were known for their production of textiles. Examples of Indian textiles were acquired for British art schools and museums during the nineteenth century, corresponding with their imperial domination of the subcontinent. British industries appropriated Indian textile designs, copying their intricate patterns for mass production. They undermined Indian artisans by flooding markets with cheaper imitations, diminishing local crafts and exploiting Indian ingenuity.

1 The Burmantofts portfolio of faïence, London, 1890

These printed plates from an extensive portfolio illustrate some of the decorative ceramic products sold by Leeds Fireclay Company Limited, also known as Burmantofts Pottery. An example of their elaborate interiors from the same period can be seen in the entrance to the Great Hall at the University of Leeds, opened in 1894 as part of the Yorkshire College.

Burmantofts Pottery operated in various forms from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. It began as a small brick-making business but grew into a major producer of decorative ceramics and

art pottery. Burmantofts became known for their colourful glazes and intricate designs in faïence and terracotta. The company expanded their market with this portfolio, alongside the opening of a London showroom.

The pottery made vases, tiles and architectural ornament for use in both public buildings and domestic homes. In Leeds, further examples of Burmantofts decorative tiles are visible at the Adelphi public house, County Arcade and Cross Arcade. They completed architectural commissions across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Their international work extended to Canada, China, France,

Commented [RL2]: Capitalise? Not sure!

Greece, India, Russia, South Africa
and Turkey.

Yorkshire H-Lee-3.3/LEE

2 A descriptive catalogue of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory, at King's Arms Stairs, Narrow-Wall, Lambeth: opposite White- hall Stairs, London, 1784

Eleanor Coade perfected the
manufacture of artificial stone based
on a process which was kept secret
from her competitors. The fired
ceramic material was produced at her
Lambeth factory and used for

sculptural and architectural ornament in Georgian England and beyond. It functioned as a durable and economical alternative to carved stone and cast metal

Coade stone most accurately reproduced the appearance of materials like limestone, with its pale colour and even texture. As it was more hard-wearing than natural stone, it was promoted for both exterior and interior applications. The first catalogue was followed by Coade's Gallery in 1799, which functioned as a showroom for prospective customers.

The surface of Coade stone could also be treated to mimic other sculptural materials, most often bronze. The scale of the objects produced at the

factory ranged from the monumental to the minute. Button-sized examples were excavated from the site of the former factory where the Royal Festival Hall now stands.

Eleanor Coade was a rare example of a woman who owned and operated a manufacturing business in Georgian England. She managed her factory with exceptional skill, securing prestigious commissions. Her success not only highlights her entrepreneurial spirit but also her ability to thrive in a male-dominated field, leaving a lasting impact on the architectural landscape.

Bedford Collection K093

3 Maker not recorded, Indian toran, c.1987

This is an Indian frieze, or toran, created to hang above a doorway to represent hospitality, particularly for a celebration such as a wedding. It made from hand-embroidered cotton with shisha mirrors. This piece was originally collected in 1987 for the Educational Resource Service teaching collection at Bretton Hall College, in nearby West Bretton.

The word toran derives from the Sanskrit word torana which means a gateway. Mirror work, or shisha or abla, appears to be particular to embroidery from the north of India. Made from blown glass, mirrored and

Commented [RL3]: Capitalisation or not? Just pondering consistency here. Also are you happy with the inverted commas / italics in this sentence? Shoud word "Toran" also have the inverted commas? And shisha isn't italicised in the main label (not the end of the world!)

broken into small pieces, they are top-stitched onto the fabric. More recent mass-produced mirrors are often made in plastic with a machine-made outer ring of coloured thread.

The Educational Resource Service was created in the 1940s to take museum objects into schools. Items from India were purchased during a visit to the sub-continent by one of their associates. Bretton Hall merged with the University of Leeds in 2001.

International Textile Collection

Music made visible

Introduction

RJC Dance is a dynamic and innovative Black British dance organisation renowned for both its commitment to artistic excellence and inclusivity. Founded as RJC Dance Theatre by Edward Lynch MBE in 1993, the company established itself as a leading force in contemporary dance, both locally and internationally. Their diverse repertoire of styles is reflected in their name, which stands for Reggae, Jazz and Contemporary.

Under the direction of original member Kathy Williams MBE, OLY, the company remains dedicated to

exploring the possibilities of movement and developing Black British dance language as a valued art form. RJC Dance is not only committed to training and performance but also to health and wellbeing, culture and education and community engagement. Through workshops and outreach programmes, they nurture the next generation of dance artists and creatives, making a significant impact on the cultural landscape.

The RJC Dance Collection was donated to Special Collections as part of the Black Dance Archives (UK) Project. The project was a Heritage Lottery funded project led by State of Trust, the charitable sister company of the production company State of

Emergency, in partnership with Birmingham Libraries and Archives, the Black Cultural Archives, the National Resource Centre for Dance at the University of Surrey, and the University of Leeds.

4 Review of *Passionelle* by RJC Dance Theatre, 1997

Passionelle was a significant departure for RJC Dance. It combined dance styles from a Black choreographic language and was performed by an expanded company of nine artists, including original members Donald Edwards and Kathy Williams MBE, OLY, pictured here. *Passionelle* premiered at the West Yorkshire

Playhouse and toured the length and breadth of the country.

Passionelle used dance to interpret the complexities of human relationships. The performance brought together intense physicality, expressive movements and a compelling narrative. The production was celebrated for its artistic depth, striking visuals and evocative music.

Donald Edwards was a founder member of RJC Dance Theatre and Phoenix Dance Theatre and continues to work in dance education. Kathy Williams MBE, OLY, was also a founder member of RJC Dance Theatre and has been Director of the organisation since 2011. She trained as a gymnast and represented Great

Britain at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984.

MS 1945/5/2/3

5 Photographs of productions by RJC Dance Theatre, 1997–2004

The RJC Dance Collection contains a rich archive of production photographs used to document and promote their dynamic and innovative work. This selection contains images from the 1997 production of *Passionelle*, smaller photographs of *Mekwae* performed in 2004, and a portrait of the organisation's founder Edward Lynch MBE.

Mekwae (“make way” in Caribbean patois) was a touring dance piece from 2004 that drew on African and Caribbean dance traditions.

Choreographed by Robert Cohan and with a score by Matthew Bourne, *Mekwae* combined traditional dance elements with contemporary movements influenced by martial arts. The score was performed by Kabin Fever, an ensemble of five musicians. The dancers included De-Napoli Clarke, Edward Lynch and Debbie Wild, alongside the Youth Dance Company.

MS 1945/3/1

6 VHS tapes of rehearsals and performances by RJC Dance Theatre, 1997–1998

RJC Dance Theatre built a collection of VHS and DVD recordings of their rehearsals, performances and educational activities, alongside promotional films and documentaries. They also recorded their television appearances on the BBC and ITV, which provided a national platform for their work.

Over the last two decades RJC Dance has developed acclaimed productions, which have toured extensively across the United Kingdom and beyond. Their first full-length production, *Our Hearts*

Cry Out, was performed at more than thirty venues during 1993 and 1994. Their tours often include performances at schools, community centres and festivals, reflecting their commitment to accessibility and education.

MS 1945/7/1/7 and MS 1945/7/1/24

7 Letter from Fabian Hamilton MP to Edward Lynch MBE, 1997

Fabian Hamilton, then the newly-elected Member of Parliament for Leeds North East, congratulated Artistic Director Edward Lynch on the award of an Arts 4 Everyone Grant. Lynch founded the organisation in

1993. RJC Dance continues to thrive at its base at the Mandela Centre in Chapeltown, Leeds. In 2023 the organisation celebrated its 30th anniversary.

In 2006 RJC Dance relocated to the Mandela Centre from its base at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Since then, the company has been dedicated to expanding its education and community outreach programmes, incorporating a creative approach that actively involves young people in their performances. RJC's Youth Dance Company has earned widespread acclaim for its energy and artistic excellence.

RJC Dance are now an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation, funded

by Arts Council England. National Portfolio Organisations are recognised for their significant contribution to the cultural landscape, offering public programmes in areas like visual arts, theatre, music and museums, ensuring wide community access and engagement.

MS 1945/3/2

Dressing the part

Introduction

The Novello Cowden Clarkes were an extraordinary Anglo-Italian family of artists, musicians, writers, publishers and actors, who worked across Europe

during the long nineteenth century. The family were embedded in the world of theatre. Clara Anastasia Novello made her stage debut at the Theatre Royal in Windsor in 1832. Her older sister, Mary Cowden Clarke, performed alongside Charles Dickens at Miss Kelly's Theatre in Soho during the 1840s.

In addition to public performances, the family held regular "amateur theatricals" in their own homes. Mary, her husband Charles Cowden Clarke and her brother Joseph Alfred Novello moved to Villa Novello in Genoa, in the Italian region of Liguria, in 1861. They were later joined by their sisters Mary Sabilla Novello and Cecilia Serle. The house was sold and demolished in

1913 after part of the garden had already been overtaken by new city streets.

8 Photographs and cartes de visite of the Novello family and their circle, c. 1866–1880

These photographic images of the music publisher Joseph Alfred Novello, his sister Mary Sabilla Novello, their nieces Porzia and Valeria Gigliucci - and members of their wider social circle – capture their shared interest in theatre and performance. Shown in costume and posed in character, they record the “amateur theatricals” staged at Villa Novello in Genoa, Italy.

The smaller photographs are *cartes de visite* (visiting cards), which were

popular during the second half of the nineteenth century. Mounted on card, they provided portable and collectable images of friends, family and contemporary celebrities in an affordable and standardised format.

Many of these images were taken by the Genoese company of G.B. Sciutto. Their printed mark is visible on the reverse, alongside handwritten inscriptions detailing the names of the sitters, the plays in which they performed and personal messages from the sender to the recipient.

Brotherton Collection MS NCC

Understanding our world

Art and mind

Introduction

Artistic creativity, neurodiversity and mental illness were sometimes connected by art historians of the past. It was thought that their conditions provided access to unique ways of thinking and feeling, which could elevate their work to the level of genius. More recent approaches, however, have separated the artist's work from their biography. Art by women was particularly vulnerable to being interpreted through their life story. If their behaviour deviated from what was considered normal, they

were also less likely to be celebrated for their differences. Here we explore the ways in which Victorian artist Emma Novello's career was undermined by negative perceptions of her mental health.

Despite the general support of her family, Novello's decision to pursue a career as an artist transgressed the social conventions of the time.

Creative activity outside the home was thought to belong to men. Restricted educational opportunities for women limited their access to the skills and networks necessary to exhibit and sell their work. In defiance of these barriers, increasing numbers of women did train and work as artists,

particularly from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.

Novello's training and practice as an artist was enabled by her family and their cultural connections, which provided privileged access to successful visual artists. Music, literature, theatre and art were not just polite attainments or leisurely pastimes for the Novello family, they were embedded in their professional lives and sense of identity.

1 (John) Henry Sass, Portrait of Emma Aloysia Novello, c.1830

Emma Aloysia Novello attended the drawing academy of (John) Henry Sass at 6 Charlotte Street in Bloomsbury, London. Despite her aptitude, she could not continue her studies because women were excluded from the Royal Academy Schools. Instead, she studied the collections of the Louvre in Paris and continued to practice as an artist.

In 1859 Emma signed an open letter to the Royal Academy of Arts alongside 37 other women, which was published in the *Athenæum*. Collectively they

Commented [RL4]: Might be in Sarah's style guide, but we do one to ten then 11 etc. And yes this might be counter to the centuries written in full, but its back to that ease of reading as driver.

demanded equal access to the Royal Academy Schools, drawing attention to the rise in art making by women and that 120 women had exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition over the previous three years.

Sass studied painting at the Royal Academy Schools from 1805 and exhibited there for the first time two years later. Despite a promising start, he did not go on to achieve the highest accolades as an artist. He did, however, realise that there was a gap in the market for students preparing to attend the Royal Academy Schools. Sass began to teach drawing in around 1813 and continued until 1842, when the school was taken over by a former pupil.

Like Novello, Sass was thought to have displayed symptoms of insanity during his later years. Unlike Novello, however, he was not institutionalised and his career did not substantially suffer. He exhibited 84 works at the Royal Academy of Arts, in addition to showing his paintings at other prestigious galleries in London. Sass mentored many artists who went on to have long and successful careers. In his own time, he was unique in providing professional art instruction to women as well as men.

Brotherton Collection MS NCC/10/4/1

2 Copy of Notice of Admission, 1882

Joseph Alfred Novello committed his sister Emma to Otto House Lunatic Asylum in 1882.

Her condition was described as “melancholic mania”, but behaviours exhibited by women in this period – particularly those who did not conform to social conventions – would not necessarily be considered symptoms of mental illness now.

The surgeon Charles Beaumont Waller completed her medical certificate and declared her to be a “person of unsound mind” rather than – in the terms of the day – a “lunatic” or an

“idiot”. He made the following observations that she was:

“Imagining she is very wicked & that everything is too good for her; fancies police are coming to hang her; refuses to speak...sits & mopes the whole day long & in fact has perverted & distorted views about anything & everything”.

Emma’s condition was thought to have been caused by prolonged caring responsibilities for her aunt, Catherine Collins, who had been seriously injured in a carriage accident in 1881.

Emma had not been included in the distribution of her parent’s legacy and relied on a monthly stipend from her brother. He often accused her of not being able to look after money and

took legal action to secure control of her finances following the death of their aunt in 1884.

Brotherton Collection MS NCC/10/3/1

3 Copy of a letter from (Mary) Sabilla Novello to Mrs Chapman and undertaker's accounts, 1902

Two months before her death while still institutionalised, Emma's sister Mary wrote to Otto House with instructions that allowed them to plan her funeral and burial. She requested only that it be quiet and unpretentious and that no

newspaper announcement be made. Emma died on 21 April 1902 and was buried at Fulham Cemetery in West London.

The Novello Cowden Clarke Collection contains very little material to illuminate the time Emma spent at Otto House Lunatic Asylum. Otto House was located at North End Road in Hammersmith and accommodated around thirty women. The large house had a walled garden and separate cottages for patients to be isolated from others.

According to a report by the Commissioners in Lunacy published in the same year in which Emma was committed, some of the patients were allowed to take carriage rides and

“attend places of public entertainment”, with half of patients charged the substantial sum of £200 a year for their care. In this year the Commissioners found that only four of the women at Otto House were “deemed curable” and nine “deemed lunatic by inquisition”, but being an expensive private facility, none were considered to be criminals or paupers.

Brotherton Collection MS NCC/20/310
and Brotherton Collection MS
NCC/10/3/2

Apocalypse when?

Introduction

Humans have imagined the end of the world in many ways throughout history. In the Christian tradition, the apocalypse is interpreted as a time of final judgment. This idea is captured in the Book of Revelation, which describes dramatic events like earthquakes, wars and the return of Jesus to bring peace and justice. For Christians, the apocalypse is not just about destruction but also about hope for a better world.

The idea of the apocalypse gained new urgency during the world wars of the twentieth century. The massive

destruction and loss of life made it seem as though the end of the world was possible. The invention of nuclear weapons created a real fear of a man-made apocalypse. These events showed that the apocalypse was not just a distant myth but something that could happen due to advances in the technology of warfare.

Today, many people worry about a different kind of apocalypse: the climate crisis. This is the idea that human actions, like burning fossil fuels, are causing the Earth's climate to change in dangerous ways. Scientists warn that if we do not adapt our behaviour, rising temperatures, melting ice caps and extreme weather

could lead to disasters that threaten life on this planet.

4 Annotated manuscript containing the Book of the Apocalypse, c.1150

The Book of Revelation, also known as the Book of the Apocalypse, is the last book in the New Testament, and therefore the final book of the Christian Bible. This decorated manuscript once belonged to Bridlington Priory on the Yorkshire coast, one of the largest and wealthiest Augustinian houses in England.

The priory was suppressed in 1539 during the Dissolution of the

Monasteries and the prior was executed by hanging at Tyburn. The priory library was dispersed and this manuscript eventually found its way to Ripon Cathedral in North Yorkshire. The manuscript used to be bound together with another one of a similar size containing further biblical texts. Both volumes include elaborate decorated initials in the form of dragons and monsters among plant stems and tendrils.

The books and manuscripts of Ripon Cathedral Library were placed on long-term deposit in Special Collections at the University of Leeds in the 1980s along with the Dean and Chapter Archive. Many of the books were collected by Anthony Higgin, Dean of

Ripon Cathedral from 1608 to 1624, and are bound in contemporary stamped calfskin bindings. Inscriptions and annotations in Higgin's distinctive italic hand can be found inside, revealing valuable information such as when and where the book was purchased, from whom, and the price paid.

Ripon Cathedral MS 3

5 Geoffrey Hill, *For the Unfallen: Poems 1952–1958*, London, 1959

In the short poem “Little Apocalypse”, Hill reflects on the relationship between Greek mythology and

Christian theology through the beliefs of German poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin. The title refers to a passage in the Bible in which Jesus describes a period of suffering before the coming “Kingdom of God”

For the Unfallen was Geoffrey Hill’s first full-length book of poetry. The poems in this collection explore deep and challenging topics like history, faith and human nature. Hill’s writing is known for being complex and thoughtful, often requiring readers to think carefully to understand the layers of meaning in his words.

The title suggests a focus on people who are caught between innocence and guilt. The poems often deal with serious subjects, such as the

consequences of violence and the search for redemption. Hill's poems are carefully crafted and rich in detail.

Commented [RL5]: Do you mean poem here? If not, remove the "an" later in the sentence?

For the Unfallen became an important work that laid the foundation for his later career as a significant English poet. carefully crafted and rich in detail, making it an important work that laid the foundation for his later career as a significant English poet.

Hill joined the Department of English Literature at the University of Leeds in 1954 and remained with the University for almost three decades. He became the first Director of the Poetry Room in 1962 and was promoted to Professor of English Literature in 1976.

He was an advocate of the Gregory Fellowships in Poetry at the University and supported his students to become successful poets, including Tony Harrison.

Brotherton Collection 20C HILL/HIL

6 *Apocalypse*, Quarto No. 5, Dublin, 1944

This issue of the poetry periodical *Apocalypse* includes a cover design by the Scottish artist Stephen Gilbert. He left Paris before the outbreak of war and sought refuge in Dublin, where he joined the experimental White Stag group. The poems reflect on cataclysmic events, suffering and violence, death and religion, alongside

verses expressing longing for peaceful pastoral landscapes.

The periodical is from the archive of the writer and cultural critic Sir Herbert Read. It includes a poem by Read titled “The Labyrinth”. In this poem Read describes the birth of a calf, including visceral details to ground the scene in reality. He was familiar with rural life, being the son of a farmer in the Yorkshire Dales. In 1949 Read returned to the countryside, making his home in Stonegrave in North Yorkshire.

Read was a prominent pacifist and anarchist. His beliefs were shaped by active service in the First World War. He entered the Yorkshire Regiment following his studies in law and

economics at the University of Leeds. Read reflected on his wartime experiences in Belgium and France through two volumes of poetry, for which he became recognised in the interwar period.

Brotherton Collection MS 20c Herbert Read/6/11/8

7 Tony Harrison, untitled notebook on global warming, c.2001

This report on global warming was published in the *Guardian* on 19 February 2001. It warns that tropical glaciers could melt completely within the next twenty years and discusses

the catastrophic effects of climate change. The article was pasted into a notebook by the poet and playwright Tony Harrison as research material, alongside similar newspaper cuttings.

Harrison filled hundreds of notebooks as part of his creative process. More than 250 are represented in the archive. This notebook contains comparatively few entries. Unlike other examples, it appears not to have been attached to a particular project.

Brotherton Collection MS 20C
Harrison/11/3

Boys and girls come out to play

Introduction

The ways in which a society treats its children reveals a great deal about its principles and priorities. In nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain, distinct roles and behaviours were ascribed to boys and girls. From a young age, children were often encouraged to conform to specific norms that shaped their identities and interests.

Boys were typically raised to be assertive and independent. The idea of boys as emotionally reserved and competitive was reinforced by societal

expectations. In contrast, girls were socialised to be nurturing and cooperative, encouraged towards domestic roles and caregiving.

These stereotypes were perpetuated through media, education and family structures, reinforcing a rigid gender binary. Over time, however, challenges to these stereotypes emerged. The feminist movement began to advocate for more fluid and equitable gender roles for children and organisations were established to advocate for their rights.

8 Women's Aid Federation of England material, 1987–1995

Women's Aid Federation of England is a domestic abuse charity that works as the national coordinating body for local refuges and services. These materials illustrate some of their crucial work with children, often using creative expression to engage with complex family circumstances and provide a sense of safety.

Recognising that children are often victims of domestic abuse, either directly or indirectly, Women's Aid provides specialised support for them. This includes counselling, educational

resources and advocacy to ensure that children receive the care and protection they need.

The organisation also runs awareness campaigns and training programmes aimed at professionals who work with children, ensuring that they can identify and respond to signs of abuse. By creating a network of safe spaces and offering support, Women's Aid plays an important role in breaking the cycle of abuse, helping children to recover from trauma.

MS 2265/4/1/7 and MS 2265/4/7

9 Books from the Elizabeth Williams Collection, 1883–1923

This selection of children's books from the late Victorian to the early interwar period reveals gendered stereotypes through their titles and decorative illustrated covers. While they reinforced conventional ideas about gender roles, some offered counter descriptions of girls as “naughty”, “wilful” and “tomboys”.

Elizabeth Williams's collection of children's books contains some 500 works, mainly prose fiction by British writers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are a

number of the moralising tales of Mrs Sherwood and Mrs Molesworth alongside melancholy religious stories by Hesba Stretton and Mrs O.F. Walton. Stirring adventure stories for boys by R.M. Ballantyne and G.A. Henty jostle for space with lively stories for girls by L.T. Meade. Hugh Lofting's Dr Dolittle books are well represented, and there are also 35 volumes of Mary Tourtel's Rupert Bear story-books, clearly a particular favourite of this collector.

Many of the books contain presentation inscriptions to children from family members, or were awarded by Sunday schools as prizes for regular attendance and good conduct.

Elizabeth Williams (1938-2012) studied at Bedford College, London, and came to the University of Leeds as an Assistant Lecturer in English Language and Medieval English Literature in 1965 after working for a year in the children's books department of the Bodley Head publishing company. Elizabeth continued teaching at Leeds until her retirement in 1991. In addition to her work in the field of medieval studies she also developed and taught a hugely popular course on Literature for Children.

Elizabeth Williams Collection

10 Books published by Renwick of Otley, 1930– 1957

Illustrated annuals like those shown here were popular gifts for children in the middle decades of the twentieth century. They depicted boys as courageous adventurers, preparing to serve the British Empire at home and overseas. Girls too were shown in active pursuits, including hiking, cycling and driving motor vehicles.

These books are from the William Walker Collection. William Walker and Sons Limited was a firm of printers and publishers in nearby Otley. They produced books for children during the

twentieth century. Archival material related to their work is held by the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds.

James H.R. Renwick was the chairman of William Walker and Sons Limited until his death in 1931. His funeral procession passed through Otley, led by the entire workforce of the company. When their premises closed in 1989, the new owners found original illustrations in the attic. These illustrations were considered to be particularly high quality, commissioned from artists working close to their London office on Fleet Street.

William Walker Collection